



REFEDS Report 2013

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Abstract:

This report provides a short overview of the work carried out by REFEDS during 2013 as well as the costs incurred in the same period. The workplan for 2013, as approved by the REFEDS SC, can be found online at: <https://refeds.org/work/>.

This report is mainly aimed at the REFEDS Steering Committee and REFEDS Sponsors that provide funding and/or manpower to carry out the REFEDS workplan.

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1. Sponsorships

The following organisations were REFEDS Sponsors during the reporting period:

- Australian Access Federation
- CESNET
- GARR
- Internet Society
- Internet2
- JISC/Janet
- NORDUnet
- SURFnet
- SWITCH

In total these organisations contributed **€ 88,697.80** in sponsorship.

2. Activities

REFEDS work is organised in sets of work items via an annual workplan. Each year REFEDS group is solicited to provide inputs for possible work areas. A short list is created with a predicted budget associated with each work area. The REFEDS Steering Committee is then asked to approve the list and to define initial priorities (accordingly with specific wishes from the sponsors if any) should the budget not be sufficient to fund everything.

Each work item covers an area of work that is in line with REFEDS goals of:

- Representing the needs for the research and education community in the wider space of access and identity management;
- Addressing inter-federation issues and trying to offer some solutions for these;
- Engaging more actively with other communities interested in identity federations;
- Enhancing international collaborations among participants by sharing best practices and possibly contributing to the creation and/or adoption of new standards.

The 2013 workplan is formally published on the REFEDS website (<https://refeds.org/docs/refedsworkplan2013.pdf>) and supported by further information on the REFEDS wiki (https://refeds.terena.org/index.php/REFEDS_Planning_Documents_2013). A short summary of the progresses of each work package is provided below.



REF1: REFEDS Coordination and Management

In 2013, REFEDS coordinated the following meetings:

- REFEDS Annual Meeting: 02 June 2013 in conjunction with TNC2013: <https://refeds.org/meetings/june13/index.html>.
- REFEDS BOF: 03 October 2013 in conjunction with VAMP2013: <https://refeds.org/meetings/oct13/index.html>.
- REFEDS Fall Meeting: 11 November 2013 in conjunction with Internet2 Identity Week: <https://refeds.org/meetings/nov13/index.html>.

In addition, the REFEDS coordinators attended and presented at the following events:

- Presentation to TIP2013 in January 2013.
- Presentation as part of European Internet Identity Week in February 2013.
- Presentation at EU-DAT Conference in October 2013.
- Presentation at EGI Conference in December 2013.

A focus for REFEDS Coordination and management within 2013 was to formalise the processes for publishing REFEDS findings and recommendations. It was agreed that REFEDS would explore using the RFC format for publishing papers. The current RFC Independent Stream will be used, with specific 'boiler plate' text added to the RFC documents to make it clear that this process has passed through the REFEDS acceptance process. A working group policy has been established to support this: https://refeds.terena.org/index.php/REFEDS_Working_Group_Policy. In 2014, this policy will be added to the main REFEDS Participants Agreement.

The REFEDS Coordinators continue to support the REFEDS website (refeds.org), wiki (refeds.terena.org), blog (blog.refeds.org) and various mailing lists. A planned wiki migration in 2013 has been put on hold due to planned IT changes at TERENA.

REFEDS put in place three contracts with external parties to support its work in 2014:

- A maintenance contract with Yaco Sistemas to support the PEER software maintenance and small-scale development.
- A development contract with DAASI for the MET tool.
- A contract with Ian Young to support the development of the Metadata Query Protocol work – an essential specification for inter-federation work.

These work items are described in the relevant sections below.



REF2: Defining Baseline Assurance within Federations

The aim of this work item was to improve the understanding of the base assurance of federations and to improve the usage of federation infrastructure based on increased assurance understanding and implementation. The work completed in 2013 has focused on three core areas:

- **Federation Operator Practice Statement (FOP).** This work item has been through many different iterations over the year, proving the complexity of defining what the standard areas of practise are for federation operators. Through extensive discussion with various user groups, a four-stage document of Metadata Practice Statement, Key Management Practice Statement, Assurance Practice Statement and Monitoring Practice Statement has been recommended for consideration.
- **Code of Conduct.** Mikael Linden and Steven Carmody have continued to lead work looking at the EU Code of Conduct and extending this work out to form an international Code of Conduct. A consultation on proposals for the International Code of Conduct was carried out at the end of 2013 and this work is now being revised in light of those comments. For more information please see: https://refeds.terena.org/index.php/International_dp_coc.
- **Entity Categories.** REFEDS has agreed to become the holder of Entity Category definitions where it makes sense for these to be defined at an international level. Much of the work this year has been in establishing a process for defining Entity Categories and completing the work to approve the first category: Research and Scholarship – R&S (https://refeds.terena.org/index.php/Entity_Categories). The REFEDS Steering Committee is now in the process of formally approving the R&S category. Three further categories have been proposed for discussion and ratification during 2014: affiliation, library services and 'hide from discovery'.

REF3: Engaging with eResearch

The Engaging with eResearch work item continued to build on the established relationship with FIM4R, resulting in the development of a roadmap responding to requirements developed by the FIM4R group:

<https://refeds.terena.org/images/4/4d/AnalysisFIM4RDocument1-0.pdf>. This work was also informed by TERENA's lead role in the EU Study on AAI for Scientific Resources In Europe – published in December 2012.

As a result of the paper and the further discussion held with the FIM4R group it was agreed to:

- have an open call for use-cases (May 2013) jointly organised by REFEDS and the Enabling Users activity in GEANT. This led to three use-cases being implemented by the Enabling Users activity.



- To ensure that REFEDS provide horizontal cross-board support for common issues that came up for each e-Research project.

Discussions with eResearch groups continued at both the joint VAMP / FIM4R / REFEDS meeting in October 2013 and at the I2 Identity Week in November 2013.

A summary blog post of developments was published in October 2013, explaining how REFEDS work continued to match and work on the developments described in the roadmap: <https://blog.refeds.org/a/161>. New requirements identified relate to attributes both in terms of release (IdP side) and in terms of harmonisation.

REFEDS is trying to look at ways to promote best practices concerning the release of attributes. This is definitely a difficult space and more work is needed.

The work on attribute harmonisation also relates to the work done in the Code of Conduct as well as in the Entity Categories. Both approaches aim to limit the number of attributes required by services and to ensure that services handle them according to the current regulations.

REF4: Understanding and Improving Metadata Flow Across Federations

Work item 4 focuses on tools being designed to support the flow and use of metadata within and across federations. Three main areas have been developed:

- PEER. PEER is a tool that allows for easy and simple registration of entity metadata in a central source (<https://github.com/Yaco-Sistemas/peer/>). In 2013, a full review of the code has been undertaken revealing some issues with the reliance of SAMLmetaJS. These issues are being addressed under a maintenance contract for the software with Yaco Sistema.
- REEP. REEP is a service instance of PEER. In 2013, work has focused on testing and improving PEER through a service instance, developing the REEP policy framework (https://refeds.terena.org/index.php/REEP_Policy) and commission Ian Young to complete the Metadata Query Protocol Internet Draft for republication (<https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/draft-young-md-query/>). A new version of the MD Query document will be published in 2014.
- MET. The Metadata Explorer Tool is designed to give federations a quick overview of the metadata in existing federations. A test instance showing all of the known federation metadata is available at: <https://rhode.daasi.de/met/>. For 2014, discussions are being held about what additional management information could be supported by MET and how this fits with monitoring tools such as SAMLbits.



REF5: Specialist Working Groups

REFEDS allows for Specialist Working Groups to be set up under its banner. These Working Groups do not receive funding but are designed to be talking shops for specific issues or operational areas. Working Groups may propose work items for funding under the core REFEDS workplan at certain points. REFEDS supports the group by providing wiki space and mailing lists, but otherwise the groups are designed to be self-sustaining through community interest.

In 2013, the Federation Operators Group (FOG) has been set up as a specialist working-group within REFEDS. This is a closed list; members must be active operational staff within federations and two existing members of the FOG GROUP must support applications for membership. The group operates under Chatham House style rules. More information about the group can be found here:

<https://refeds.terena.org/index.php/FOG>.

3. Finances

A summary of the costs incurred by REFEDS in the period reported (August 2010 – August 2011) is given below. As the table shows, the costs are inline with the budget.

Budget Period 1 Jan 2013-31 Dec 2013	€	Comments
Left over budget from 2012	33,380.62	
Contributions from Sponsors for 2013	88,697.80	
TOT Budget	122,078.42	As per 1 Jan 2013
Expenses 2013	75,651.26	
Left Over Budget Jan 2014	46,427.16	As per 1 Jan 2013

Table 1: Budget Summary

Summary Expenditure Sep 2011- Dec 2012	€	Comments
Budgeted cost Jan 2013 – Dec 2013	75,000	As per plan approved by the REFEDS Steering Committee
Breakdown of Cost 2013	€	Comments
REEP Costs	4,200	Ian's contract
MET Costs	12,600.00	DAASI International
PEER Costs	3,333.33	Maintenance contract



		with YACA
Nicole Harris Costs (JISC)	5,165.46	Only until March 2013
Personnel Costs (TERENA)	45,696.35	
Travel Costs (TERENA)	4,656.12	
TOTAL Costs	75,651.26	

Table 2: Expenditures breakdown

