Panel report
R1 - Future of grid-like initiatives in Croatia
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The round table "Future of grid-like initiatives in Croatia" took place as part of the CARNet Users Conference - CUC 2002 on 26 September 2002 from 11 a.m. to 1.15 p.m.

The topic had been agreed upon already in March with the Program Committee Chair, Mr. Miroslav Milinovic, who has been dealing at SRCE with the related field of middleware and is a member of international organisations and teams involved in the same field.

After having analysed the projects and initiatives in the Croatian science and industry, the invitation for participation was sent to persons who already participate or have initiated national and foreign projects and investments related to the grid:
- Tome Anticic, D.Sc. - IRB - Tome.Anticic@irb.hr
- Darko Huljenic, D.Sc. - NT Ericsson - Darko.Huljenic@etk.ericsson.se (who apologised and instead came Ivan Caric, D.Sc. - NT Erricsson - Ivan.Caric@etk.ericsson.se)
- Mladen Kostesic - IBM - Kostesic@hr.ibm.com
- Robert Manger, D.Sc. - MZT/PMF-matematika - Robert.Manger@mzt.hr
- Karolj Skala, D.Sc. - IRB - Karolj.Skala@irb.hr
- Ivan Slapnicar, D.Sc. - FESB - Ivan.Slapnicar@fesb.hr
- Sinisa Srbljic, D.Sc. - FER - Sinisa.Srbljic@fer.hr.

The participants discussed both internally and with the audience the in advance submitted questions:
- Is grid just another buzzword, currently in fashion, or is it a near reality?
  What does grid mean now, and what will it mean in the future?
- Which are the world trends: different approaches, forums, standards and what are the first-hand experiences of the participants?
- Where does Croatia stand here: in the study of clustering technology, the development of middleware, creation of grid-ready applications, leasing of grid resources?; or is it wise "just" to follow the technology and be ready for application?; or should we wait for the user parts of grid to appear as ready applications on our desktop?

In the presence of around twenty interested conference participants, the distinguished round table participants first explained their attitudes. This resulted in a lively discussion involving the audience as well, proving the extensiveness and complexity of the grid as a new way of thinking, but also as different, complementary, and conflicting attitudes and approaches in Croatia.

Mr. Manger D.Sc. introduced us to the attitudes of MZT (Ministry of Science and Technology) about the grid, speaking about the idea of grid itself, the real needs for its implementation and enriching in Croatia, and about initiatives that have been started and supported in this respect by the MZT.

Ericsson Nikola Tesla invested the resources in the development of middleware in Croatia. Mr. Caric, D.Sc., explained the circumstances in which the project originated, the results, and the plans, warning of the power of the united Croatian science and industry and the need and chance of Croatia to get to grips with the technology that is yet being developed in the world. He also pointed

out that Ericsson is providing the Croatian academic community with its product free of charge for scientific purposes.

The head of the FER (Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing) team that participates together with the Ericsson experts in the development of MidArc, Mr. Sinisa Srbljic, D.Sc., gave us a comparative analysis of approaching this problematic in the U.S.A. and in Croatia. Based on his first-hand experience, he was pointing out the possibility and the need for active contribution to the development in the world, and even market competition with the possibility of imposing our own standards.

Mr. Anticic, D.Sc. arrived just to take part in the round table, from Switzerland where he is actively participating at CERN laboratories in the DataGRID project, including Croatia as a member, and he explained the purpose, methodology and plans of this concrete attempt to create an international grid.

CroGRID is the tentative title of the project established on the initiative of Mr. Skala, D.Sc. In a lengthy presentation he explained, from the IRB perspective, the maturing of the idea from the local needs at the end of 2001, to the proposal submitted to the Ministry of the Interior about establishing the project that should unify the efforts of several institutions in an attempt to define the optimal technologies (standards?) for the creation of clusters and grid, and especially the development of scientific applications and the environment that will use this infrastructure for its own, already huge needs.

The initiator of one of the first centres for advanced computing in Croatia, Mr. Slapnicar, D.Sc., talked about the need for rational investments into equipment, the desirability of open program support and the need to start research which has no clearly defined user or even customer.

Mr. Kostesic briefly referred to the efforts invested by IBM in the field of grid, talking mostly of the needs of the human grid - open and friendly co-operation of all the interested subjects in order to achieve successful results, which was immediately supported by several other speakers as a basic precondition.

Towards the end, the discussion dealt more with the problems of standards for connecting and the middleware, use of the open program support, training of junior experts, necessary network resources (Mr. Ivan Maric from the audience presented the CARNet plans about increasing the connection speed of the academic network).

The discussion did not arrive at conclusions for all the numerous started issues, but it principally clarified the attitudes and the positions of people who are already contributing to the integration of Croatia into the world trend of introducing grid as a new technology that promises to change the world, in a similar or even maybe more revolutionary manner than was the case with web some ten years ago.