

Why l=Europe?

Within the NameFLOW-Paradise X.500 Directory there is a top level node called "l=Europe". This paper identifies how this node came about, how it is managed, and looks at the future.

PARADISE started from humble beginnings in the basement of UCL, with a small, tightly controlled pilot involving academic organisations in a classical DIT schema of country/organisation/(dept)/person.

As the DIT grew, the management aspects also grew, and PARADISE was born as a European Commission funded COSINE project. Initially the schema was maintained. However difficult questions started to raise their heads. In particular, where should the European Commission (EC) be located within the DIT?

At around the same time, work on RFC 1384 was underway (now superseded by RFC 1617) very much lead by the PARADISE players. This work was moving towards giving clear guidelines as to which type of organisations should be registered at the root level of the DIT. The EC did not really fit into the definition provided.

Also during this very productive period for international directories, the NYSERNet pilot (Now the PSI WPP project) was looking at the issue of providing a unified directory service for North America. For a short period, a "l=North America" was introduced into PARADISE. This was an amalgam of the U.S. and Canadian nodes of the DIT into a unified name space. Although this node no longer exists in the NameFLOW-Paradise DIT, its concepts are still a core part of the NADF project.

A similar node was considered for Europe. However, it was felt the process of amalgamating the trees would be very much more complex. More importantly, it was not felt this added much to the pilot service. Having said that, the node did solve some problems: it provided a catchall location for Europe wide organisations.

After many lengthy discussions, the project decided to go ahead and introduce a l=Europe node into PARADISE on an experimental basis. We understood there would be many difficulties, not least on how has authority to manage the node, but it was considered to add significant functionality to give it a try.

The node has a different focus to the "l=North America" node. It would act as a European 'root', that is, using the RFC 1384 definitions of what should be allowed to the world root but with a European focus. Thus the definition of what is allowed may retrospectively be defined as:

An organisation allowed under 'l=Europe' is an organisation, such as the European Commission, which inherently has a brief and scope covering many nations within Europe.

The decision to accept or reject an addition request is currently handed on an ad-hoc basis by the PARADISE project team. The current 'valid' extent of this node is:

EUnet
European Commission DG XIII
European Space Agency
Y-NET

There are currently four other nodes, that have effectively expired:

Cosine
ESPRIT
Special Interest Groups
VALUE Programme

And there lies the problem for the future within NameFLOW-Paradise. Who manages this node? Who decides these have expired? Should the node continue to exist?

The EEMA have recognised the problem, and sponsored a project to look at the issues, with a view to setting up a European name registration authority if appropriate. It may also look at issues such as should it be "l=Europe" or "c=EU"?

In the interim it is anticipated the node will continue to be run on an ad-hoc basis.

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