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Backbone parameters, capacity of international lines and quality of member connections improved significantly during last five years. In the beginning of 1999, most parts of the CESNET backbone consisted of 24 Mbps lines, no backup lines existed and the international links were heavily overloaded most of the time. By the end of 2003, the backbone capacity of 2.5 Gbps offers full redundancy and sufficient capacity of international lines. Typical capacity of the most significant member institution circuits has reached 1 Gbps. It means that the backbone capacity as well as that of the international links increased more than 70x during those five years. Both the performance and reliability of the whole networking environment improved.

Other services follow this trend, especially in the reliability field. In addition, the portfolio of network services has been extended significantly: the IP telephony, various multimedia services, native IPv6 backbone, AAA services, Grid services and others have been added. This quantitative and qualitative improvement was achieved using an almost constant financing from the Ministry of Education and CESNET members.

Another positive fact is the growth of user groups using the high-speed features of the CESNET2 network. The IT professionals and users from the natural science fields, especially the high energy physics, have always been very active and demanding. During the last years, use of the network for medical applications has been evolving successfully - especially thanks to the long-term cooperation between the IT institutes and faculty hospitals.

Regardless of the almost traditional problems concerning the research plan financing, solving the research projects - parts of the whole research plan - continued successfully. In addition to the internal projects, our research team participated successfully in the GEANT project research activities titled TENG (Task Force - Next Generation Networking). Besides the GEANT project, we participated in three other international projects of the 5th EU Framework Programme: DataGrid, SCAMPI and GNET.

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