IBM

ASLK-CGER extends realtime banking services with eNetwork Software.

A way of life for most Belgians
Based in Brussels, Algemene Spaar en Lijfrentekas/Caisse Générale d'Epargne et de Retraite (ASLK-CGER) – a name synonymous with banking and insurance in Belgium – is an institution at the very heart of Europe. In 1865, ASLK-CGER was legally founded as a state-owned, public sector credit institution. Today, most Belgians have an account with ASLK-CGER.

System	IBM Parallel Sysplex IBM 9672
Software	IBM Communications Server for OS/390 IBM OS/390 IBM IMS
Hardware	IBM 3746 Nways® Multiprotocol Controller (Model 900) IBM 3745 Nways Communications Controller

ASLK-CGER in Brussels Belgium

APPN delivers high availability and reliable performance.

The budgetary law passed in 1980 divided ASLK-CGER into a bank and an insurance company. The bank, placed on an equal footing with commercial banks, began to develop corporate and international business. In 1993, the Belgian government privatized both organizations. In the same year, Fortis, a Dutch- Belgian insurance and banking group, acquired control of ASLK-CGER. As a result, the bank concentrates more than ever on the domestic market and is now one of the top commercial banks in Belgium.

Investing in quality realtime online services

The bank's corporate applications run in two data centers which are linked with a number of 2-Mb high-speed links. The data centers operate IBM® OS/390® software on two production, two development and two test systems. In 1997, the data centers delivered 99.7% availability to a network of about 8,000 SNA logical units (LUs) installed at ASLK-CGER headquarters and 1,100 branch offices and processed 3.5 million Information Management System (IMS™) transactions per day.

A remarkable aspect of the bank's online systems is that all customer transactions originating from its own branch network or from home banking, and received between 6:00 and 23:00, are processed in realtime with customer accounts updated immediately.

By the end of 1996, the bank decided to extend these realtime services to its customers through BANKSYS, an independent Belgian bank organization that provides around-the-clock online transactions from many sources, such as automatic cash dispensers and point-of-sale devices installed at gas stations and other public places. ASLK-CGER developed a new IMS application called Online-to-BANKSYS (OLTB) to process transactions received from BANKSYS.

This strategy of extending its online services to a 24-hours per day service level also motivated the bank to upgrade its data center systems with the IBM Parallel Sysplex® system and IBM eNetwork™ Software such as Communications Server for OS/390 and its Advanced Peer-to-Peer Networking® (APPN®) support.

Dynamic networking with APPN

Erik Noppen, Network Systems Manager at ASLK-CGER, is responsible for implementing APPN and is very enthusiastic about the new technology. Erik Noppen explains, "Because APPN is a dynamic, peer-to-peer networking protocol, it takes much less time to define and apply network configuration changes, which saves a lot of time and effort. This also makes it much easier to adapt the network configuration each time a new host image is added in the data centers."

"APPN in the data center was the only way for us to extend our reliable realtime online services to 24-hours per day operations."

Erik Noppen, Network Systems Manager at ASLK-CGER

Erik Noppen also describes the performance benefits, adding, "With the combined IBM technologies of Parallel Sysplex, APPN and IMS Version 6 with its generic resources support, we will be able to extend our realtime online services from 17 hours per day to 24 hours per day and still deliver high availability."
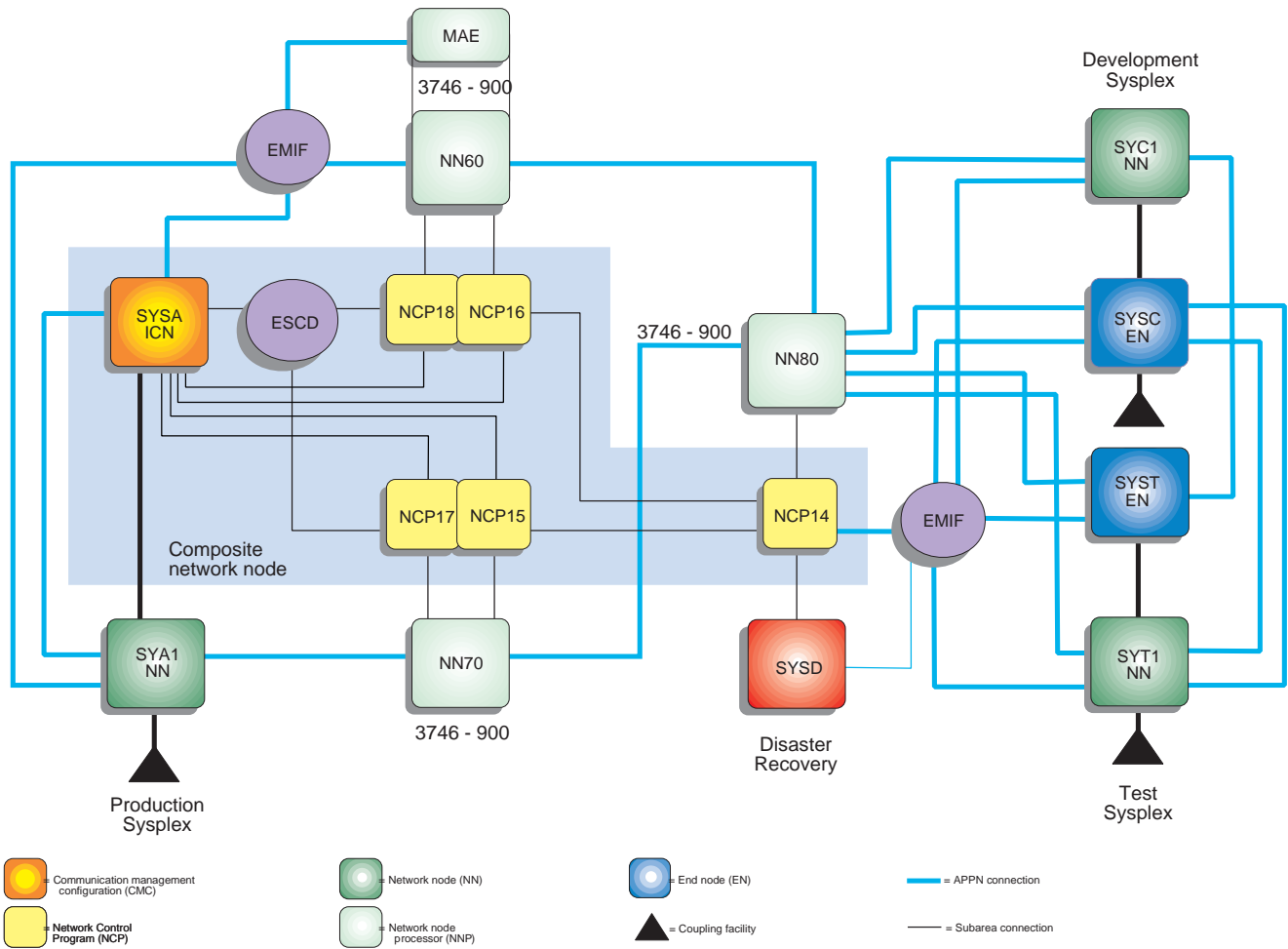
ASLK-CGER had a sophisticated disaster recovery procedure in place for its hierarchical subarea networking protocol and it was important that it continue to operate efficiently after implementing the new peer-to-peer networking protocol. Erik Noppen is confident that he has a good solution in place for managing the dynamics of APPN, based on the central directory server (CDS) and its associated controls.

Erik Noppen appreciates the support his department has received from IBM's local staff in Belgium, as well as the IBM staff in Raleigh, North Carolina, who design and develop the Communications Server for OS/390 and the IBM Installation Support Centre (ISC) at Hursley in the United Kingdom, which provides Product Introduction Programmes for IBM's European customers.

"During our migration to APPN, the IBM team gave us excellent advice on both the technology and the migration phases, and the whole project progressed very smoothly and without any problems."

Erik Noppen, Network Systems Manager at ASLK-CGER

Future implementation plans
ASLK-CGER plans to extend the high availability into the network with High-Performance Routing (HPR), which provides features such as multinode persistent sessions (MNPS) for application recovery, dynamic path switching and the adaptive rate-based congestion flow-control mechanism.

MAE

3746 - 900

EMIF

NN60

Development Sysplex

SYC1 NN

NCP18 NCP16

SYSA ICN

ESCD

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NN80

SYSC EN

Composite network node

NCP17 NCP15

NCP14

EMIF

SYST EN

SYA1 NN

NN70

SYSD

SYT1 NN

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Disaster Recovery

Production Sysplex

Test Sysplex

= Communication management configuration (CMC)

= Network Control Program (NCP)

= Network node (NN)

= Network node processor (NNP)

= End node (EN)

= Coupling facility

= APPN connection

= Subarea connection

ASLK-CGER data centers configuration design for APPN/HPR

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