

To EURIM Members and Observers
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THE EUROPEAN
INFORMATION
SOCIETY GROUP

EURIM



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1 The Transformational Government Dialogues

Putting flesh on the Service Transformation Agreement

As anticipated, the EURIM programme of “political dialogues” is well timed to help stimulate constructive debate on the implementation of the “Service Transformation Agreement”, now available at http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/B/9/pbr_csr07_service.pdf as part of the package released with the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The witnesses agreed for the first session, scheduled for 14.00 - 16.00 on 8th November in the Thatcher Room, are Sir David Varney, Naomi Eisenstadt (Social Exclusion Task Force), Judy Walker (Citizens’ Advice) and Councillor Kevin Wilson. This session is intended to cover the improved delivery of socially inclusive services: given that those in most need are commonly those least likely to be reached via current generation on-line products and services, whether public or private. The evidence received to date is at www.eurim.org/activities/tgdialogues/outputs.php and the questions that need to be addressed in this area are available from Dave Wright davywright2@ntlworld.com.

The second session, on 22nd November, will cover the challenge of organising genuine partnerships across and between central and local government departments and agencies, voluntary/community organisations and the private sector (small as well as large): as opposed to dominant players coercing others to adopt their patterns of working. The expected witnesses include Stephen Sears (CEO Social Enterprise), Anne Blackmore (Head of Policy, NCVO) and Jonathan Bland (Chair Social Enterprise Coalition).

The third session, on 6th December, is due to address the means of ensuring that consultations involve those most affected, (e.g. service recipients and delivery intermediaries) and that performance monitoring and reporting reflect their experience of delivery and priorities. Witnesses include John Suffolk (Government CIO), Nigel Tyrell (Love Lewisham) and Paul Hodgkin (Patient Opinion).

Not all the participating MPs, MEPs and Peers can attend all the sessions but at least ten have confirmed for each session, subject of course to Parliamentary business. We have also begun the process of lining up photo-opportunities and one-on-one interviews between witnesses, parliamentarians and journalists. Additional parliamentary participants are of course welcome (please e-mail Dave Wright davywright2@ntlworld.com) and a pre-briefing has been arranged for the afternoon of 6th November. Those wishing to join the team organising press cover should e-mail virgo.philip@eurim.org

There is no deadline for submissions (send to dialogues@eurim.org) but material in those received after the end of November is unlikely to be included in the first report(s). Those wishing their submissions to have maximum impact are also asked, wherever appropriate and possible, to include “human interest” examples (where possible with eye-catching photographs) to illustrate how those in most need have been helped and/or the impact on those involved in front-line delivery.

Please contact Dave Wright davywright2@ntlworld.com to participate.

2) Internet Governance: Best Practice and Reality

Clear support in principle for a UK Internet Governance Forum to “walk the talk”

On 11th October the Department for Business (on behalf of Government) and Nominet hosted a pre-IGF consultation conference. The main purpose of this event was to consult widely with the Industry and other stakeholders on the views that should be put forward at the Internet Governance Forum in Rio in November 2007. The Nominet Best Practice Awards, judged by an expert panel chaired by Rt Hon Alun Michael MP, were presented during the Conference by the Minister of State, Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP.

The Conference was also asked to endorse the approach to Internet Governance set out in a paper by Alun Michael http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ecrime/AM_NominetWorkshopSummary.pdf and to agree to “the establishment of a UN Internet Governance Forum (UK IGF) in which Government, Industry, Parliament and representatives of Civil Society will work together on internet issues from a UK perspective and seek to influence the international agenda”. This proposal was indeed strongly supported and a straw poll indicated that of the four IGF Themes (Access, Diversity, Openness, and Security), Security was the overwhelming priority for action at the UK level (more votes than all the other themes added together). It was also top of the priorities for action at international level - although support was much more evenly spread.

The EURIM Council subsequently agreed that support for the creation of such a Forum, in partnership with others, would be the main role of the EURIM Communications Regulation Group in 2008. The intention of Council would be for that Group to play a supporting role akin to that which it had with regard to the formation of Ofcom and it will need to be restructured and resourced accordingly. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org if you would like an invitation to a planning meeting that will be scheduled shortly after the report-back meeting (yet to be arranged) for the UK delegation to the IGF in Rio.

3) The Parliament and the Internet Conference

Tackling crime and achieving confidence in the on-line world

There was strong support in the break out session organised by EURIM at the Parliament and the Internet conference on 18th October for developing a practical and comprehensive approach to tackling crime and nuisance in the on-line world. There are growing concerns about criminals turning to the Internet to commit old crimes and invent new ones. The impact is not out of proportion with offline forms of criminal activity but the potential is enormous in terms of speed, penetration and multiple attacks. The police response is important but will deal only with an appropriate range of offences and cannot deal with a lot of low-level nuisance that causes public concern.

The UK is already working on a positive approach to governance - arguing for partnership between Government, Parliament, Industry and Civil Society through a United Kingdom Internet Government Forum. It is proposed that the same four-part governance oversees an industry-led “complaints unit” to better target corrective action – an approach which would complement both the proposed Police Central Unit and the Fraud Reporting Centre which is now being established. Support for the formation of such a unit is expected to be the main task for the EURIM e-Crime group in 2008. Once again this is a major task and the group will need to be restructured and resourced accordingly.

The discussion paper “Tackling crime and achieving confidence in the on-line world” is available at http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ecrime/PIC07_AdvanceNote.pdf. The back-up appendices, which summarise the current state of play in the UK, with embedded links to the web sites of all the main players and initiatives, can be accessed from <http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ecrime/outputs.php>

The breathtaking vision of the One-per-child initiative

The final session of the Parliament and the Internet Conference was a presentation by Nicholas Negroponte of the “One per Child” computer initiative - a cheap, robust child-powered (through a crank) laptop. The device is also claimed to be faster and more secure than most conventional laptops because of its use of stripped-out open-source software in place of conventional western “bloatware”. Moreover it has a slot for a Windows card, three USB ports in place of the normal two, for add-ons

and phenomenal wireless connectivity. It could therefore have the potential to render twenty years of hardware and software development obsolete and change the direction and location of product, service and content development.

4) Information Sharing at the Heart of Government

And all shall have initiatives

The Service Transformation Agreement www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/B/9/pbr_csr07_service.pdf, summarises the data sharing plans of the main central government departments. There are a great many of them and the Ministry of Justice has responsibility for leading a cross-government programme to overcome barriers to data sharing and for rationalising the 1500 helplines operated or funded by central or local government. Meanwhile the IPS has been given lead responsibility for Identity Management policy. Given that there is no reference to “organisational identities”, other than in the context of individual departmental plans, it is unclear where policy on these sits, if anywhere.

The interlocking issues of information assurance, security and sharing and of identity and authorisation management, both individual and organisational, go to the heart of many agendas, both public and private, from fraud reduction to service improvement. It is also apparent that much practical experience, painfully gained by the private sector over many decades, particularly in financial services, is unknown to most of those responsible for policy formation.

Three members of the EURIM Council, Stephen Darvill (LogicaCMG), Terence Sandiford (Experian) and Simon Parker (WS Atkins) have therefore agreed to organise a review meeting to discuss a possible major exercise to help change the nature of debate in this area. This would almost certainly entail co-operation with organisations such as IdenTrust, Intellect and the National Computing Centre. Those interested in participation, bearing in mind that the exercise is likely to need serious resources, should e-mail eurim@eurim.org for an invitation to join the planning group.

In the meantime, a review meeting on 25th October confirmed that the recommendations in the revised report of the EURIM Data Sharing sub-group dovetail with the expected plans and priorities of the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Information Commissioner. The final draft of the Data Sharing Protocols Briefing will be circulated to the Personal Identity Group list shortly for comment and approval; if you are not currently a member of the Group but would like to view the document at this stage, please email eurim@eurim.org for an electronic copy. The planned follow up exercise with SOCITM and others to produce an exemplar for Local Government, using the ICOs new “Code of Practice”, could also help break an expected “log jam” of planned departmental and agency exercises, each “seeking to impose their own semi-incompatible codes on their supposed partners”.

The current Regional Centres of Excellence and the council-led Improvement Partnerships are due to be merged to form ‘Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships’ (RIEPs) as part of the ‘National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy’, that is due for publication early in 2008. See www.publicsectorforums.co.uk/Nimoi/sites/CMForum/resources/Value%20for%20Money%20in%20Local%20Government%20-%20Draft%20Report.pdf for details.

The RIEPs will “develop and lead implementation of the Regional Strategies to be published early next year”. A RIEP would be an appropriate body for implementing the Group’s recommendation for co-operation with the Ministry of Justice on a feasibility study for a single over-arching model sharing protocol, although it is recognised that DCLG will retain a coordinating role and need to provide a central overview and help facilitate the sharing of information at regional and national level.

5) Standards for Identity Management

The interoperability of identity management systems touches raw nerves

The idea of a neutral exercise to create a database of information on current standards to help support the work of the new cross-Government Identity Management Standards Policy Group went down very well with both members and observers, not just because of the benefits to government and its suppliers. Those who already run large-scale identity management systems around the world are

commonly looking for improved interoperability, including with governments (i.e. not just that of the UK) and would also benefit.

The planned wiki is now operational and the sections covering existing standards for technical, data, process, mapping and information assurance are being populated. This is, however, potentially a major exercise and the EURIM Council has requested a review of objectives, funding and partnership arrangements to make best use of the opportunity.

6) Review of Members' Priorities

Balancing objectives, priorities and resources

Margaret Moran's personal survey of members' priorities earlier this year revealed a number of areas for action. These include changes to communications with members and to the website to improve clarity as to our objectives, priorities, action plans and deliverables. Plans to address these were, however, put on hold pending the outcome of discussions on co-operation between the all-party groups. The way ahead is now clear, with plans for co-operation on programme planning rather than re-structuring. The EURIM Council has therefore asked that the postponed three-year planning exercise (i.e. to cover deliverables during the run-up to the next general election and in the period afterwards) be progressed.

The first stage is to ask all groups to review their objectives and priorities for 2008 and how they plan to achieve them, including through partnerships with others. Some of the objectives are ambitious, requiring a "step change" in resources and commitment (see some of the sections above). Rather than say these are "too ambitious" we have asked the Groups to look at sponsorship, secondees, interns and joint ventures as well as considering who else they wish to see involved and organising their own targeted recruitment exercises accordingly, albeit with support and follow up from EURIM's admin office.

We will need to expand the professional support team but wish to resource this by recruiting more members rather than by raising subscriptions. Some of the joint ventures may well, however, need to be separately funded.

Margaret Moran plans to write to members next month, summarising the feedback she received, the actions already taken in response and current forward plans. She will again be asking for comment, direct to her. In the meantime, any comments sent to me will be reported to her at our next monthly review.

7) Reskilling the UK Workforce

Workforce updating, reskilling and continuous professional development

The survey earlier this year revealed only one common priority among members for a new work stream: over half of all respondents wanted us to address the issues of IT skills and professionalism.

We had left this to one side because of the activities of E-Skills and ProfIT but the omission of action in this space from the PSA Delivery Agreement "Improve the Skills of the Population" shows that we were wrong to do so. That omission was not surprising given that all discussion on skills at the party conferences last year and this ended up with debates about school standards and funding. It is, however, very serious - especially because ICT appears to have been dropped from the list of STEM subjects for which public funding for second degrees and conversion courses is available.

Ian Stewart MP has therefore agreed to chair a new group to start work in the New Year. It aims to bring together employers and unions (and their constituency MPs and parliamentary members) as well as the industry's trade associations, professional bodies and sector skills councils. As well as agreeing a way forward, the group will seek to turn up the heat - politically - so as to ensure rapid and effective action before the damage to our higher level skills base is terminal.