

To EURIM Members and Observers
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THE EUROPEAN
INFORMATION
SOCIETY GROUP

EURIM



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1) The Successful Delivery of Better Public Service

Why do we never learn?

There have been many recent events on the means of improving project success rates but, as speakers at the “Govt 2.0 or Truly Transformative Government” (Oxford Internet Institute and POST) seminar on 22nd January (http://webcast.oii.ox.ac.uk/?view=Webcast&ID=20080125_209) pointed out, we have known these for over 30 years. That meeting began with gems such as “Don’t reinvent the wheel: steal with pride”. However, it then ranged much wider: “Mechanised compassion means discrimination, service denial, frustration and loss of dignity”, “User centred like a laser guided bomb in Faluja” and “This is best viewed as a £50,000 project with a £100 million of consultancy on top”. There was also one very interesting answer to the question of why we never learn. Failure by the rules is commonly well rewarded (promotion, cost-plus over runs, consultancy etc.). But the punishment for breaking them can be savage, however successful the results. The event was chaired and attended by members of the EURIM Transformational Government team who acquired some interesting new questions for our next hearing, with John Suffolk. This has been rescheduled for 5th March.

2) Secure Information Sharing and Identity Management

Most participants in the meeting on 18th January to discuss the EURIM response to Data Sharing policy review <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/data-sharing-review-consultation.htm> (deadline for response 15th February) were also involved in making responses via other channels. The meeting report summarizing the discussion and the areas of agreement for the EURIM submission is at <http://www.eurim.org.uk/members/pi/080118pireport.pdf>. Please send any comments to Dave Wright davywright2@ntlworld.com.

Further work is being done on:

- the nature of consent (e.g. how voluntary, informed and/or renewable does it need to be?);
- data breach notification (e.g. should it be different/necessary, if data is encrypted?);
- reasons for the failure to make effective use of existing technologies to improve security;
- the international dimension.(lessons, comparisons and cross-border systems and transfers).

The meeting had difficulty mapping its discussions onto the questions asked in the on-line response form for the consultation. The meeting looking at the DIUS consultation on Innovation Strategy, (see below), had a similar problem. This approach may simplify the job of those collating results from such consultations, (we used it ourselves for the survey of members’ priorities last year), but can also serve to narrow debate and reduce the likelihood of innovative and creative answers to difficult questions.

The sub-group report on Information Sharing Protocols was circulated for comment and is undergoing final review for issue as a Group Position paper. There is concern over the widespread failure to appreciate that several very large scale, secure, fast response, on-line, information sharing, identity management and transaction authorisation services are already fully operational, nationally and internationally, using standards and protocols negotiated and implemented by the private sector. Building on these and the experience of those running them could offer opportunities to dramatically reduce the cost of secure public sector services. The group is therefore planning high profile briefing events on *operational* experience to date, drawing on the experience of the Financial Services industries and on the current state of plans for future co-operation on inter-operable infrastructures for authentication/authorisation inter-operability, in co-operation with the Liberty Alliance and others.

3) Communications Convergence and the UK Internet Governance Forum

EURIM members and observers are invited to the first UK Internet Governance Forum, Thursday 6th March, 16.00 - 18.00 in the Attlee Suite. This has all-party parliamentary support from, PITCOM, EURIM and ApComm and is presented by Nominet in collaboration with the Department for Business. The event will feature a report back from the IGF in Rio and launch of the 2008 “Best Practice Challenge”.

The key components of the UK IGF are:

- Plan of action from now until the Delhi IGF (December 2008)
- Best Practice Challenge 2008
- Crime Reduction Partnership
- Promoting grass-roots on-line participation
- Supporting the dynamic collation between child protection and free speech organisations:

4) E-Crime: Moves Towards Rationalisation and Co-operation

The forward programme of the EURIM E-Crime Group will have two main strands; the “Crime Reduction Partnership” component within the UK-IGF and consultations on Government policy, secondary legislation, regulations and “industry standards”.

On 30th January, at a meeting of PITCOM, the Earl of Erroll and Lord O’Neill introduced a “robust” discussion of the Government response to report House of Lords select committee report on Personal Internet Safety, including the committee’s plans for follow up. The members of the committee were concerned that the inability to report possible widespread frauds where individual victims were losing “sums which might cost them their monthly mortgage repayment” meant that the UK was now a safe haven for e-criminals. “We wanted to get further than informed debate. There’s a lack of action in the government response. If someone doesn’t take some leadership, the civil service won’t have the clout to say to their masters that we need some budget to sort this out.”

On 18th March there will be a joint meeting of PITCOM, EURIM and the All Party Policing and Identity Fraud Groups on Partnership Policing at which the intention is to have an update on current plans on the part of law enforcement and industry and how these link together.

Meanwhile, a dozen of the professional bodies and industry groups concerned with combating e-crime in the UK have come together to form the “Information Security Awareness Forum”. This will be launched on 12th February with an invitation to others to join them.

The initial projects include:

- supporting the petition on the Number 10 website to get the proposed Police National E-Crime Unit funded and operational <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/ecrime/> (signatures deadline 29th February)
- co-operation between industry (users as well as suppliers) and Get Safe On-line <http://www.getsafeonline.org/> on customer/parent awareness campaigns
- a “Director’s Guide” for those who are legally responsible for when things go wrong in large organisations (based on updating existing material produced by IAAC and others).

Several EURIM members are on the Forum organising committee and I can provide contact details to those who wish to give statement of support and help deliver, not just discuss

5) Reskilling the UK Workforce: and Breeding More Golden Geese

Discussion at the planning meeting on 29th January confirmed members’ concern over the apparent lack of priority for turning the rhetoric of the Leitch Report into action to encourage investment in improving and updating the skills of the current UK workforce.

Workforce updating is outside the plans and objectives contained in the recent Public Service Agreement www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/A/5/pbr_csr07_psa2.pdf on “Ensuring a world-class skills base by 2020”, published as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. Moreover many current funding arrangements come to an end on 31st March.

There was much discussion as to what was being done by others but several of those present felt that policy and priorities, including the failure to seriously consult employers and respond to their needs and concerns, had not changed over ten, twenty, thirty years. Most current discussion at the policy level was said to be a simple repeat of that of 25 years ago, even including a replication of the then gulf between events attended by education suppliers (Universities, colleges, public funding agencies and their contractors) and those attended by employers (personnel managers, recruiters, trainers etc). In consequence political action is focussed almost entirely on first entry education (school, college, university or “remedial”) while the skills of many of those already in the workforce atrophy, with neither updating nor upgrading. This problem is becoming very much worse as global competition makes it cheaper to outsource offshore than meet the after-tax cost of re-training.

There was therefore felt to be a new urgency, at least on the part of the professional bodies and trade associations, about addressing long standing issues. But there is a limit to what they can achieve, even with the support of committed back-bench MPs, unless they have the wholehearted support of major employers who wish to continue to base high-value added operations in the UK and of trade unions who wish their members to remain employable. It is, however, still unclear whether there is the “will” to undertake the political action necessary to change forty-year-old funding strategies.

The current EURIM strategy is therefore to support the EURIM parliamentary members on the DIUS and Treasury Select Committees with relevant information and contacts while sounding out the Corporate members as to whether there is the “will” for a serious campaign to change long-standing bi-partisan political priorities.

Meanwhile, Intellect, e-Skills, BCS and CPHC will be trying to bridge the gap between the ICT industry and the University ICT departments on the 1st and 2nd April at the University of Greenwich and several members of the EURIM council are on the organising committee.

6) Updating the DIUS Science and Innovation Strategy

DIUS has extended the deadline for response to its strategy consultation to 14th February. The meeting on 28th January to discuss responses was particularly concerned over the failure to ask questions about the definition and measurement of success. The EURIM response, copied to our Parliamentary members on the DIUS Select Committee, is now on the website at <http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ukcomp/0801DIUSresponse.pdf> and suggests that the definition of success should be:

- the existence of wealth-creating employment and businesses;
- achieving social outcomes (for instance tackling climate change).

The response also calls for the measures of success should be determined in terms of outputs rather than inputs and benchmarked against our competitors. It criticises the use of “visibility” and “investment” as “measures of success”. They are not. At best they are inputs. The measures should include outputs such as the number of taxable wealth creators in the UK.

There are needs to:

- refocus academic reward structures away from volumes of citations and publications and towards support for excellence in innovation and exploitation.
- encourage the development of a sustainable skills base in the UK with fiscal incentives for training and skills development.

- promote investment around existing clusters of excellence (such as Cambridge and Southampton for technology, Newcastle for marine engineering and the “Severn Triangle” (bounded by Swindon, Cardiff and Malvern) for electronic security) rather than fund artificial new centres.

A particular concern was for Government to be a better listener, to *act* on feedback and to stop confusing research with innovation. They are not the same. “Research turns money into ideas: innovation turns ideas into money”. It was commented that the UK academic research base responds very accurately to its current incentive structure. Its ability to exploit current government processes is also extremely innovative. The need was to better harness that ability, in order to help the economy and society as a whole.

Government needs to move on and understand the role of the UK in a global economy, making the UK the place where key members of innovation teams want to bring up their families and where globally competitive businesses can grow (tax, regulation, skills, infrastructure).

It should not try to set technology priorities, instead it should focus its efforts on supporting those where the UK is already a key node in existing global innovation chains – such as those for open source development where HMG is itself “the absent partner”. And one of its most important roles is to enable the universities to better respond (including to their own advantage) when industry is seeking solutions and partners, rather than merely compete incestuously for research council funding.

7) EURIM Three Year Strategy

On 29th January the EURIM Council discussed forward priorities in the light of feedback from the members’ survey last year. During the discussion it was said by those present that “long term” the work on Knowledge Economy was the most important. However, that of the Personal Identity Group was the most urgent. The reason was that, until there is confidence in the ability of government to securely store and share personal information, there will be a policy and procurement logjam that will delay the delivery of better public services at lower cost. EURIM was felt to be in a unique position to help remove that logjam.

The Council approved the recruitment of two additional part-time rapporteurs to help resource the work needed, including better co-ordination with partners, and asked the working groups to produce Three Year Strategies, including for the recruitment and sponsorship to resource their plans to turn recommendation into action. The caveat for the staff recruitment is that we also need to recruit the additional corporate membership and/or sponsorship to cover the additional cost.

The working group strategies are due to be ready for discussion at the AGM on 29th April. Details of their planning meetings will be circulated over the next month as these are arranged and I would very much welcome feedback on your priorities, including those you wish to see progressed via EURIM and those progressed via others or in partnership. Views as to who is best placed to organise, lead and resource any partnership would be particularly welcome.