

To EURIM Members and Observers
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The Information
Society Alliance

EURIM



EURIM Newsletter October 2008

1) Involving the Leaders of the Future in Political Debate on the Knowledge Economy

How change in local communities is altering priorities for MPs and election candidates

Planning is well advanced for the workshop on 26th November with Local Futures, Bow Group, Fabians and Intellect/BCS Young Professionals, hosted by IBM UK, on the impact of the new political economy.

John Fisher of Local Futures will introduce the discussion followed by responses from Chris Mole MP (Parliamentary chair of the EURIM Knowledge Economy Group), Tom Flynn (Policy office for the Young Fabians and a prospective parliamentary candidate) and Christine Leslie (Editor of Cross and also a candidate). We are awaiting confirmation of a Conservative MP to complete the balance.

This is the first meeting to which we will be inviting prospective parliamentary candidates as well as current parliamentarians. We are also looking at topics for follow up debates that will similarly attract the would-be politicians and industry leaders of the future and for partners to host such events, either on their own premises or elsewhere. Please e-mail Lucy Fairbrother fairbrotherl@parliament.uk for an invitation for the 26th or to offer assistance with the forward programme as hosts or sponsors.

2) The Directors' Forum on Information Governance Gathers Pace

This is too important to be left to politicians, regulators and retired professionals

Recent illustrations of the weakness of current regulatory regimes mean that the Directors' Forum on Information Governance will be all too timely. The first advance discussion paper, a fiery analysis of problems, is on the website but on the 24th November we wish to look at how to remove counter-productive regulation, rather than merely add new layers.

Sir James Crosby has agreed to do a short keynote to open discussion. We will then invite three or four brief presentations from among those who have sent in discussion papers. Those already agreed as participants in the subsequent round table include several with current responsibility for keeping the boards of regulated businesses around the world, (not just the UK, EU and US) out of jail, plus some of those at the top of the major audit, legal and security practices who advise them.

Members and observers are reminded that we particularly wish to be able to circulate advance papers on how to create the political climate and processes that will lead to constructive change and genuinely better regulation - not just commentaries on what is wrong. Among those who have so far to help with the event, including organising advance papers, are the BCS, IoD, ICAEW, Law Society, Intellect and Centre for Policy Studies. We are in discussion with others and expect to add to the list shortly. We should also have space at the round table for about a hundred advisors and observers.

Please e-mail Ed Phelps Phelpse@parliament.uk if you would like to submit a discussion paper, attend as an observer or volunteer a Main Board Director, your Company Secretary, Senior Partner or equivalent for the round table itself: we still have half a dozen places. More details at: www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ig/drt081124.php

3) Achieving the Reform of Public Service Delivery

Dragon's Den for Department of Work and Pensions innovations

The ideas that emerged from the review of the EURIM Transformational Government follow up programme included a 'Dragon's Den' exercise in which prospective innovators would pitch delivery ideas to a panel of experts drawn from the public, private and third sectors. The 'contestants' would be selected from among those offering supposedly viable ideas for efficient and effective services. After the contestants' presentations, the Dragons would probe the proposal and select those they would be willing to support.

It was hoped that such an exercise might afford an opportunity to respond innovatively to James Purnell's offer to consider direct funding for ideas that seem to offer a real prospect of greater success within the current 'Welfare Reform' consultation. We had a most positive response and a planning meeting, chaired by Margaret Moran MP, has been organised for 23rd October with the Delivery Director of the Right to Bid Team. Contact Dave Wright davywright2@ntlworld.com for details.

Towards a "Citizen Experiential" workshop

The other ideas that the EURIM Public Service Delivery programme is evaluating include a 'citizen experiential' workshop. The aim of this would be to develop shared insights into delivery challenges from a citizen's perspective and gain practical understanding of the issues and obstacles in particular areas. As a result, evidence-based recommendations could be proposed on ways forward that enhance customer access to services, at the same time as engaging with front-line practitioners and providers to promote a shared sense of journey, responsibility and achievement.

Making a reality of the recommendations on the role of Select Committees

We have received some very thoughtful and constructive feedback on the recommendations in the report from the Transformational Government dialogues concerning the potential role of the select committees: www.eurim.org.uk/activities/tgdialogues/TGD_IntegratedReport.pdf. These do indeed involve significant change and it is clear that more work is needed to think through the implications and persuade others of the desirability and practicality. A meeting will be organised to discuss this and follow up accordingly.

Successful delivery

It was also apparent at the party conferences that there is widespread scepticism over the ability of the public sector to deliver large ICT systems successfully. A number of requests have been received to help "inform" Think Tank studies on this topic and the consequences for policy. I have taken the personal view that, rather than ask the EURIM Council to approve any addition to an already ambitious forward programme, these should be passed to the BCS, IMIS and Intellect for professional response. I would, however, welcome feedback on this "decision" since others may feel differently. I would, in any case, be happy to provide details of the requests to any members who wished to assist such studies direct.

4) Creating a UK-Crime Reduction Partnership

Bringing the initiatives together into a coherent, over-arching partnership

Alun Michael will open the EURIM workshop at the Parliament and the Internet Conference on 16th October by describing the progress to date in tackling crime in the on-line world. We aim to deal comprehensively with antisocial activity that uses the internet and to make the UK "the safest place to do business on-line". At an excellent "scoping meeting" this week we decided to undertake three case studies to define the difference that Partnership approach could make. Safety and confidence are big issues for (i) schools (ii) elderly users and (iii) small firms. In each case knowledgeable and experienced partners will help us identify the right architecture for the Partnership by asking "what can the Partnership do for you?" We are also working with the Information Security Awareness Forum and others on a "Parliamentary Guide to Managing Information Risk".

That partnership can succeed only if it has full support from Industry, Government, Parliament and "Civil Society". In parallel, law enforcement must be resourced and organised to play its part - which

means support for the establishment of the Police Central E-crime Unit and engagement with it. Given the importance to business and the public of tackling fraud and the shift towards on-line fraud, the Partnership and the Unit need to work closely with the National Fraud Strategic Authority and the City Police, as lead force on Fraud.

The protection of children is crucial and the partnership framework also needs to fully embrace support for initiatives such as the Internet Watch Foundation and the new Council for Child Internet Safety. The other main initiatives with regard to on-line crime and security include Get Safe On-line, the new Business Crime Reduction Centre and the Olympic WARP (Warning, Advice and Reporting Partnership) that is about to be created.

One of the issues for discussion will be how to ensure that debate over funding, support and co-operation is in the context of making it much easier for industry to work with all relevant initiatives rather than having to choose. "There should be no wrong portal". That entails paying up-front attention to how the various initiatives can and should support each other rather than compete for scarce time and resource.

5) EU and UK Communications Policy and Regulatory Structures

Stimulating investment in the future as opposed to protecting the past.

The seminar on High Capacity Broadband, hosted by Alcatel Lucent in Paris on 22nd September, was a great success. The subsequent votes in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the 23rd, including the amendments (e.g. to remove content regulation) to the Commission proposals, appear to have been widely welcomed.

It was, however, interesting to note that comment at the party conference fringe meetings on new media issues was sharply critical of some of the assumptions behind current policy. It is clear that the Audio-Visual Media Services Directive, with its ban on product placement (unless permitted by national exemptions) and its assumptions on how broadcast advertising models work, will be out of date before it is implemented. Meanwhile the rapid growth of mobile broadband via USB modems (already 30% of connections in, for example, Austria) appears to have caught many by surprise.

Meanwhile the planned timetables for investment in "21CN" networks need to be viewed in the context of the massive "hump" in bandwidth demand that the 2012 Olympics will bring, nationally as well as locally around the venues.

The CIAO review and Broadband Stakeholder Group report on the costs of bringing broadband to the whole of the UK, should therefore be used to open up debate on how to ensure timely investment in next generation broadband, including business and local access to full inter-active video, not just one-way streaming. This will almost certainly require using radio spectrum to the full because there will not be the time, let alone political support, for digging up the streets of Britain again.

6) Workforce Skills are back on the agenda

80% of the workforce in 2012 has already left full-time education

Last year the debates and fringe meetings at the party conferences on skills were all about school standards and numbers going to university. This year saw the beginnings of serious discussion on the need to invest in workforce skills as a whole, from "post 19 apprenticeships" to mature entry and cross-training for skills at all levels.

This will, hopefully, ease the work of the EURIM skills group in creating a cross-party alliance to lobby for effective action to rebuild the UK's frameworks for maintaining and updating the skills of those already in the workforce so that they can survive in a world of outsourcing and offshoring.

One of the key findings from EURIM's past work in this area is the need for a wholesale rationalisation and streamlining of the current plethora of unrepresentative consultation mechanisms so that trades unions, professional bodies and employers can better work together to ensure that what

is planned meets the needs of their current and future members and staff. That almost certainly means strengthening the resources and authority of those sector skills councils which genuinely represent the industries they are supposedly there to serve - so that they can also provide “industry strength” market intelligence on evolving skills needs to current and would-be training and education providers.

7) E-participation Meeting with Pan-European Stakeholders

Margaret Moran MP (EURIM Chair) will be addressing a small gathering of e-democracy speakers and e-participation experts from Europe on November 12th in W1. The agenda for the meeting will be a short talk from Margaret about her past e-participation work followed by a briefing from members from the Pan European e-Participation Network (PEP-Net – pep-net.eu) on what PEP-Net is and its work, plus the state of play of e-participation in their part of the world. This will hopefully lead to a debate about e-participation and its various incarnations around Europe, plus a discussion of best practice.