

To EURIM Members and Observers
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The Information
Society Alliance
EURIM



EURIM Newsletter May 2010

1) Welcoming the New Intake

Programme for the Class of 2010 and the onset of Coalition and Co-opetition

13 of our Parliamentary Associates were elected giving us a current total of 49 MPs in membership plus 23 successful candidates who have shown interest but not yet joined. 5 of our previous Parliamentary members are now in the Coalition Cabinet. We have agreed to work with PITCOM (the All-Party IT Committee) and ApComms (the All-Party Group covering Communications and Internet issues) and others on a joint briefing and recruitment programme for the new intake.

Our contribution will include themed receptions on 6th July, “Securing the jobs of the future for your constituency: including with broadband access” and on 14th July, after the AGM, “Privacy and Liberty versus Service and Security?” The EURIM working groups (see below) are working on briefing material to be made available via the website and the Commons Library and on events up to and including the party conference season. The groups are increasingly working in partnership with others to draw on relevant expertise and reduce duplication of effort while maintaining balance and quality. Our own governance structures are on the website and we will soon be issuing formal invitations to all parliamentary and corporate members, new and old, to stand for the Governing Council at the AGM. We will also be approaching MPs with a particular interest in the areas we cover to join the board and/or become parliamentary monitors, ensuring that our programmes are both relevant and balanced. Please e-mail me or contact one of the existing directors if you are interested.

2) Securing the Jobs of the Future for Your Constituency.

Towards policies that foster people and skills -based, environment-friendly industries

The Knowledge Economy group plans a programme of informal meetings for MPs representing constituencies with large numbers of jobs which could move to the far end of the world at short notice: not just call centres but “content” creation or publishing, from games and publishing to high level Research & Design. The objective is to enable them to meet major employers with operations in their constituencies who wish the UK to remain a location of choice for their business: planning, regulation, infrastructure and “where skilled staff want to live, work and bring up their families”. Tax is by no means the only factor and for many businesses is not even the most important.

The aim is to improve mutual understanding and turn potential problems into opportunities, building on previous work such as “A Flourishing Innovation Economy - How the UK must attract and retain Knowledge Based Businesses” http://www.eurim.org.uk/resources/status_reports/0609KEpaper.pdf. The group is in discussion with a number of other groups and the expectation is that the exercise will be joint with major users of technology, including those running knowledge and content “factories”: from Universities and Research Centres to the Music, Film and the other Creative Arts.

One, but only one, of the critical factors is the availability of world-class symmetric broadband. The first event, on 6th July (see above), is therefore linked to the broadband agenda.

Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org to register interest.

3) Delivering More for Less: Improving Delivered Service While Cutting Costs

Moving from rhetoric to action in the adoption of good practice in public service delivery

The Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP, then Financial Secretary to the Treasury, welcomed the summary of good practice in public procurement produced by the Public Service Delivery (PSD) Group last year <http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/pubproc/0909ProcurementSummary.pdf> as “a simple crib sheet ... a useful aide memoire for us all, as well as a succinct summary of what the next generation needs to learn, to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past”. The summary links to a more detailed report which in turn links to authoritative guidance from the Audit Commission, National Audit Office, OGC and others. The problem is not the lack of guidance but that it is so often not followed: particularly “at the top”. In consequence many programmes have been doomed before they were contracted. The aim is to remove ignorance as to what is good practice as an excuse when the next generation of failures comes before the next generation of Select Committee members.

The group is now working on guidance on procuring shared network services, where there is the potential for major savings, reducing delivery costs at the same time as pulling through local access to world-class broadband. Success requires open, transparent, consultative and co-operative approaches that present challenges to those used to “commercially confidential” bids for “big bang” national solutions. Those still pressing for the latter often cite mandatory government “security” requirements as a barrier to innovative approaches. The PSD group is therefore working in parallel on guidance on the procurement of security advice and on the inclusion of security in mainstream procurements.

All the PSD exercises are conducted in co-operation with the relevant professional bodies and reference the relevant guidance material from the Audit Commission, CESC, National Audit Office, OGC and others. The material is unofficial but the observers are most helpful, often organising exercises to fill gaps in their guidance as these are identified. For example CESC organised a briefing http://www.cesg.gov.uk/policy_technologies/biometrics/workshop.shtml on “Public Domain Biometric Applications”. The title is dry but the result was a lively and informative meeting with the heads of nearly 70 public sector programmes in attendance. The slides and notes remain an excellent introduction to the practicalities of using fingerprints or iris and face scans at airports, railway stations or benefit offices. A more recent round table organised with the Audit Commission on Information Quality <http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ig/100222report.pdf> is another example. In both cases the objective was to give well-balanced inputs to enable political and official audiences to better understand the realities behind the claims - not to promote policies or technologies.

Progress reports and draft material are placed on the website as produced, albeit often in the members' area until reviewed and agreed. An example is a report on “Security by afterthought or by design”, for which we have also drafted a succinct summary <http://www.eurim.org.uk/members/ig/sbd/SbyD-DraftSummary.doc>. This is available in draft form in a password-protected area pending the launch of the report and of a follow up exercise to secure action on the recommendations.

The next PSD group meeting, to review progress on current programmes, is on the morning of 9th June, hosted by the City of London Corporation in the City Marketing Suite.

4) Not Just Better Data Protection but Ensuring Public Sector Data is Fit for Purpose

From voter registration through “who owns my identity?” to “is my data correct, let alone secure?”

The group looking at information and identity ownership and governance is also putting briefing material online as it is agreed. This already includes material on topics such as “From toxic liability to strategic asset: unlocking the value of information” http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ig/0911-Value_Summary.pdf and “Security by afterthought or by design” <http://www.eurim.org.uk/members/ig/sbd/SbyD-DraftSummary.doc>. A core message is that serious problems with both information quality and systems security have to be addressed for the public to have genuine confidence in online public services.

On 26th May the Identity Governance sub-group received a presentation by Stephen Donnelly of the Prudential on the issues they face, operating within the identity governance regimes of most of the world's major economies, including the Americas, China, India and Japan, as well as the EU. This helped put UK debate into global context as part of a study into the issues that need to be addressed if the UK is to be a location of choice for identity services that could be based anywhere in the world, rather than reliant on outsourced call-centres and personal databases located in Asia and the Americas. The sub-group next meets on 30th June to review a brief on the issues that the new government will need to address in this area.

On the afternoon of 8th June CILIP will host a meeting of the Quality sub-group (following up on discussions at the workshop described in Section 3 above), to review the draft briefing material that they have been tasked to produce before the summer recess.

On the morning of 15th June the Voter Registration sub-group has a meeting on "Reforming the UK Electoral Registration System – what can we learn from abroad?" This will focus on electronic Individual Voter Registration (eVR), and will hear presentations from representatives of the Danish and Norwegian embassies on how individual voter registration schemes have been implemented in their countries, the issues that had to be addressed and the problems encountered. This sub-group team has established links with the Electoral Commission, suppliers to the MoJ, and other relevant organisations as well as with representatives from other overseas embassies. The aim is to inform MPs and senior officials on how eVR in Great Britain might best be implemented, as provided for by the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009. Given experiences in the recent election and the comments of the Commonwealth Observers this topic has become of great interest.

Please email eurim@eurim.org to register for any of these events or to go on the circulation list for the Information Governance Group as a whole, or any of the sub-groups: on basic principles, value of information, quality of information, security by design, ID governance and voter registration.

5) Making the Internet a Safe Place to Learn, Relax, Shop and Do Business

From child protection and consumer education to making the UK unsafe for e-criminals

The main current activity of the E-Crime group is to support the creation of the e-Crime Reduction Partnership announced in the Digital Britain Report, with more detail in the more recent Government E-Crime Strategy <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm78/7842/7842.pdf>. In the short term we are assembling material to brief the new intake of MPs on how the various current and planned initiatives might come together as the partnership gathers pace. The other audience for this material is those in industry who wish to participate in exercises to help protect their businesses and their customers.

The website <http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/e-crime/e-crime.php> includes past papers which need updating, such as a "map" of players and issues produced for the ACPO E-Crime Conference two years ago http://www.eurim.org.uk/members/e-crime/E-CrimeAtlas_Draft.doc as well as new material. For example there is an up to date (as of May 2010) briefing note on current Child Protection initiatives http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/e-crime/CEOP_Briefing.pdf from CEOP (the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Agency). CEOP has also offered personalised briefings for MPs: e-mail eurim@eurim.org and we will forward your details (note this offer is for parliamentary members only). Other material already mounted, linked to or in the pipeline includes material on Get Safe Online <http://www.getsafeonline.org>, Cyberstalking <http://www.e-victims.org/social-networks-factsheets/factsheets/what-to-do-if-you-are-being-stalked-or-harassed-online.html> and Victim Support. <http://www.e-victims.org>.

6) Securing World-Class Broadband for Your Local Voters and Businesses

The material <http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/commopol/1003-LocalBroadbandAccessBriefing.pdf> on broadband access produced for candidates is being updated in the light of recent developments. This will link to the guidance material being produced on the procurement of shared service networks. These are likely to be central to cutting the cost of bringing broadband to “the final third”. The Audit Commission and National Audit Office review into experience with Collaborative Procurement http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0910/collaborative_procurement.aspx?alreadysearchfor=yes provides a good start point but there is a need to find guidance covering issues such as business rates, security and state aid. Identifying the relevant sources, including authoritative precedents and case studies of success, as well as drafting and reviewing accurate and readable high level summaries, for those “at the top” mean that this is likely to be a major exercise requiring participation and support from suppliers, buyers, advisory groups and associations, professional bodies, regulators and auditors. The role of this group is likely to be to provide a neutral "umbrella" for co-operation rather than doing the work and we are in discussion to find suitable lead partners.

The next meeting of the Communications group, on 21st June, will also look at the EU initiatives regarding universal service, data protection and intellectual property. It will also look at plans for an additional event for new MPs, this time to meet with UK MEPs on a topic of mutual interest - e.g. the protection/enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights in the online world. If so, the event is likely to be staged in co-operation with groups representing Telcos, ISPs, Content producers/publishers, Museums and Libraries. Once again we are in discussion with potential partners.

7) Ensuring That Your Voters and Their Children Have the Skills of the Future

Not just first entry education but continuous technical and professional development

The Council of Professors and Heads of Computing have produced a draft briefing for MPs http://www.eurim.org.uk/members/wfskills/The-Crisis-for-UK-HE-Computing_Draft.doc on the scale and nature of the skills crisis we now face as we fall behind the rest of world in our investment in high-level skills. This is about to be sent out for review with the expectation that it will be expanded to include more on how we can move forward at affordable cost. We then expect to work with them and others on a programme to brief their constituency MPs and political alumni on the possible means of turning our yet another indigenous skills crisis into a global opportunity.