

To EURIM Members and Observers
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The Information
Society Alliance
EURIM



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1) Delivering Better Service at Lower Cost to the Taxpayer

Pooling existing funds to pull through investment in local Broadband Access

Over 40 MPs have shown interest in exercises to bring broadband to their constituencies. There are over 50 projects currently in play, with much duplication and fragmentation of effort and confusion as to what is good practice in making best use of the funding that is available. The follow up plans to the EURIM Broadband reception on 6th July includes identifying those approaches to planning and procurement that are worth copying, particularly with regard to serving those parts of the UK which do not already have BT, Virgin Media, Sky and their peers competing head to head.

The first meeting of those willing to share practical experiences of buying or supplying shared network services, on 27th July, identified over a hundred framework agreements from nearly 50 public buying organisations. Most had cost more to create than the business awarded. They also found tens of millions of pounds wasted by would-be bidders, on customised procurements that had led no where. They found only two that appeared to give obvious value for money when it came to putting public sector budgets together to fund new network infrastructure. The meeting report and material collected are in the members' area of the website at www.eurim.org.uk/members/psd/ssnproc/ssnproc.php. The next sub-group meeting, to agree the contents of the interim report, is on 7th September.

Delivering better security at less cost

The coalition government is seeking massive savings from sharing applications, networks and databases. There is growing concern over the consequences if departments and agencies seek to cut spend on the security of their own systems rather than consider sharing with others, while using "security" as an excuse for not sharing. Meanwhile there is much confusion as to what is good practice in procuring security advice, products or services as well as duplication of effort and a common failure to recognise (or even understand) the checks done by others. This leads to increased cost (both of tendering and of bidding) and reduced choice (even major players often cannot afford the cost of bidding), with the problems compounded by skills shortages and sharply increased pressure on budgets. Cabinet Office is planning to address the known problems with its procurement regime, beginning with the inevitable re-organisation. The security procurement sub-group meets on 6th September to identify those frameworks, tenders and processes that the participants believe are worthy of re-use and replication pending the completion of the planned review of processes in this area. The invitations to participate in the first stage of the work have been confined to those willing to share their own practical experience as buyers or suppliers but the exercise is likely to be expanded after the spending review has been announced.

Tackling the generic problem of publicising, replicating and monitoring better practice

The next spending review is expected to bring about a period of radical changes in the mechanisms of Government, both central and local. The next meeting of the Public Service Delivery Group will discuss how to address the longer term issues, in co-operation with other stakeholders, including members and observers. A particular objective will be to help our new parliamentary members, many with experience of local government, better scrutinise the consequences of the changes in prospect. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org if you would like to join this exercise.

2) Securing the Jobs of the Future for Your Constituency

Setting the priorities for action

Stephen McPartland MP chaired a planning meeting of the Knowledge Economy Group on 26th July which discussed the effect of immigration policy on the UK as a location of choice for businesses requiring access to globally mobile, world-class, skills. The meeting was told that the UK had fallen from being a world leader to a laggard on issues like e-invoicing, which help determine the location of the global supply chain operations. The third topic of discussion was the importance of higher-level skills, particularly for technicians and post-graduates, with the need to make it very much easier to learn new skills and update existing ones, when and where needed. There was a follow up meeting in August with UKTI to discuss practical co-operation with regard to the priorities of those looking to invest in the UK. The Group will meet again on 9th September to move from discussing priorities to making action plans.

3) Information and Identity Governance not just Garbage and Fraud Protection

Who is doing what around the world regarding electronic voter registration?

The interim report of the sub-group looking at **electronic voter registration**, drafted is now on the website at www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ig/idg/eVR_InterimNote.pdf together with a table of the responses from overseas at www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ig/idg/eVR_GridOverseas.pdf with links from, for example, the Association of Election Administrators www.aea-elections.co.uk/default.jsp. The intention is to get the widest possible feedback before going firm on the final report. The overseas responses fall into two distinct groups, those where the register is almost exclusively for electoral purposes and those where it is linked to a multi-purpose population register, whether at municipal or national level.

Can we have common governance across Public and Private Sector ID systems?

The meeting of the **Identity Governance** sub-group on 26th July spent most of its time discussing the implications of Government plans to rationalise its plethora of fragmented identity systems, beginning with the number of working groups looking at identity management! There appeared to be a welcome for the short-term focus on its own employees and contractors, but concern was raised that short-term cost-cutting pressures risked reducing protection for databases containing personal information. It was felt that more attention should be paid to the potential for migrating applications to organisations with more accurate files and better security, as well as lower operational costs, especially if this could be done in such a way as to avoid significant cost in staff re-training or business disruption.

There was a concern that those in the public sector appeared to have little or no understanding of what is actually done by those meeting the needs of the private sector, internationally across jurisdictions as well as nationally, from identity checking, credit reference and staff vetting to fraud detection. That lack of understanding is shared by many of the would-be suppliers of technology-based “solutions”. The group will need to do more to address this problem as it reviews its draft briefing material: “How do they know it is really you” – currently in the members’ area of the website for review at www.eurim.org.uk/members/ig/idg/IDG_FullBriefContents.pdf.

Securing action on the need for security by design rather than afterthought

There is growing concern over the vulnerability of the UK critical infrastructure, especially in 2012 when there is the added risk that sunspot activity may take out non-hardened communications facilities at times of peak load. Plans are therefore under way for a public launch of the **Security by Design** paper (currently in the members’ area of the website), with a reception immediately before or after the Public Spending Review is announced. If so, this is likely to be used to announce any plans to follow up the interim report of the group looking at security procurement announcement, perhaps with action plans to help secure the market-led changes that are recommended.

Should the focus be on security or accuracy?

Recent reports have indicated serious problems with the accuracy of many public sector databases, sometimes with lethal consequences in the case of medical records, more commonly leading to fraud, injustice and unnecessary suffering with regard to welfare, taxation and other databases.

On 9th September the **Quality of Information** sub-group will review a draft briefing and a one page summary, (the former aimed at officials and advisors, the latter for MPs), on the need to ensure that public sector information is fit for purpose. The meeting is also expected to consider the production of a longer back-up paper and resource file, linking to reports on the scale and nature of inaccuracy identified to date. However, merely exposing the scale and nature of the problems, without taking action to address the consequences, could lead to a collapse of confidence in parts of the public sector. It also needs to be recognised that private sector practice also ranges from excellent to appalling and is rarely subject to the same scrutiny. The drafts are at www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ig/qoi/qoi.php.

Please email eurim@eurim.org if you would like to attend the review meeting (hosted by CILIP, the professional body for the management of information services). The sub-group on **Valuing Information as an Asset** has completed its work and the report and recommendations are in the public area of the website at www.eurim.org.uk/activities/ig/voi/voi.php.

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

From Internet Governance through the dark side of the net to Cyberwarfare

The EURIM session at the Parliament and the Internet Conference on 14th October will be used for a progress report on the creation of the e-Crime Reduction Partnership. This will include reviewing the scoping exercise on the scale and nature of the problems that need to be addressed, and the progress made with bringing together the many fragmented awareness and intelligence initiatives that have grown up over recent years. This is intended to lead in to a discussion of current priorities. The intention is to also use the opportunity for those working on specific exercises to report back on their progress and invite others to join them. To save time on the day we plan to circulate the reports in advance. In the course of September we will therefore be contacting all those who have volunteered action to see how they have progressed and whether they are ready to go public on their forward plans.

The bad news is that the problems are still said to be getting worse: CIFAS reports a 20% increase in the number of victims of impersonation (www.cifas.org.uk/default.asp?edit_id=1031-57). The good news is that the number is actually quite small. However fraud against the public sector is said to cost 2% of GDP, about the same as is raised by Council Tax. Equally serious is the evidence, albeit patchy, of loss of confidence in the online world. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org if you are interested in helping support existing initiatives to reach critical mass, as opposed to merely launching new ones.

5) Bringing the Skills of the Future to Your Constituents and their Children

Turning multiple funding crises into opportunities for co-operation

It is taking every bit as long as expected to move from goodwill to action in organising practical co-operation as opposed to yet another study. The intention is to begin with security skills, where there is not only a global crisis but major players appear willing to co-operate. We are currently looking for those able to help organise a “survey” of the skills and qualifications valued by employers, with the intention of then working together to provide the necessary courses and materials, on a modular basis as necessary, when and where employers and current/potential employees want them. The exercise is expected to involve Universities and Colleges which already provide short courses (and technical support) for local employers and law enforcement as well as those security consultancies which provide training for others as well as for their own staff space. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org if you are interested in participating.

6) Putting Broadband UK and the Digital Economy Act into EU Context

Making sense of the Broadband Debate

The next meeting of the Communications Group is on the afternoon of 13th September and will begin with a review of current and impending EU initiatives and their likely impact on the UK. It will also receive a progress report on the exercise to help bring together central and local government budgets, including for education, health, emergency, traffic control and law enforcement, to help pull through community broadband which is being driven through the Public Service Delivery Group (see section 1).

The note on broadband issues sent after the last meeting to the Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, Ed Vaizey, is at www.eurim.org.uk/activities/commspol/CommsNote-EdVaizey.pdf. The new guidance on the valuation of Cable Networks fibre from the Valuation Office (www.voa.gov.uk/instructions/chapters/rating_manual/vol5/sect870/frame.htm) has, however, sparked further controversy (www.thinkbroadband.com/news/4346-voa-release-revised-system-for-fibre-rates-ispas-calls-for-urgent-review.html). Such controversy is no surprise given that BT Openreach excess construction cost charge is now the same for fibre as for copper.

Several of our parliamentary members are now the MPs actively involved in local exercises and there is a wealth of relevant material at www.eurim.org.uk/activities/commspol/broadband.php.

BIS and Ofcom co-operated, including with the Information Commissioner's Office and others, on consultation events on 2nd and 16th August, on the implementation of the revised EU Electronic Communications Framework. Participants raised concerns regarding the provisions concerning e-Privacy (cookies and data breach notification), facilities sharing, information gathering and security and resilience. We circulated details of the events to members for them to participate directly and the Secretary General raised those questions that had been notified to him. We do not plan separate activities in this space but will circulate details of the report of the meetings.

The next group meeting is expected to plan events in London and Brussels to progress co-operation on the next round of EU initiatives with the aim of bringing together industry and consumer groups to discuss how to co-operate in ensuring policies that really do protect consumers from unfair exploitation, at the same time as encouraging investment and innovation in content and infrastructure. The current controversy over the meaning of "net neutrality" illustrates the need. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org if you would be interested in participating.

7) Activities for Research Assistants

Who reads the e-in tray and flags items for interest/action?

MPs are welcome to send their research assistants to meetings that they cannot attend. We also plan to organise meetings for their research assistants on what we do, why and how. We also plan to use these to gather their feedback on the topics of interest to the MPs they serve and on how they would like to receive information on these. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org if you would be interested in helping organise this programme.