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What role for the new EU Agency for Large Scale IT Systems in 2014 & beyond?

4 March 2014 / Forum Europe Offices . Brussels



Post Conference Report

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On the 4th March in Brussels, Forum Europe and eu-LISA organised a joint roundtable debate sponsored by IBM on what role the EU's large scale IT infrastructure agency will play in the coming years in the field of home affairs and how its goals will be achieved.

Kicking off discussions, eu-LISA Executive Director **Krum Garkov** began by answering perhaps the most fundamental question of all - Why eu-LISA? Mr. Garkov explained that there has been a shift, indeed a transformation, from physical to virtual management of borders in Europe, and that the EU's internal security is increasingly dependant on the efficient and safe transfer and management of information and data, facilitated by the modern ICT. eu-LISA was created as a dedicated body to provide professional management of systems and technologies, supporting the Member States, the European Commission and other EU agencies in their work in the areas of freedom, security and justice.

Mr. Garkov explained that, given the reliance on technology to deliver Europe's internal security agenda, there is a requirement for smarter technology management in order to react to the many developing

threats and challenges, in particular the increasing mobility of both European and global citizens, and cross-border economic development. eu-LISA exists, Mr. Garkov stated, to support the facilitation of both economic growth and security.

Responding to a question from the floor regarding whether eu-LISA will or is already partnering with external agencies, institutions and industry, Mr. Garkov confirmed that frankly, eu-LISA cannot function unless it continues to develop strong partnerships, where necessary and feasible, in order to deliver on its mandate. He went on to explain that eu-LISA has, as one of its on-going strategic aims, the intention to become the EU-level hub and centre of excellence for IT systems management, to which member states and EU institutions can both turn to for advice, and collaborate with as and when required.



eu-LISA has already developed relationships with Frontex and is working on areas of cooperation with Europol. Recently, a MoU was signed with the European Commission that has set out its joint cooperation mandate. On industry partnerships, Mr. Garkov explained that, as one of the goals for eu-LISA and its staff is to ensure continuing added value to EU member states, institutions and citizens, the agency's ability to access and benefit from the research and development work that industry undertakes will be critical in its mission.



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Isabella Chiodi, who heads the EU Unit at IBM, suggested that it was the job of industry to explain more clearly how technology can act as an enabler in response to the various challenges Europe faces in the areas of justice and home affairs. In particular, for the success of large-scale projects such as that relating to smart borders, technology adoption will drive profound organizational and behavioural changes. Therefore the role of the industry goes beyond ICT, with a key contribution of industry partners such as IBM being to leverage its experience in implementing similar large-scale projects with a methodology facilitating the definition of new protocols, preparing the transformation to reduce resistance.

In addition to well-designed solutions (modular, flexible, scalable, sustainable and secure), special attention should be given to the effective rollout, especially when multiple countries, languages, cultures and (legacy) systems are involved.

At the end of her introduction, Ms. Chiodi explained that IBM and industry partners have vast experience in managing high volume data streams and, notably, in ensuring security, efficiency and affordability.

One participant wondered how eu-LISA plans to manage the disparate and particular requirements of individual member states. Mr. Garkov acknowledged that the challenge is always in being able to respond in an effective way under such diverse circumstances, but that one of the ways this was being addressed was through the creation of strong governance and partnership with member states.

Ms. Chiodi, agreeing with Mr. Garkov and the questioner that this is indeed a key challenge, reiterated her belief that industry can support the creation of vendor neutral systems, i.e. to take account of national differences when developing solutions and deliver efficient, cost effective solutions.

Another critical question raised by a participant was whether the scope of eu-LISA's responsibilities will grow over time. Mr. Garkov responded that in the long run, the agency has much broader opportunities to increase its contribution and added value. Central to the remit of eu-LISA is the intention to remove burden from and provide expertise to member states.

Data privacy and security was also discussed briefly, with a number of participants wondering how eu-LISA sees these issues. Mr. Garkov reassured participants that data security is a golden thread that runs throughout eu-LISA's infrastructure and operations. Key to delivering these secure services, Mr. Garkov explained, was the necessity and challenge of staying ahead of the game, that only by being proactive in attempting to identify threats in advance, could the agency be said to be addressing this issue properly.

Ultimately, Mr. Garkov stated, eu-LISA's future is about evolution not revolution and that partnerships with the private and public sectors will be key in achieving its current and future mandates. This involves being customer (member state and citizen) focussed and ready to learn and adapt to an ever-changing globalised world.



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