

€3.7m TSSG Research Project to Boost Confidence in Data Protection - WIT research group lead EU Project to provide increased security

By AlphaGalileo

A team of researchers in Waterford Institute of Technology's TSSG (Telecommunications Software and Systems Group) were recently appointed as lead co-ordinators of ENDORSE, a €3.7m EU-wide research project to create technical and legal framework for data management to prevent the accidental or unauthorised use of sensitive personal information.

Privacy and data protection are major concerns for organisations, law makers, consumer and human rights groups, government and data subjects, individuals who are the subject of personal data. The Data Protection Commissioner's 2009 report showed a 47% increase in security breaches with 119 reported incidents. Two high profile incidents involved sensitive client details held by Bord Gáis and the Health Service Executive.

Mr. Paul Malone, a researcher with TSSG's Pervasive Communications Services and ENDORSE project leader said, "Organisations collecting personal data need to ensure their management practices adequately protect all information in a compliant manner. People need reassurance that their personal details are being properly collected and managed and that are being used for the purpose to which they have consented. Transparency is vital for public trust and confidence.

"The ENDORSE project brings together legal experts, computer science partners and software firms from Ireland, the UK, the Netherlands, Spain, Austria and Italy. The aim of the project is to provide confidence in data protection. To do this, we will develop infrastructural components to help organisations ensure their personal data management policies and practices comply with national implementations of the EU Data Protection Directive (95/46/EC).

ENDORSE will also provide organisations with tools to enable them to show individuals how their personal data is being used, by whom and for what purpose. Automating users' access to this information will result in significant savings for organisations currently dealing with these requests on an individual basis.

"The project's goal is to produce a generic solution that will be available to all industries. By simplifying the complexities and overheads associated with compliance, ENDORSE will benefit organisations across the EU. To do this, it will define a software-based "privacy rule language" to express an organisation's privacy policies. These will be automatically checked against data protection legislation for compliance.

"A set of open-source tools can transform these compliant policies into other formats where they can be used for a variety of tasks. One will convert the policy to a natural language format easily understood by end users and accessible via the organisation's website. Another will convert the policy to control and restrict access to personal data.

"ENDORSE project outputs will be available as open-source software meaning it will be readily and freely available for public and private sector to use with their own systems in a very cost-efficient way. Keeping the barriers to adoption low is crucial, particularly for the SME sector.

"Planned industry trials involve an Italian multi-national insurance organisation and a start-up in the UK. The UK firm provides voice and video communications services in a social network model. These partners were chosen as they have very different specific data protection needs which are governed by different national legislations," he said.

Boosting TSSG's ongoing work in ICT security, this two and a half year project involves collaboration with partners from the public and private sector including the DL Legal, Soluta.Net, University of Zaragoza, Tilburg University, Salzburg University of Applied Sciences, SEECOMMS (Research) Limited, **CREATE-NET**, Europ Assistent Italia.

TSSG researchers are among Ireland's leading telecommunications and software engineering experts whose work sees them partner with academic and global industry leaders. The group conducts research in telecommunications network management security and mobile services and is recognised as one of the top ten European institutes driving 'Future Internet' research.