

Workshop on 'Societal security' in security research and development

1 July 2010 in Brussels

Parallel session 1

Security research in support of societal resilience and trust

The European Security Research and Innovation Forum (ESRIF), which published its final report at the close of 2009, was the fruit of remarkable process. Behind the scenes of a 65 member plenary, over 600 experts from industry, academia, and civil society tirelessly worked in the ambition of forming a unified perspective for approaching the security challenges of the next 20 years. An essential conclusion of the process is that such a unified approach is difficult to come by.

Security concerns all areas of society. It has vital importance for all kinds of people in all regions and in all levels of society. Perhaps more importantly, it concerns a wide variety of conflicting economic, political and cultural interests. While the 324 pages of ESRIF final report spell out the official results of the ESRIF exercise, it is clear that the primary unofficial result is that Europe speaks many security languages.

1. Aim of the session

Against this background the session on societal security, resilience and trust aims to explore and assess the interlinking of society and security in security research today. Both in terms of general principles and operational research it seeks to present and critique both the real advances and the disappointed potential of an explicit objective in the 7th Framework Programme to strengthen European security research.

FP7 security projects have up until now taken one of two possible approaches to the relationship between society and security. The wide majority of projects have regard security research and societal research as autonomous, though linked through collaboration or networking (primarily within Activity 6, Security and Society). A small number of projects have sought to integrate societal aspects into the different mission areas of technologically focused security research (border security, critical infrastructure protection, crisis management, etc), for instance in the description of the expected societal impacts for each topic.

2. Core concepts

Parallel session 1. Security research in support of societal resilience and trust builds on two key concepts: societal resilience and trust. These are key terms from the ESRIF discussions and figure prominently in the final report. How should they be understood and implemented in context of security research?

Societal resilience

The concept of societal resilience takes its starting point in the increasing unpredictability of threats. As the speed of events accelerates and the proximity of dangers becomes compressed, the need to prepare for crisis becomes more pressing. There is a wide spread perception that it is today more necessary than ever to enhance preparedness for the crisis before it comes, to in a sense live in a society that is constantly prepared, whose robustness will make it capable to withstand any threat.

Resilience is a term often used by engineers to describe the strength of material or electronic systems. Economists use the term to describe the ability of the economic systems to tolerate stress. Military analysts use it to describe the ability of armed forces or military equipment to carry after damage or injury.

The key to societal resilience is the insight that neither technological approaches to security nor purely social institutions are enough to assure long-term well-being and security. Society must be prepared not only through prophylactic measures on its surface, but through intrinsic measures in the fabric that binds its members together. A deep and thorough integration of security technology with the core of society is the only way to assure this resilience. Society must link to available security technologies and security technologies must deepen and strengthen their reach through comprehensive interdependency.

In this sense resilience refers to a kind of cohesiveness, but one that is assured only through the fusion of social and technical means. Threats and crises touch all levels of society and have transversal knock-on effects that reach into the most distant corners of social life. Limiting these effects, slowing their transportability and weakening their strength is possible only through a combination of technological and social measures, combined in well considered preparedness. Operational and service-organisational infrastructures also demand close attention.

Trust

Whereas societal resilience grows from a technological perspective toward a social role and meaning, trust has its origins in the social sphere, rediscovering itself, through the field of security research in the link to technological systems. Trust is traditionally a concept which defines the relationship between individuals and groups as one of deep or implicit knowledge. It is a kind of knowing without knowing, dependability without proof, reliability without verification. Trust is cannot be supported by not guaranteed by technical or even rational means. It is,

just like societal resilience, a way of dealing with the unknown, carrying on in social relations without full knowledge of a person, carrying on professional collaborations in recognition that some doubt is possible, and using technical systems without having first-hand knowledge of them or being able to assess them or control them directly.

Trust is thus about a special kind of dependency, common to both technical and social systems: we can never know enough about our partners, understand enough about the complex devices we use to fight them, in order to make fully logical decisions. It is a dependency that grows out of a shared experience, shared values, shared culture or traditions, but above all a sense of shared humanity.

This shared experience is the crux of security and insecurity, and the key to social, cultural and technological interoperability. Without trust, it is impossible to make use of a critical instrument or part manufactured by someone else, impossible to have crucial confidence in the interpretation of sensitive security-relevant data, and impossible to regard a security professional from the far corner of Europe as involved in the common project of European security.

3. Two projects presentations

To illustrate what is already being done today in European security research, two FP7 Security research projects will briefly present their activities, some first results and lessons learnt so far in their projects. These are:

Human behaviour in crisis situations: a cross cultural investigation in order to tailor security-related communication (BeSeCu)

The project investigates cross-cultural and ethnic differences of human behaviour in crisis situations in order to better tailor security related communication, instructions and procedures with a view to improving evacuation and protection. It provides evidence that will be useful to first responders, building designers and those involved in the development of emergency operating procedures for buildings. The BeSeCu project employs two research strategies:- cross-cultural survey of individual experiences will be conducted to identify determinants of inter-individual differences in people who have experienced evacuation situations, fire disaster survivors and survivors of similar crisis situations, but also workers and first responders as well as those affected in the community. This retrospective study is to be carried out across 7 European countries with diverse cultural background.

Presented by the Project Coordinator Silke Schmidt

Changing perceptions of Security and Interventions (CPSI),

The goal of the project was to provide governments and related organisations with a methodology to increase insight into the determinants of actual and

perceived security, and into which interventions are effective for increasing security. The deliverables of this project represent practical and ready-to-use tools, which can be employed by policy makers and other end-users to formulate policy regarding security. In this project we will develop 1) a conceptual model of actual and perceived security and their determinants, 2) a methodology to collect, quantify, organise, analyse and interpret security-related data, 3) a data warehouse to store and extract for analysis data amassed using the methodology, and 4) carry out a validation study to test the model, methodology and data warehouse.

Presented by Project Coordinator Heather Griffioen-Young.

4. Topics for discussion 1: General matters

a. The two aims of the Security Programme

The Security Programme announces two distinct aims: A more secure society and increased industrial competitiveness. Few would contest the fact that they are both desirable. However, are they compatible? Do they support each other? Do they contradict each other? Are the premisses shared? Can they be achieved under one programme? Should they?

b. A secure society and how security research can bring us closer to it

The security programme struggles with a clear understanding or consensus of what a secure society is. EU security research risks a credibility problem: It is organised and administered by the one group that has most direct financial interest in Europe being insecure. Security Research in Europe has benefited from immense good will. This is because security is an undisputed good.

c. The threats to Europe

The research tasks taken by the Security Programme assume a set of threats then focus on solutions. However, the Security Programme only to a very small degree supports research on what the threats to Europe are. In particular, immense resources are dedicated to border security in various forms. There is, however, no scientific consensus on what threatens our borders.

d. Industry and investment

What does it mean to invest in security? Is investing in security technology compatible with investing in societal security? The tools and available measures for the one harmonize poorly with those of the other. Does DG ENTR possess adequate competence to organize research on societal security?

e. The opposition between technology and society

Technology emerges and thrives only in a social setting and as response to real or perceived social needs. The opposition between technology and society is a false one.

f. The European security market

The European security market is not outside of or opposed to European society, it is a part of European society. What does security economics tell us about the interface between industry and society?

g. Innovation and society

The interdependence of societal security and security technologies is often invisible. Innovation is the meeting places between society and technology, societal security and security technology. Innovation is a social phenomenon

h. The security dilemma

Security measures, particularly those that rely on technology solutions, often create one kind of insecurity while reducing another. A society of surveillance, of biometrics, and of management of populations provides a certainty kind of security, while inhibiting another.

i. Liberty and security

The often announced political aim of seeking a balance between civil liberty and security is based on a problematic assumption between the two. There is little scientific grounds to support their opposition. On one important level the opposition is entirely false. Increased liberty gives increased security.

j. Accountability

The 'bottom line' after 4 years of FP7 Security Programme: Do we have scientific confirmation that Europe is more secure?

k. Towards FP8

What institutional changes are possible? A more coherent and rigorous collaboration with DG Research is desirable. What would a more integrated conception of the-social-in-the-technological rather than the-social-with-the-technological look like?

Topics for discussion 2: Societal resilience and trust

l. Security in society

What is a secure society? What are elements of societal security? Under what conditions will Europe be secure? How does it vary across sectors, cultures, nations, industries, professions etc. This is a political question of the highest

order, which needs to be constantly reposed in order to achieve security in Europe.

m. Values

Assuring security means assuring social values. What are the values that are assured by security research?

n. Interests

It is uncontroversial to point out that security research as it is embodied in DG Enter Security Programme serves the interests of the European security industry. Do what degree are these interests identical with those of Europe at large? To what degree do the interests of industry serve the interests of European society?

o. Resilience

The same can be said about resilience. The term is used for all from social relations to computer software to banking cooperation. What is the common ground and how can it be raised to an overarching theme?

p. Resilience and rights

We know what to do, what the needs are, what the standards are. The question is how seriously they now will be taken. The notion of 'privacy enhancing technology' needs to be raised from the level of an abstract principle to reality.

q. Trust in industry

The Security Programme places the security of Europe to a very large degree in the hands of industry, and industry, it must be said, profits directly or indirectly from insecurity. Can trust be assured on this basis?

r. Trust in research

Since the turn of the 20th century a principle of scientific independence has shaped the course of research method, financing and administration in Western societies. This principle claims that scientific research is valid only when it is carried out in a manner independent from those who might profit from it. Does security research in the FP7 turn this principle on its head?

s. Trust in security systems

Trust has been affirmed as a key to security. Trust has applications across the spectrum of European activities. It is a social, personal, and technical concept. It has applications to the relationships between neighbours, agencies, states, financial partners and technological systems. Security research needs to find a way to generalise the concept.

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29.06.2010