

2007 EU Telecoms Reform

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Securing Europe's information superhighway



Today's businesses, governments and consumers increasingly rely on telecommunications and the networks that support it, including the internet. They have become the lifeblood of our economy, woven into the fabric of modern society. But we cannot be complacent. The internet is under continuous attack from spammers and cyber criminals. What if it failed? Mobile and fixed telephony depend on the availability of the underlying infrastructure. How vulnerable are we? Europe needs secure and reliable communications networks. It needs a coordinated response to face today's and tomorrow's threats.

Communications networks are an important part of the critical infrastructure that is essential to our economy and society. They are increasingly the principal means of delivering vital services to business, government and citizens. Secure communications networks have therefore become as essential as electricity to make the digital economy and society work.

INCREASING THREATS

Information and communication technologies have made it easier to carry out all manner of cross-border business activities, and public and private life. But all kinds of criminal and terrorist activities have similarly benefited from the virtues of such technologies. Such threats to security pose a significant challenge to modern society.

In recent years a fundamental change in the threats we face has taken place. Today's attackers are increasingly sophisticated and organised. Rather than being driven by curiosity or a desire to show off technical virtuosity, they are motivated by financial gain. In addition, malicious code ('malware') is increasingly used to expose confidential information, leading to identity theft and significant financial loss, particularly if credit card information or banking details are exposed.

Recently Estonia, France, Germany and the UK all reported extensive cyber attacks. Citizens, businesses and governments alike have been affected in one way or another.

These developments risk eroding consumer trust and make citizens wary of the promises of the digital revolution, a worrying trend for our increasingly internet-dependent economy. Even careful and reputable companies have reported breaches of security which exposed the privacy of their customers to unknown risks.

Spam (estimated to be between 40% and 90% of all email) continues to be a problem. Often distributed through vast 'networks' of compromised PCs, spam is no longer a mere nuisance and an intrusion in the private life of an individual, but increasingly a vehicle for viruses and other malware. Annual worldwide economic damages resulting from malware are estimated at €9.2 billion.

And as systems and networks continue to grow and become more and more complex, we can expect more security issues to emerge. New technologies and applications, such as smart radio tag devices (RFID) and ubiquitous computing will not only unveil new opportunities, but also present new challenges for security and privacy.

EVERYBODY IS RESPONSIBLE!

In security, the 'chain' principle applies: it is only as strong as its weakest link. Therefore all stakeholders have to live up to their own responsibilities. Otherwise any weak point can be ruthlessly exploited, providing the entry point for hackers and criminals. Everyone – government, business or individual – has a role to play and a responsibility to fulfil.

Network and information security is therefore one of the priorities of the 2007 EU Telecoms Reform.

A CHIEF NETWORK SECURITY OFFICER FOR EUROPE

That's why the fight against security breaches, both as regards networks and processing, will be stepped up significantly. The future European Telecom Market Authority will have, as one of its core tasks, network and information security, and will assist the Commission in implementing new measures and coordinating EU-wide responses to security threats. The much needed creation of this new Authority will help boost coordination and cooperation between Member States and EU institutions, and between public and private sectors. Under the lead of a Chief Network Security Officer, it will thereby assume those functions currently undertaken by the European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) that have proven European added-value. As a single, integrated body with the required critical mass being able to draw on the best expertise in Europe, the Authority will play an important role in building a true culture of

security throughout the continent. Through the promotion of common approaches and exchange of best practices it will contribute to achieving a high level of security, which in turn will safeguard the creation of Europe-wide services, and help Europe-wide business flourish securely. A permanent stakeholder group will ensure that the Authority will be in close contact with the private sector and its efforts to enhance network security.

STEPPING UP PROTECTION

To ensure high-quality and secure telecoms and information services, the Telecoms Reform will strengthen current privacy and network security provisions. For example, decision-makers will be better informed about the actual level of security of networks so that they can make better policy choices. There will be more clarity as to the security measures that telecoms operators must take to ensure that the networks and services they provide are secure, reliable and resistant to breaches. In addition, service providers that suffer security breaches will have to tell their customers when their personal data has been compromised, so as to allow them to take the necessary precautions.

The new rules will also give operators and competent bodies better instruments to combat spam, malware and other security threats and so protect the interests of their customers, and step up the enforcement powers of regulators. In addition, it will be made clear that the current privacy rules also apply to electronic communications that use smart radio tags (RFID) and similar devices.

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