

SurPRISE:

"Surveillance, Privacy and Security: A large scale participatory assessment of criteria and factors determining acceptability and acceptance of security technologies in Europe"

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Coordinator: Johann Čas
Institute of Technology Assessment
Austrian Academy of Sciences
Strohgasse 45/5
1030 Vienna, Austria
Email: info@surprise-project.eu
Web: www.surprise-project.eu

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PRIVACY AND SECURITY AT STAKE IN EUROPE

European citizens desire and accept a very high degree of public and private surveillance in their everyday lives in order to feel safe and secure. Or do they really? European politicians and decision-makers seem to assume that citizens accept surveillant security measures and avoid in depth debate about the consequences for their privacy.

The SurPRISE project aims to explore the views of European citizens and pass them on to European policy makers to produce a more nuanced debate. It is time for the citizens to speak and for the politicians and decision-makers to listen.

» Does more security always justify less privacy?

In their everyday lives, Europeans experience a greater degree of surveillance technologies and practices than ever before, and politicians and decision-makers seem to have taken citizens' wishes for more security for granted. They afford a higher priority to data collection on citizens' activities than they do to a consideration of the ethical and human rights consequences of that data collection, which of course includes the issue of privacy. The predominant ideas seem to be that citizens are willing to trade-off their privacy for enhanced security in different settings, that surveillance technologies always improve security and, vice versa, that more security requires infringement of human rights. However, research results are questioning the validity of this simple security-privacy trade-off which is dominating current security policy and practice.

» Need for European citizens' views

Decision makers and technological security experts have tended to overlook underlying privacy concerns and public skepticism towards surveillance-oriented security technologies. The proposed or implemented surveillance measures often derive from similar sets of technologies throughout Europe, but at the same time ignore diverging national understandings and political traditions. So far decisions on matters concerning security and privacy have left essential questions unanswered: What are acceptable security technologies in Europe, what are not and why? What is considered security and what is privacy seen from the citizen's point of view? In what ways and on what issues about privacy and security do European nations diverge from each other?

» Methods

The main objective of SurPRISE is to enable European citizens to discuss and evaluate different security solutions and their privacy implications. 2000 citizens from 9 different European countries will be consulted at meetings, through group debates and individual voting on central dilemmas. The series of citizen consultations is expected to reveal a spectrum of differences in citizens' attitudes on the debate about the trade off between privacy and security. The citizens will be informed through written material and short documentary films and will be given the chance of both discussing their thoughts with other citizens and expressing their individual views. The results will give a detailed picture from across Europe and reflect citizens' views on the proposed surveillance-oriented security measures in question.

» Expected results

SurPRISE will produce new insights into the relation between surveillance, privacy and security, from the European citizens' perspective. It will explore options for less privacy infringing security technologies and for non-surveillance oriented solutions. SurPRISE will promote a better informed public and political debate of security policies respecting the views of European citizens as a central element. It will thus contribute to the development of security policies and measures in line with human rights and European values.

» SurPRISE Consortium

- Institut für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften | Austria
- Agencia de Protección de Datos de la Comunidad de Madrid | Spain
- Instituto de Políticas y Bienes Públicos, Agencia Estatal Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas | Spain
- Teknologiradet – The Danish Board of Technology Foundation | Denmark
- European University Institute | Italy
- Verein für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie | Austria
- Medián Opinion and Market Research Limited Company | Hungary
- Teknologiradet – The Norwegian Board of Technology | Norway
- The Open University | United Kingdom
- TA-SWISS, Centre for Technology Assessment, Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences (TA-SWISS) | Switzerland
- Unabhängiges Landeszentrum für Datenschutz | Germany