Press Release

Security Technologies and Citizens' Rights

How do surveillance-oriented security technologies (SOSTs) affect the lives of European citizens? *As a result of an EU-wide security research project, a consortium of partner institutions presents its findings to the public.*

The SurPRISE project, funded by the EU's FP7 programme, conducts a detailed examination of the relation between security and privacy, putting the citizens' perspective into the centre of analysis. Bringing together the results of the research conducted so far, three of the participating partner institutions - Verein für Rechts-und Kriminalsoziologie (IRKS), the European University Institute (EUI), and Unabhängiges Landeszentrum für Datenschutz (ULD) – produced a series of reports: The aim was to explore the challenges as well as options for technological, legal, political, and social developments on privacy and security in contemporary Europe. A final report connects these key concepts and findings, offering a number of policy recommendations.

The publications are part of Work Package 3 – Exploring the Challenges. They can be viewed and downloaded here: surprise-project.eu/downloads

Surveillance Technology and Privacy Enhancing Design

What is the present and future impact of a number of surveillance-oriented security technologies (SOSTs) on the lives of European citizens? The first report by ULD, provides basic understanding of surveillance technologies, e.g. drones, location tracking or facial recognition. It analyses their use and effects taking into account not only the respective data collection capabilities, but also data matching and linkage possibilities and the future use of Big Data technologies. To balance the use of technologies against the principles and ideals of a democratic Europe respecting the fundamental rights of its citizens, the authors conclude that an assessment of the desired security enhancement as well as the impact on privacy and other human rights is crucial.

Analysing our right to privacy

The second report, by EUI, explores challenges and options for political and legal developments concerning the right to privacy and security in the EU. Both are often deemed irreconcilable interests, with security coming out on top. The authors look at four relatively new technologies - GPS-based location trackers, Smart CCTV, user data extraction by means of deep-packet inspection and surveillance by means of Trojan Horses - using three criteria: sensitive data as privileged content, information produced in the course of confidential personal relationships, and methods of intrusion. The report aims to present the 'core/periphery' approach as an analytical alternative to the abstract 'security versus privacy' approach in order to assess which limitations to the right to privacy and the protection of personal data are permissible.

Surveillance and Human Rights

Fundamental rights such as the right to privacy should not be abandoned for an illusion of security. SurPRISE deliverable 3.3, by IRKS, looks at security enhancing options that are not based on surveillance technologies, and addresses the negative side effects of surveillance

on society and human rights. It takes into consideration the wider social context often neglected by security experts. The report advocates for a 'balanced risk awareness' and an informed public debate about the impact technologies have on society. This requires putting the dimensions of perceived threats into a realistic perspective. However, it also acknowledges and examines the challenges posed by realistic threats such as terrorism or cybercrime.

Where do we go from here

The final synthesis report aims to present comprehensive security enhancing policy options. It looks at the on-going security and threat debate and the problems that arise when using technological solutions to handle these threats. The authors also address the emerging difficulties if citizens are being involved in crime prevention measures and conflict solving debates. However, as a long-term perspective, they stress the importance of citizens' involvement in the form of a public debate. They advocate for a 'balanced risk awareness', perceiving security and privacy in a comprehensive way.

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