

Interview – Barbara Daskala

ENISA Risk Management Expert Barbara Daskala is one of the editors of the recently launched ENISA report on the pilot case study. Barbara recently presented the ENISA report at the Continua Spring Summit 2009 in Barcelona, providing a basic overview of its results on emerging and future risks in remote health monitoring and treatment.



What are your general thoughts on the pilot case study and what do you think it can contribute to?

This pilot has two main objectives; the first one is that ENISA wanted to evaluate this framework, that is, the capacity to perform analysis of emerging and future risks with the support of subject matter experts. This objective has been accomplished by the feedback received for this report. The second objective is to provide information and comprehensive results on certain risks that we could face with eHealth. It is important to stress that this pilot case study is not exhaustive, since this pilot is focusing on one specific case study only. However, this study can contribute to the whole debate around the possible emerging risks regarding eHealth monitoring and treatment.

Why do you think it is important to further improve the risk assessment and risk management in regards to eHealth monitoring?

We need to integrate a risk management approach in the development process, be it for products or services. Most people probably think risk management is a really heavy and difficult process, which in most cases it is. But if it is included in the early stages of development, if it becomes an integral part of our thinking and development methodology, it will result in the development and production of better products and services.

In this context, eHealth services are not an exception; we strongly believe that such an approach is beneficial for the provision of better services. It should be noted however that this not only targets the industry; also research institutes, academia and of course Governments should be involved and adopt such a procedure. This also becomes apparent from the nature of the identified risks.

Are the risks still outweighing the opportunities in terms of eHealth monitoring?

eHealth services have to offer a lot of important benefits for citizens and society in general, there is no doubt about that. However, it is still a controversial area in the sense that it may also pose many important risks that need to be addressed, preferably before its massive deployment. In our scenario on an emerging eHealth application, we identified possible emerging risks, which may provide some input for policy and decision makers to consider. This can assist towards being proactive and actually prevent these risks from occurring, while deploying eHealth solutions, as those seen in our scenario. I guess what is important to note here is the benefit of a precautionary approach, which allows for the deployment of such beneficial services while at the same time remaining alerted about possible risks and concerns raised. I mean we wouldn't want as a society to solve some problems, while at the same time creating others, perhaps of equal importance and gravity.

It should also be noted that there are of course other very important research initiatives at the EU level, currently studying eHealth deployment issue and how to improve them, and we really think this is the right way to go forward. In this respect, we think that ENISA's study could contribute a bit towards this already serious and extensive debate on eHealth issues.

How do you see the implementation of eHealth in the future?

I think it is already occurring, but with different levels of uptake in different european member states (and of course internationally as well) As the report also mentions we are talking about an application possibly deployed in 2011, i.e. this is something we will see in the near future.

In the future we will probably also see more automation, and possibly even more services in the area of health care. The important thing is that we are cautious on how we go about this development of future eHealth, because there are risks.

When looking at the European level, legislation is commissioned by the EU. This study, as well as relevant research conducted on eHealth, is a major input of information for the decision and policy makers, that would need to consider all these issues.

Will ENISA use the EFR Framework to analyse other scenarios?

Yes, in 2009 we are going to launch five pilot studies on various subjects that are based on the scenario analysis of the EFR Framework, such as "Cloud computing", "Internet of things/Future Internet" and "Data mining and profiling".

How are these selected?

These topics are decided upon, after a thorough decision/validation process with ENISA stakeholders. Last year, apart from the formal Work Programme procedure, we run an additional validation procedure in order to decide on the specific topics for the scenarios of the EFR Framework. In this process, we involved ENISA's major stakeholders and experts, namely the EFRA Stakeholder Forum, the Permanent Stakeholder Group (PSG) and the ENISA Management Board, who provided their feedback on the specific topics we should be looking at in this year's Work Programme.

In a nutshell, we would like to look at risks posed by technologies and applications we see emerging in the future, especially when these technologies or applications have important implications on the society. In this respect we need to stress the policy relevance of the ENISA work in this domain.

Why are there no recommendations in the report?

It is important to keep in mind that this is ENISA's first pilot assessment in the area of emerging risks and it has been performed under tight resource and time constraints. Although recommendations fell out of scope for this first pilot, our plan is to also come up with recommendations in our future studies, since we understand the importance of making suggestion to address problems identified.

For press release:

http://www.enisa.europa.eu/pages/02_01_press_2009_03_20_being_diabetic_2011.html

For full report:

http://www.enisa.europa.eu/doc/pdf/deliverables/enisa_being_diabetic_2011.pdf

For FAQ:

http://www.enisa.europa.eu/doc/pdf/faq_eHealth.pdf

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