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News in Brief

Promoting debate on implications of emerging biometrics

(CORDIS) Prompting research and a public debate on bioethics of biometric technology is the overall objective of the FP6 BITE project. This driving aim stems from the fact that biometrics seems headed for dramatic growth in the next few years, according to the tripling number of biometric devices in use in Europe. But the collection and storage of such personal data raises huge ethical questions, according to BITE coordinator, Professor Emilio Mordini who describes access to medical information through biometrics data as the most controversial issue surrounding the technology. "At the moment this is not a real risk, but this could happen in the short term," he says. Data could provide information on whether a person has a medical condition, has used drugs, or is pregnant, for example. The BITE project, which started work in October 2004, is just at the start of the biometrics debate. When the project comes to an end, Professor Mordini and his team hope to have "built the core of a future, wider network and to have produced an inventory of current issues and have a wider perspective on future issues."

<http://www.cordis.lu/news>

19 May 2005

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Complex Systems call information day

(CORDIS) The Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) unit of the European Commission's Information Society and Media Directorate-General has organised an information day, which will take place on 2 June in Brussels. The event addresses those interested in submitting a proposal on 'Simulating Emergent Properties in Complex Systems'. It is a follow-up call to an earlier call on complex systems. This event offers an opportunity to be informed about the content and the funding instruments used, as well as an opportunity to find potential partners for a common proposal. The event's purpose is to facilitate the formation of consortia and to promote synergies and collaborations across proposers through an open exchange proposers forum. To this end, participants are encouraged to lay out their ideas for possible proposals, identify the expertise they are seeking for, or simply express their intention of getting involved in a consortium.

<http://www.cordis.lu>

23 May 2005

Report on demand for mobile communications

(RAPID) A report on 'The demand for future mobile communications markets and services in Europe' has been released by the Institute for Prospective Technology Studies. The study presents the results of a research project that the Institute commissioned to investigate the future demand for mobile services, which could make use of frequency spectrum. The project adopted an innovative methodology combining qualitative scenario-building and quantitative modelling. The report shows how the adopted methodology developed alternative socio-economic scenarios from which potential demand for wireless services in the European Union in the years 2010, 2015 and 2020 is derived. It also describes the main results of the study as well as covers the adopted expert-consultation that validated the whole process.

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23 May 2005

Multi-stakeholder drive towards a learning society

(RAPID) A multi-annual, multi-stakeholder drive to build digital competence at home, school and the workplace was recently launched by Viviane Reding, the Commissioner for Information Society and Media, and Ján Figel', the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, at a multi-stakeholder conference entitled 'Towards a learning society'. According to Commissioner Reding, lifelong digital learning is increasingly necessary, to sustain Europe's cultural creativity and economic competitiveness. "It is at the top of the agenda of the new initiative i2010 (or European Information Society 2010) with the clear long-term perspective of more and better jobs in the existence of a well-educated, skilled and adaptable workforce and solid education," she said. The conference brought together 500 stakeholders from industry, education, the social partners, civil society and government to take stock of Europe's eLearning strengths and weaknesses from a variety of perspectives, including education, enterprise and industry, employment, and social inclusion.

<http://europa.eu.int>

23 May 2005

Shoe kick-starts active lifestyle

(BBC) It could be the ultimate incentive to get kids exercising - a shoe that controls the amount of TV they watch. The shoe, the brainchild of a student at west London's Brunel University, has a unique insole that records the amount of exercise a child does and converts it into television watching time. One button on the shoe records the number of steps taken by the child over the day. Another transmits this information to a base station connected to the TV. It calculates the time earned and once it runs out, the TV automatically switches itself off. The health monitoring insole has been designed by Gillian Swan, a final year design student at Brunel. "Today's children are exposed to a raft of television programmes and children's channels. Ten years ago, children were entertained by playing games with their friends, now they are cooped up in their bedrooms watching hours of television programmes," she said.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

23 May 2005

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