

ENFSI NETWORK INFORMATION PROJECT

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ABSTRACT: The necessity to exchange information among forensic laboratories in Europe has been identified years ago. One of the main objectives of the use of computer networks would be to share the many databases that each one has developed nationally, being able to update them live and give a larger access to these tools.

In October 1999, the idea was common between all working group chairmen that it was time to move forward in the field. This ENFSI Network would have to allow free communication between member laboratories, with the outside world and in a secure way. This presentation is meant to introduce the plan that has been proposed, the issues that have arisen, the solutions that have been chosen and implemented, and steps that still have to be taken.

This subject has to be submitted to the ENFSI board – meeting in July 2000 in Lyon (France). If the ENFSI board agree (it should be because the subject has already been discussed in Netherlands in October 1999), it could be presented in Cracow.

KEY WORDS: ENFSI Information Network; Website; Internet.

*Problems of Forensic Sciences, vol. XLVII, 2001, 13–16
Received 9 May 2001; accepted 15 September 2001*

This short document explains the need for enhanced electronic communication within ENFSI and the steps that have been taken up to now. To get the latest news, please visit regularly your website at: (recent information has been added to the text following recent developments at date).

INTRODUCTION

The need for an efficient communication medium within ENFSI was clearly identified by the ENFSI board and WG chairmen at their joint meeting in Voorburg, 1999. Both secure communications on the inside (electronic mail, databases...) and communication to the forensic community and the general public outside of ENFSI were to be fulfilled. I was appointed to launch the project.

Let us have a look at our situation and identify our needs more precisely. Then we shall present the platform that is already in place and the structures to be implemented in the future.

SITUATION AND NEEDS

By defining who we are and what we do, we can have a good idea of the possible communication needs to be taken care of by a common structure.

Who are we?

ENFSI is an informal association of forensic science laboratory directors in Europe, which now unites 46 member laboratories in 31 different countries (as of April 2001) (<http://www.enfsi.org/page.php3?page=memberlist>). The size of our member laboratories range from a few dozen to thousands of people. This creates a structured scientific community, made of thousands of people all over Europe. On top of that, the day to day work of those people is linked to the judicial process, using scientific techniques to draw evidential conclusions from material seized by investigators.

This association has a number of executive bodies – board and standing committees – and of expert working groups (<http://www.enfsi.org/page.php3?page=organisation>). Each of them live their own lives, have their own activities. Institutions from outside ENFSI can take part in expert working group activities too.

What are our typical activities?

With no particular order: meetings, informal exchanges, scientific publications, public presentations, promotion of forensic disciplines, establishment of standard procedures, assessments and trials, training, building common databases... These items cover most of our activities.

We shall try and identify which can be supported by electronic communication means.

Communication needs

From the previous remarks, we can pinpoint the following needs for communication.

1. Communication to the outside:
 - address the public (specialised and non-specialised), online presence.
2. Communication inside:
 - know each other better,

- exchange information,
- discuss case work,
- share tools, updated protocols and standards.

This means to provide a certain number of online services:

- hosting of webpages (documents, protocols, etc.),
- hosting of databases (searchable data),
- means for direct secure communications,
- means for online activities.

These services are not exclusive of others to be identified in the future. To implement them we need to develop a certain number of technical solutions.

SOLUTIONS

After this analysis phase, it was decided to propose the following solutions to be implemented:

- an online directory of members,
- a certification authority,
- a common platform for hosting webpages and databases, that should be easily maintainable by the members themselves,
- online communication services (forums, chatrooms, electronic voting...),
- new services such as authentication, timestamping of electronic documents, etc.

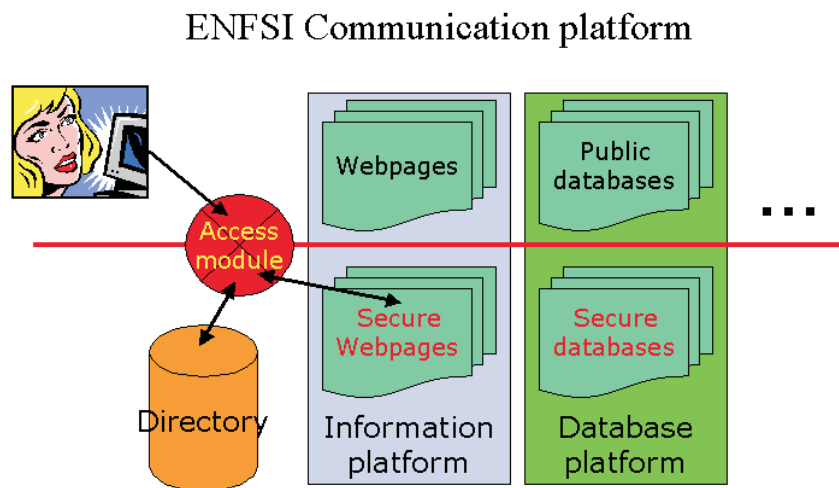


Fig. 1. ENFSI Communication platform structure.

A certification authority will distribute cryptographic certificates to allow trust among the members for the exchange of secured documents. The platform will distinguish various access levels, whether people accessing the website are members of a working group or not, members of ENFSI or not, or any other criteria.

SITUATION AND STEPS FORWARD

A number of steps have already been taken since the beginning of 2000. The buying of a domain name (enfsi.org) and a temporary hosting were the two first, along with the creation of a specific design for our website.

The system is about to be moved to a new series of servers (two machines), hosted on a large Internet platform in Paris. A specific machine will be dedicated to the maintenance of the certification authority. That will be in our offices in Rosny-sous-Bois, disconnected from the Internet. New services will step in progressively as soon as they are validated. The website itself will contain as much technical explanations as possible for the members to use it at its most.

Now, the only way to make real progress is to get maximum participation from the members.

The ENFSI board has now taken this matter into account by launching a reflection on the communication needs of the organisation, and will be providing guidelines and rules for the website too.

Each ENFSI entity should also provide a representative for communication matters. And the best way to contact us is at webmaster@enfsi.org.

To read the full PowerPoint presentation, please visit [and please visit](http://www.enfsi.org) regularly YOUR website at <http://www.enfsi.org>.