

Report of the Strategic Direction Working Group

Summary

The Strategic Direction Working Group (SDWG)¹ was set up at the 35th Conference pursuant to the [Strategic Direction Resolution](#) with a two year mandate to undertake various tasks anticipated in the [interim strategic plan](#).

The SDWG was directed to undertake its work “in close liaison” with the Executive Committee (ExCo). The New Zealand Office of the Privacy Commissioner performed the roles both of SDWG Convenor and ExCo Secretariat allowing certain tasks implementing the strategic plan to be performed seamlessly between these two bodies.

In this final year of the SDWG’s mandate, priority was placed upon completing three tasks:

1. Implement the arrangements to encourage and confirm hosts well in advance (item 2(b) of the 2014-2015 action plan);²
2. Prepare a revised set of strategic priorities and action plan to commence in 2016 (clause 2(b) of the Strategic Direction Resolution)
3. Develop a workable plan to fund the Secretariat (item 3(b) of the 2014-2015 action plan).

The first two of these three high priority tasks were completed but regrettably a failure to find consensus prevented completion of the third.

Priority task 1: Encourage and confirm hosts well in advance

The Secretariat and an ExCo Subcommittee (NZ/FR) managed a process that called for expressions of interest in hosting the 2016 Conference. Detailed written [Guidance](#) was prepared and released to assist authorities planning to submit a proposal. A process to evaluate the multiple proposals was developed and operated enabling a host for the 2016 event to be confirmed at least 4 months earlier than would have been possible under the former system. The target set out in the action plan was met (“Achieve the position of having one or more future hosts confirmed before the 37th Conference”). Planning has been completed to enable the host of the 2017 event to be confirmed even further in advance.³

¹ The SDWG comprised member authorities from British Columbia, Colombia, Hong Kong, Ireland, Netherlands, New South Wales, New Zealand, USA and Victoria.

² These arrangements were designed by the SDWG/ExCo the previous year and authorised in a rule change adopted by the 36th Conference, see: <http://icdppc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Amendment-to-Article-2.1d-3.2c-of-the-Rules-and-Procedures.pdf>

³ The Secretariat has invited members to submit proposals to host the 2017 Conference by 30 November 2015.

Priority task 2: Revised Strategic Plan

A proposed Strategic Plan to cover the years 2016-18 has been developed and has been circulated with closed session papers as a resolution for adoption at the 37th Conference.

The proposed strategic plan contains 4 strategic priorities:

- Strengthening Our Connections, Working With Partners;
- Advancing Global Privacy in a Digital Age;
- Completing Conference Capacity building; and
- Assessing Our Effectiveness;

each of which is paired in the 'action plan' with practical goals to complete over a period of three years.

In amendments to the Conference's Rules and Procedures, also presented for adoption at the closed session, it is proposed to recognise the ExCo as having an explicit function 'to provide leadership to the Conference in attaining its strategic goals'. The SDWG goes out of existence at the 37th Conference. Accordingly, the resolution authorises the ExCo to convene working groups to assist with implementation of the action plan if that proves necessary.

Priority task 3: Workable plan to fund the Secretariat

Without its own funding stream the Conference is reliant upon the willingness of a single member authority to resource the Secretariat. This is inefficient, ineffective and out of step with the Conference's purpose of combining the efforts of the world's privacy authorities. While the Conference has 100+ member authorities its operational model has made the functioning of its Secretariat dependent upon the resources of a single authority.

The current model would easily satisfy a small local network where the demands are modest and every participant takes a turn at carrying the load. However, it is ill suited to such a large forum with high expectations of collective global action in a challenging area of regulation and public policy. The current Secretariat estimates the annual cost of providing the Secretariat to be in the region of €50,000.

A lack of resources means that the Conference is constrained from reaching its goals. Viable and sustainable funding of the Secretariat is an important step towards unlocking the Conference's potential.

New Zealand led the work to explore options to fund future secretariats. It developed a working paper that in May/June 2015 that incorporated input from members of the SDWG. This first paper (['Elements of a workable plan to fund the Secretariat and associated core Conference expenses'](#)) was circulated for consideration by the ExCo at its July meeting. As a result of some feedback, NZ developed a simpler, less ambitious and more concrete proposal (['A Workable Plan to Fund the Conference Secretariat'](#)) that was circulated to the ExCo in anticipation of the September meeting.

The proposed plan was relatively simple and contained the following key elements:

- The Conference would adopt the target of funding 60% of the cost of providing the Secretariat (with the secretariat itself bearing 40% of the cost).
- These funds would be raised by imposing an average levy of €300 per member authority (with large members paying slightly more and small members paying slightly less).
- The funds would be collected as a fee for attending the closed session of the annual meeting, payable for the first time at the 39th Conference in 2017.

The Plan did not find favour with the ExCo with FR, NL and the US opposed. Accordingly, the ExCo Chair took the decision to suspend work on the plan and leave the matter to be considered again by the next Committee.

The Secretariat has made the working paper and plan (not adopted) available for the information of members at the [working group reports](#) page of the website.

Other tasks

The SDWG undertook various other tasks that informed the work on those three priority items. These involved researching such matters as the priorities and strategic plans of other networks, the handover practices between annual meetings, the strengths and weaknesses of the Conference and barriers to hosting. While these tasks have not resulted in the presentation of any formal reports or recommendations to the Conference several working documents have been added to the Conference [website](#) for reference.

The SDWG commends for the Conference's adoption the proposals presented jointly by the SDWG and ExCo for a new Strategic Plan.

On behalf of the Strategic Direction Working Group

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