

# Global Security Standards: Practical Reality or Distant Vision?

*Globalization and Technology Advancements Are Among the Forces Driving the Consolidation of Country and Regional Standards, Argues ADT's Regulatory Expert*

**B**orn in 1993, the European Union (EU) today is a political and economic giant of 27 countries with almost 500 million people and US\$16.8 trillion in 2007 gross domestic product – about 30 percent of the world's economic output. Standardised laws, which apply to all EU members, guarantee the free movement of people, goods, services and capital across borders.

Despite this seeming transparency, security standards still vary widely from country to country, making cross-border enterprise security a big challenge. Few know more about those differences than ADT's Head of European Regulatory Affairs Edward Lister. Based in London, he sits on 13 security committees affiliated with various European bodies, plus another seven committees concerning fire safety and the environment.

In the following interview, Lister points out why he thinks the gaps between EU countries will start closing fast and help set the foundation for eventual international standards.



*ADT's Head of European Regulatory Affairs Edward Lister*

## **Describe the current state of EU security standards, will you?**

We're making steady progress, although it's come about in a sort of haphazard way with different editions [of EU standards]. For example, the 1997 edition is a fairly crude version compared to the 2006 edition and it's moved on from there. Slowly but surely everybody is coming together and what we will see over the next three or four years is everybody coalescing more and more onto 2006 edition, probably by then the 2008 edition. But the fact remains is that we will standardise right across Europe. In time, these standards will join North American standards, both of which will be adopted by other countries as the world economy matures and developing nations catch up with developed ones.

## **What's driving the development and adoption of those standards?**

The big four are technology, deregulation, globalisation and competition – all feeding each other. At their root is technology, though. It's enabled all kinds of new business models, especially global ones. These new business models, helped by market liberalisation, have spawned new competitors, which pressures prices and drives costs down. Not long ago, for example, each country had just one telecom provider. Now, in the U.K. alone, you have more than 1200 telephone service providers with 800 resellers. That's happening across Europe, at a different pace in different countries, of course but, generally a massive liberalization is going on in the

market place. And because companies must get more competitive, they need to drive out costs, so they're looking at all aspects of their businesses, including security.

### **Tell us about some obstacles you see standing in the way of standards adoption.**

Obviously you have different stages of economic development across the EU. The U.K., Germany and France economies obviously contrast those of Estonia, Latvia and Bulgaria, for example, so the former tend to have more advanced technology and standards than the latter.

Privacy concerns, protected in the EU's Data Protection Act, also create variations across countries, which are generally strict about privacy but with different flavors like how long you can keep images, where cameras can be and so forth. So while CCTV technology is strictly limited in Denmark, but in the U.K. you have cameras on just about every street corner.

Police response and system maintenance are other big variables across the EU. Some countries require maintenance, especially to limit false alarms, and without it, police won't respond. Other countries don't require maintenance at all, so systems can gradually deteriorate, leading to false alarms.

Another obstacle is the guarding industry, with strong lobbies in some countries that insist on guards responding rather than police. In Italy, only guarding companies can own an Alarm Receiving Center – what's called a monitoring center in the U.S. And despite the fact that technology today would allow you to cover all of Italy with a single ARC, you need 120 of them because strict geographic limits are mandated by law.

### **Sounds like standards advocates like you still have lots of work to do. Are true EU standards just a distant fantasy, much less global ones?**

Depends on what day it is. [Laughs] Seriously, yes, there's still lots to do but we're making progress and momentum's building. Vested economic interests in various countries like Italy's guarding industry I just mentioned or Germany's enormously powerful, insurance-driven VdS test facility with its own standards will continue seeking to protect themselves. But, in most countries, we're seeing the EU standards taking hold, although we'll continue seeing local interpretations.

Like anything, the forces for change eventually win out, either because their logic, their commercial advantages or some combination of the two become overwhelming. It's pretty compelling, for example, when companies can monitor their European security operations from New York, Singapore or anywhere else for that matter, or have pan-European badging and access control.

One important change that's almost certain to come is that, the EU will have an equivalent to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. You can almost see it coming across the Atlantic, lock, stock and barrel. So, against that background, standards will become even more important.

Internationally, there'll be pressure to coalesce regional standards, whether they're EU ones or North American ones or Indian or Chinese ones. Even though there's a lot of "not-invented-here"

syndrome around the world – not just in the EU, but practically everywhere – commercial drivers help limit that because open markets demand common approaches. That's good for companies as standards can help drive overall costs down by enabling them to manage security in more cost-effective ways.

### **What is ADT's position and role in driving standards adoption in the EU and worldwide?**

We're lobbying very hard to see more standards – and high-quality ones at that – first across the EU, then more around the world. That's why I spend so much time on all the committees I'm on.

Right now, for example, there are no compulsory maintenance standards across the EU but we'd like to see them to help our customers avoid false alarms, which in Spain can invoke a 5,000-euro fine for each one. And that's just one example. More standardised approaches will let our customers increase their overall security effectiveness yet lower their costs and administrative requirements, a win-win if ever there was one.

Fact is, while technology allows a global approach and continues to march forward, the regulatory environment obviously will lag behind as people in politics dicker and bicker, right? ADT's role is to help push standards forward by giving lawmakers the insights and information they need to make good decisions that cut through the roadblocks.

In the meantime, ADT owes its customers – especially our global, multinational ones – our continued understanding and advice on existing standards, their evolution and how to best navigate them from country to country and region to region over time. It's an important way we can help them manage, even reduce, the complexity of their security operations around the world. ●

***Edward Lister, ADT's Head of European Regulatory Affairs**, has more than 25 years experience in all aspects of the security and fire safety operations. He is active on 13 security committees for a range of European standards development bodies, five committees for fire safety and two committees for commerce and the environment. He is available for consultation and can be contacted at [elister@tycoint.com](mailto:elister@tycoint.com).*