

# Forensics in a global community

**W**e often view the European Union as a single entity, failing to acknowledge the diverse nature of each Member State. Diversity is something to be celebrated; it is the very thing that brings richness to the world in which we live. Such diversity requires tolerance, understanding, an appreciation of the rights of the individual but also, most importantly, an acceptance of responsibility.

So what does 'responsibility' mean to the forensic and intelligence community? How can it play its part in supporting the EU as a whole and its individual members?

Operating internationally, Forensic Pathways Ltd (FPL) has always recognised the need for cross-border collaboration and a multi-disciplinary approach. The relationships we now see between Member States have helped us identify many new and emerging problems:

- Asylum
- Human trafficking
- Honour related violence
- Terrorism
- Crime investigation/intelligence
- Drugs cartels

This has been reflected and recognised by the G5 Meeting at Evian on the 5<sup>th</sup> July at which the Ministers of the Interior of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK resolved to adopt key policy directions with regards to the fight against terrorism and organised crime. Under the heading 'Information exchange: the principle of availability', six areas for information exchange were identified:

- Fingerprinting and DNA
- Missing Persons and Unidentified Bodies
- Identity Theft
- Stolen Vehicles

- Ballistics
- Intelligence on criminal activities

There is significant research taking place in these areas. However, this cannot operate in a vacuum; the world is a small place, and new technology that helps us to travel and communicate, whilst affording us freedom, also makes us vulnerable. Globally, agencies are collecting vast amounts of information, assuming information means knowledge. Collection of information and evidence is meaningless unless we attribute weight to that evidence in order to gain knowledge. Similarly, this knowledge must be shared. We often hear of organisations buying extensive IT systems, only to find they cannot be integrated into other areas – systems that cannot talk to one another. How often do we hear the words 'data protection' and how often does this prevent the sharing of information which would not only make good common sense but would also protect the very people we claim to care about?

For us to tackle the issues mentioned previously, and to support the work of agencies and organisations such as EUROPOL, La Strada, the OSCE (Organisation for Security & Co-operation in Europe) and the UN, we have to be open to collaboration, invention and innovation. We must share practices and knowledge that we know to be good, and discuss areas for change and act upon them – but always with an appreciation of cultural and regional issues.

This approach has been the driving force behind FPL. Incorporated in 2001, the aim was simple: to engage with the international community, ensuring products and services truly reflected both immediate and emerging needs.

*Cross-border collaboration and a multi-disciplinary approach are essential in order to address 21<sup>st</sup> Century issues...*

## Research

FPL played a central role in the successful EU project to develop 'Smart Technologies' based on the web to tackle VAT Fraud and Missing Trader Fraud. FPL now employs these technologies on the web and is the first company globally to do so with forensic investigation.

FPL is also leading the EU AGIS Project on the sharing of Ballistics Intelligence across the European Union. This will make recommendations on the use of 'Smart Technology' across the whole of the EU to engage in sharing forensic intelligence.

## Services

### The search for knowledge from information

Our emerging world is one where the new commodity is 'information' and the ease with which we collect it. Unfortunately, our ability to collect information has not been matched by our ability to make use of it. So successful have we become at collecting information that we seem to have forgotten the art of making use of the data. We seem to equate masses of information with masses of knowledge and this is simply untrue.

FPL acknowledges the diverse nature of forensics and that it extends beyond the traditional laboratory setting. It has recently joined forces with Advanced Forensic Solutions, a company known for developing innovative forensic services that exploit cutting edge information sciences. AFS has developed technology, taking advantage of artificial intelligence and the new discipline of knowledge engineering. The founder of AFS invented the Forensic Led Intelligence System (FLINTS), now widely used in intelligence management by UK police. More recently, AFS has

developed new information management techniques to provide the telecommunications and insurance industry with a secure web-based technology to automate fraud detection services online. The service is to be launched in the autumn by the Home Office, with major telecommunications and insurance companies as partners. This project will process enormous amounts of data in real-time, automatically locating fraud and illegal activity. To date, some 45 million records have been processed via web technology and services.

FPL is partnering with Microsoft UK to develop powerful products allowing mass access to and use of the newly acquired AFS suite of technologies. Geoff Hughes, Senior Executive at Microsoft UK, recently said: "Microsoft is pleased to be joining forces with this company. They are doing things with our technology in forensic investigation that we find truly futuristic. Turning bland information into knowledge capable of being used for critical decision-making sets them out ahead of others in the field."

This partnership will produce a strong cross-industry approach to the development of futuristic tools to aid crime and forensic investigation, intelligence management, knowledge generation, and public safety. The emphasis as usual will be on forensic innovation backed by client focused needs and requirements.

Mike Boyd, former Deputy Chief and Chief of Toronto Police Service, Canada, and a well recognised Detective in North America, is soon to be joining the company as a Partner. He said recently: "This company is doing exciting things important to policing and intelligence management. I am pleased to be associated with them because they are pushing the barriers of technology and science out in ways crucial to developing a safer society."

### Training

#### Cross-border/cross-discipline

As members of the European Community, we all have a responsibility to share knowledge, no more so than in

the area of forensic investigation and intelligence. This training should also reflect a multi-disciplinary approach in order to appreciate individual roles.

FPL's training reflects this inter-disciplinary approach, with the latest range of courses focusing on:

- Crime Scene Management
- Crimes in the Name of Honour
- Fire and Explosion Investigation
- Forensic Awareness at Crime Scenes
- Forensic Intelligence
- Introduction to Explosion Investigation
- Post Explosion and Bomb Awareness
- Vehicle Fire Investigation

An interesting development recently has also been forensic training in telecommunications fraud. Training is presented by world renowned experts, based not only in the UK but also in the USA, Canada, Brussels and Islamabad.

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The dissemination of Best Practice across borders is essential so that the exchange of information and knowledge flourishes. The new world faces diverse and complex problems: terrorism, money laundering, organised crime, human trafficking and honour killings. Effective training and the opportunity to learn from another perspective are essential if we are going to deal at source with the issues we face.

### Consultancy

The development of forensics and intelligence globally continues to gain momentum, with more countries committed to developing their forensic capability. FPL offer support and advice in all areas, including the setting up of forensic laboratories, cold case reviews and expert witness provision.

### Innovative product design

It is essential that companies recognise the individual characteristics of the countries in which they operate. FPL continues to reflect collaboration between company and end-user. From its award-winning Anti-Contamination Stepping Plates through to the development of new fingerprint powders that work effectively in hot climates, new releases of DNA/Forensic Cabinets and sophisticated Intelligence Analysis Technology, the main theme has always been communication with end-users and the development of state-of-the-art products, services and training.

FPL is a global company with distributorships in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Central Europe and Turkey. As an approved supplier to the United Nations, FPL has also provided equipment to agencies such as the UNDP in Somalia.

### Conclusion

It is only through a commitment to the sharing of information and knowledge, working towards joint ventures, and taking a multi-disciplinary approach will we be truly effective in the challenges that face us, and allow us to protect those who are vulnerable within our global community.

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