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UK ACADEMICS TURN OFF TAP OF ONLINE DATA

UK academics are working together with industry to turn off the deluge of personal data that floods the internet and threatens people's security and identity.

Through a £3.6 million project, called Encore (Ensuring Consent and Revocation), a team of e-security experts aims to create a solution to increasing problems caused by the uncontrolled flow of personal data. The team brings together researchers from HP's Systems Security Lab in Bristol, the project leaders, with WMG at the University of Warwick, QinetiQ, HW Communications, Oxford University's Ethox Centre legal department, and regulation and business experts from the London School of Economics (LSE).

Encore, which is jointly funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Technology Strategy Board, will help businesses and Government adopt scalable, cost-effective and robust consent and revocation methods for controlling the use, storing, locating and sharing of personal data.

At present people have no way of controlling how their personal information is used and to ensure that it is deleted, when requested, from databases. Often such details are handed to third parties, making the control of personal data even harder. Millions of people shop online every day and yet data leakage and identity fraud are growing concerns. There is a need to respond to this situation by developing technology and systems that are as easy and intuitive to use as turning a tap on or off.

Professor Sadie Creese, head of WMG's e-Security Team based in the Group's Digital Lab, said: "There are plenty of occasions when we want to be able to share our information but we need more control over the process. If we turn the tap on we need to know our data is only flowing where we want it to; if we turn the tap off, there must be no leaks."

Encore project director Pete Bramhall, of HP Labs, said: "With leading researchers from HP, QinetiQ and HW Communications, the Encore project has a strong industrial team that will deliver leading-edge, privacy-enhancing technology and services to private and public-sector organisations."

While Professor Creese will head up the team developing the technology to enable more control over data, experts at Oxford University and the LSE will tackle user requirements, the legal framework and regulation.

The Encore project will run for the next three and half years, with the commercial exploitation of the project's results flowing thereafter. The project website is www.encore-project.info

For media enquiries, please call Zoë Howard on 02476 524721 or 07824 540845.

Notes to editors:

- HP Labs Bristol is Hewlett Packard's second-largest corporate research location and is among the world's premier corporate research labs. www.hpl.hp.com/bristol
- WMG, an academic department of the University of Warwick, is a provider of innovative solutions to industry, supporting some of the most advanced research, development and education projects in the world. www.wmg.warwick.ac.uk The e-Security Team is part of WMG's newest research centre, the Digital Lab www.digital.warwick.ac.uk
- The Ethox Centre is a multidisciplinary academic centre for ethics and communication skills in medical research and health care practice, located within the Department of Public Health and Primary Health Care at the University of Oxford. www.ethox.ac.uk
- The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is a world-class institution, known for its concentration of teaching and research across the full range of social, political and economic sciences. www.lse.ac.uk
- HW Communications has focused on advanced research and development in mobile and wireless communications and is now targetting the transfer of the technologies developed in the research laboratory into its own range of products for the marketplace. Its competence lies in its strong academic capability and technical ability for both software and hardware development. www.hwcomms.com
- QinetiQ is a leading international defence and security technology company which develops innovative technology-based solutions and products and provides technology-rich support services for government organisations and commercial customers around the world. www.qinetiq.com