How to meet an unknown challenge – Why do we misjudge Cyber Security and Data Protection?

General human behaviour
Facing a challenge and taking precautionary measures is a basic and normal part of human life. But emotions play a key role with regard to the practical consequences of threats. Very often we are very anxious although the real danger is very small. On the other hand we tend to ignore many dangers, in particular if there is no practical experience or no easy-to-understand evaluation. These mechanisms apply to individuals, companies, groups and societies as well. The whole situation is even worse if uncritical parts of the dangers are small and obvious and supposed experts are not really up to the problems.

Cyber security in particular
These arguments all fit to the issue of Cyber Security and Data Protection. If there are different interest groups, if the issue has big economic importance and if opinions of experts differ, these mechanisms are even much more important. Furthermore for the present Cyber situation practical problems can hardly be solved. As a consequence for an unknown digital future the problem is even less solvable. Furthermore the range of opinions with regard to importance and dangers is huge and measures for the digital future need early preparation. It is impossible to explain the whole issue and to go into details with some sentences. CECUA devotes special awareness to these issues (for further information see related publications on www.cecua.eu: digital future, smart home, infrastructures, Europe, user rights and more).

Resulting situation
In this way we don’t know the problem sufficiently and even if we understand it there is no comfortable solution. On the other hand the related ‘unknown’ dangers don’t burden us. Furthermore the benefits of many new functions are much more obvious than the dangers. Therefore, according to our usual human behavior we would sleep well further on and wait and see. Unfortunately, the issue is basic for our future life with incredibly high vital dangers and many processes are irreversible at the time of sufficient experience. Furthermore one must say unfortunately that it is easier to explain the issue to experts than create awareness of average citizens.

What can be done?
In this situation closing our eyes is the worst of all. Therefore, we have to overcome our typical personal emotions and the typical behavior of human groups and societies. Instead, we have to listen to good advice. But who has the really good advice and what can be done? At first, we should recognize the problem and the general dilemma and improve awareness of all relevant stakeholders. Secondly, we can only try our best. Thirdly, we should try to optimize our measures due to further experiences and findings. Even partial solutions are very difficult and it is impossible to solve the whole problem in the short-term and sustainable. But nevertheless short steps in right directions as well as single measures to avoid dangers have vital importance.

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