UK scientists working to help cut ID theft

The National Physical Laboratory (NPL) is part of Biotesting Europe, a new €358,000 biometrics project, part-funded by the European Union. The project will ensure that future testing procedures and facilities meet the needs of systems users and developers, building confidence in this growing industry.

Biometric recognition systems measure unique behavioural or physical traits to recognise people. These can be as varied as iris images, fingerprints, the structure of veins in the hand, or even an individual's typing rhythm.

Currently they are predominantly used in national government systems for border control or criminal justice. They could equally be used in a domestic context to reduce identity theft by helping to secure bank accounts or corporate IT systems. For example the use of fingerprint readers when paying by credit or debit card could make identity fraud more difficult.

With a range of approaches and technologies available for biometric recognition and new ones constantly in development, the field is a fast moving one. Before investing in systems, buyers need to be assured of the usability and reliability of products. Similarly, technology developers benefit from independent testing regimes that allow them to prove their products and trial them in combination with existing systems. There is a need for a European network of resources for testing systems and products. This network would improve access to testing and avoid duplicating existing facilities. Before significant additional investment is made, there is a need for an audit of the resources currently available and the needs of customers.

NPL is uniquely qualified to play a part in this research. It holds world-leading independent expertise in the evaluation and calibration of biometric systems and its scientists are well respected in the field.

The results that emerge from Biotesting Europe will provide a clear direction for the future development of shared resources for biometric testing.

Source: National Physical Laboratory