

# A Sharper Focus on RFID Privacy Issues

A European report presents an objective view of privacy issues, and AIM Global launches a new educational effort.

By Mark Roberti

July 16, 2007—So much nonsense is written about the privacy issues related to radio frequency identification, it's enough to drive supporters of the technology crazy. But things might be starting to change. The [European Parliament's Scientific Technology Options Assessment \(STOA\)](#) committee has issued a report stating what I've been saying for years—that RFID has had no negative impact on privacy (see [European Study Probes RFID's Impact on Privacy](#)).

The report looks at real-world deployments and finds no evidence of the nightmare scenarios many opponents conjure up—such as criminals skimming data from RFID tags without someone's knowledge. The report does make the case that the technology could be misused in ways that infringe on consumer privacy. No surprise there, though—a lot of technologies can be abused.

The RFID industry has not been sitting back. Some vendors have been developing new technologies to secure tag data and reduce the risk of unauthorized interrogators reading it. Both [AIM Global](#) and [EPCglobal](#) have undertaken efforts to educate end users how to deploy the technologies in ways that don't infringe on privacy. We've seen several groups, such as the [Center for Democracy and Technology](#), develop best practices for protecting privacy when deploying RFID.

AIM recently launched a new effort to educate legislators, journalists and the public at large about privacy issues and the many benefits RFID can bring to consumers individually (better service, more product information, faster payments and so on) and society as a whole (including improved recycling, food safety and border security).

RELATED\_ARTICLES It's encouraging that a number of RFID vendors that are AIM members have made a financial commitment to support this effort (I'm not sure if they want to be named publicly at this point). Still, I hope some leading end users will also pony up some money so AIM can hire a public relations firm to get positive stories about RFID in the press and educate legislators about the good the technology can do. The financial commitment would be small, but the long-term benefits could be huge. If misinformation leads to laws or public attitudes that stymie RFID adoption, businesses won't be the only ones to lose.

Please contact AIM's Linda Young ( [l.young@aimglobal.org](mailto:l.young@aimglobal.org) ) if you want to support this effort.

*Mark Roberti is the founder and editor of RFID Journal. If you would like to comment on this article, click on the link below.*

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