

CoMiFin-ICA (Communication Middleware for Monitoring Financial Critical Infrastructure – International Cooperation Aspects) held a workshop and project meeting in Rome on October 11-12 2010. Attendees included members of the CoMiFin project team from the University of Rome, IBM research, Eltag Datamat, as well as representatives of the Bank of Italy and the Italian Banking Association, and Sandia Labs. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss IT security challenges to the banking industry and the role of information sharing among banks in meeting those challenges. As bank transactions are increasingly managed on-line their public interfaces become increasingly attractive targets of fraudulent use and malicious disruptive attack. The main CoMiFin program (of which this collaborative effort is an adjunct) has been designing and testing IT systems to counter such attacks since 2008. The workshop also included a demonstration of the ability of these systems to identify the port scanning activities and concurrent transaction attempts that are the signatures of malicious use.

Diversity among banks' IT systems and a strong motivation to protect transaction information, both for client confidentiality and competitiveness reasons, create barriers to information sharing. The CoMiFin system design seeks to penetrate these barriers by allowing graded participation in the system with corresponding degrees of access to the system's analytical results. In addition to such technological encouragements to cooperate, system-level supervisors such as national central banks or the European Central Bank could create incentives for banks to share information. During the workshop Sandia representatives proposed a modeling study of the benefits both to individual banks and to the banking system as a whole that would come from information sharing. The aim of this study is to understand how system-wide security changes with different degrees of participation by individual banks, and to evaluate the effectiveness of policies meant to foster sufficient participation to realize large systemic benefit.

The project meeting following the workshop included preliminary planning for the second workshop, to be held in Albuquerque in March of 2011. The two primary topics to be discussed are the "uptake" model evaluating policies for banks' participation in information sharing (described above) and technological trends in cyber security. Sandia's extensive resources in cyber security are expected to lead to a very fruitful interaction with CoMiFin personnel.