



## EC awards contract to CYBERSPACE consortium to enhance cybersecurity in Europe

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The European Commission has awarded a €3.2 million contract to the [CYBERSPACE](#) consortium, comprising 11 partners from eight EU countries, to pursue a three-year project funded by the Internal Security Fund — Police to enhance cybersecurity across the EU. The project aims to improve information sharing, develop investigative tools, and advance cooperation between European governments, law enforcement agencies (LEAs), businesses and the public to better detect, report, prevent and respond to cybercrime.

### Enhancing cybersecurity in Europe

Cyberattacks are not only a massive drain on the global economy (€5.5 trillion in 2020) but also bring large social costs, considering the lives ruined, the stress of identity theft, the damage to society's trust in our institutions, etc. Despite the urgency behind tackling cyberattacks, LEAs lack adequate systems to gather and share information on cybercrime and European countries have few mechanisms in place to tackle state-sponsored cyberattacks in a unified manner.

*“LEAs do not collaborate with businesses enough to leverage private sector contributions to intelligence. Existing investigative tools cannot compete with the increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks. Moreover, the European public requires clear pathways to defend themselves against and report cybercrime,”* says Holger Nitsch from the Bavarian Police Academy, Project Coordinator of CYBERSPACE.

CYBERSPACE aims to address these gaps by:

- Providing LEAs, policymakers and the private sector with a better picture of the extent of cybercrime and cyberattacks in the EU
- Improving public awareness and stimulating stakeholders to report cyberattacks to LEAs and CERTs
- Developing and enhancing investigative and forensic tools to strengthen the capacity of LEAs to investigate cybercrime and cyberattacks
- Fostering cross-border collaboration between LEAs to improve the efficiency of permanent contact points for cybercrime
- Increasing cooperation between European governments to deliver harmonised policy responses to cybercrime.

As the project progresses, it will consider different policy options in response to hacks and attacks like the SolarWinds hack perpetrated by Russia. Since such attacks are against governments, businesses and individuals, all stakeholders need to be engaged in efforts to counter the attacks.

The project will also address ethical and data protection issues and assess societal impacts to ensure the respect of privacy and compliance with ethics requirements and build public trust for the lawful use of the CYBERSPACE tools. An Ethics Advisory Board and a Stakeholder Board with invited external experts will help identify the measures needed to avoid unwanted negative impact or risks to fundamental rights.

### **Launch of the CYBERSPACE project**

The CYBERSPACE project was formally launched at a virtual kick-off meeting on 9 December 2021. The meeting was attended by EC representatives and project partners across Europe – including the scientific community, LEAs, forensic institutes and government ministries. The project launch provided an opportunity to discuss the contributions of the different partners in relation to their areas of specialism and review the objectives of the project.

### **Meet the team**

The project is coordinated by Holger Nitsch from the Bavarian Police Academy (BayHfoD) in Germany. Other consortium partners include Trilateral Research (IE), F-SECURE (Finland), FORTH – the Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas (Greece), KEMEA – Center for Security Studies (Greece), PrivaNova (France), Ministry of Interior (France), Netherlands Forensic Institute (Netherlands), Swedish Police Authority (SPA) and Department of Security (Spain).



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