

CRIME ON THE DARK WEB: LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION IS THE ONLY CURE

29 May 2018

[Press Release](#)



Today, May 29 2018, law enforcement from 28 countries across the globe met at Europol headquarters in The Hague to share knowledge and expertise and discuss a coordinated approach to tackling crime on the dark web. Experts from [Eurojust](#), the [European Commission](#), the [European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction](#) (EMCDDA) and [INTERPOL](#) also contributed to the event.

[Europol](#), through the [European Cybercrime Centre](#) (EC3), has been supporting the investigation of criminal marketplaces on the dark web for some years by sharing tools, tactics, and techniques. The dark web hosts many of the more critical marketplaces for several criminal organisations and individual illegal activities in Europe and around the world. Due to its structural specificities – the possibility to buy and sell anonymously and the fact that it is a digital space that knows no national borders – it is a fertile environment for criminals.

In recent years several successful coordinated investigations were able to take down some of the largest dark web markets, undermining the assets exploited by criminals. In particular, in summer 2017 joint operations led by the US FBI and the Dutch National Police, with the support of Europol and other law enforcement partners, [shut down Alphabay and Hansa](#), two of the largest marketplaces responsible for the trading of over 350 000 illicit goods like drugs, firearms and cybercrime tools, such as malware. In these specific marketplaces, where bitcoins were the dominant payment method, different types of illegal goods and criminal services were sold, even though more than two thirds of transactions were for illicit drugs and chemical substances.

Owing to the success of these operations, the volume of transactions has decreased and some traders have left the dark web platform due to anxiety, uncertainty and the risks regarding the level of anonymity. After the takedown operations, many vendors, who had their shop closed twice in short succession, were not inclined to open them again, while the distrust between vendors and buyers has increased.

Dedicated Dark Web Team

One of Europol's initiatives is to create a coordinated law enforcement approach to tackle crime on the dark web with the participation of law enforcement agencies from across EU Member States, operational third parties as well as other relevant partners, such as Eurojust.

In order to achieve this goal, Europol has established a dedicated Dark Web Team to work together with EU partners and law enforcement globally to reduce the size of this underground illegal economy. It will deliver a complete, coordinated approach: sharing information, providing operational support and expertise in different crime areas and the development of tools, tactics, and techniques to conduct dark web investigations and identify top threats and targets. The team also aims to enhance joint technical and investigative actions, organise training and capacity-building initiatives, together with prevention and awareness-raising campaigns – a 360° strategy against criminality on the dark web.

A shared commitment across the global community and a coordinated approach by law enforcement agencies proved their effectiveness last year and are essential going forward. The scale of the assembly at Europol today demonstrated the global commitment to continued work of this nature and to jointly tackling the use of the dark web as a means to commit crime. This is the primary reason why Europol has decided to create a new Dark Web Investigations Team embedded within its European Cybercrime Centre.

Chief Commissioner Ivaylo Spiridonov, Director of the Bulgarian General Directorate Combatting Organised Crime, delivered the opening remarks on behalf of the current Presidency of the Council of the EU and highlighted that "Today's expert assembly will further enhance the law enforcement's ability to find sustainable solutions and a common coordinated approach to respond to criminality on the dark web".

"The event also marks the official launch of the new Europol Dark Web Team which will provide operational and technical support to law enforcement in thwarting criminality on the dark web in a coordinated and multidisciplinary manner," added Catherine De Bolle, Executive Director of Europol.

In 2010 the European Union (EU) set up a four-year Policy Cycle to ensure greater continuity in the fight against serious international and organised crime. In March 2017 the Council of the EU decided to continue the [EU Policy Cycle](#) for organised and serious international crime for the 2018 - 2021 period. This multiannual Policy Cycle aims to tackle the most significant threats posed by

organised and serious international crime to the EU in a coherent and methodological manner. This is achieved by improving and strengthening cooperation between the relevant services of EU Member States, institutions and agencies, as well as non-EU countries and organisations, including the private sector where relevant. Cybercrime is one of the priorities of the Policy Cycle.

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