EU Cybersecurity Strategy Includes New Public-Private Partnership

JULY 8, 2016

At the same time that the European Parliament approved an EU-wide cybersecurity directive, the European Commission also announced a new public-private partnership on cybersecurity. Made up of cybersecurity market players, including the recently launched European Cyber Security Organisation (ECSO), and members from national, regional and local government, research centers, and academia, the partnership aims to increase cooperation, build security solutions and help Europe's cybersecurity industry take advantage of the growing global cybersecurity market.

The partnership is considered a key component of the European Commission's efforts to support a Digital Single Market. According to the Commission's partnership fact sheet, gaps continue to threaten online network security and "a more joined-up approach" is needed to supply cybersecurity solutions and to ensure their widespread deployment by companies, public authorities and EU citizens at large. The European Union has committed to invest €450 million under its Horizon 2020 research and innovation framework, and industry is expected to invest triple that amount—raising €1.8 billion for the partnership by the end of the decade.

The effort has a number of lofty ambitions. For example, the European Commission discusses the hope that investments in open source software and open standards will help obtain "technological breakthroughs and master key future cybersecurity technologies," and it hopes to align the partnership's efforts with the European Open Science Cloud and quantum supercomputing initiative. The partnership also will pool together industrial and public resources in order to:

- build trust between Member States and industry by fostering cooperation on early-stage research;
- align supply and demand for cybersecurity products and services by helping industry better understand the security requirements of end users and industrial consumers of cybersecurity products; and
- facilitate common digital security, privacy and data protection requirements for industry sectors, such as encrypted storage or processing solutions.

The partnership's technical priorities include:

- privacy-by-design and identity, access and trust management
- data security, including privacy-aware big data analytics and operations on encrypted data;
- protection of ICT infrastructure; and
- cybersecurity services broadly.

Other priorities that have been identified are education and training development, standardization efforts, and ways to boost cybersecurity for small- and medium-sized enterprises. The partnership was signed by the European Commission and ECSO on July 5, 2016, and both parties hope to begin accepting cybersecurity proposals on these topics by early 2017.