

Brussels, 27 April 2009

EU Commissioner Reding calls for preventive action to make the EU resilient against cyber attacks

In a video posted on her website this morning, Viviane Reding, the European Union's Commissioner for Information Society and Media, called on Member States to act to ensure that Europe's electronic communication networks are well protected. While being the backbone of most other crucial services, such as energy and water distribution, air and road traffic control or banking, European critical information infrastructures are themselves under constant threat of technical breakdowns and cyber attacks.

"The reality of cyber attacks is nowadays quite far from being a game or a proof of intelligence and curiosity. Cyber attacks have become a tool in the hands of organised crime, a means of blackmailing companies and organisations, of exploiting the weakness of people, but also an instrument of foreign and military policy, and globally a challenge to democracy and economy," said Viviane Reding, the EU's Commissioner for Information Society and Media, speaking ahead of today's EU Ministerial Conference on cyber security taking place in Tallinn. "A one month-long internet interruption in Europe or the US would mean economic losses of at least 150 billion euro," added Commissioner Reding.

Essential services that underpin the functioning of the European economy and daily life depend on the smooth work of communication networks. With recent examples of cyber attacks on Estonia, Lithuania and Georgia and a 10% to 20% probability that information networks will be hit by a major breakdown in the next 10 years, the protection of Europe's networks is of highest priority.

Currently, there are wide differences in Member States' approaches and capacities to respond to a potential network breakdown. *"So far, the EU's 27 Member States have been quite negligent. Although the EU has created an agency for network and information security, called ENISA, this instrument remains mainly limited to being a platform to exchange information and is not, in the short term, going to become the European headquarters of defense against cyber attacks,"* warned Commissioner Reding.

In her video message, Commissioner Reding called for swift action to ensure that the EU is protected by a strong and effective cyber security strategy: *"I believe Europe must do more for the security of its communication networks. Europe needs a 'Mister Cyber Security' as we have a 'Mister Foreign Affairs', a security tsar with authority to act immediately if a cyber attack is underway, a Cyber Cop in charge of the coordination of our forces and of developing tactical plans to improve our level of resilience. I will keep fighting for this function to be established as soon as possible."*

Representatives of the Member States, the European Commission and experts are meeting on the 27-28 of April in Tallinn, Estonia, to discuss the strategy recently proposed by the Commission for protecting Europe from cyber attacks and disruptions ([IP/09/494](#)).

Background

Last March, the Commission called on public administrations, businesses and citizens to act to improve the security and resilience of Europe's critical information infrastructures ([IP/09/494](#); [MEMO/09/141](#)). It urged both public and private sector actors to ensure that necessary levels of preventive, detection, emergency and recovery measures are in place in all Member States. The Commission will foster close cooperation among all stakeholders through a "European Public-Private Partnership for Resilience", by supporting the development of a European information sharing and alert system, as well as regular exercises for large-scale network security incident response.

Commissioner Reding's video message is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/reding/video/index_en.htm

Official website of the EU Ministerial Conference on Critical Information Infrastructure Protection:

<http://www.tallinnciip.eu/?id=conference>