
PRIVACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE OF ENCRYPTION & ANONYMITY ONLINE

Conference

The balance between privacy and security has always been central to law enforcement operations. Europol is proud to have implemented one of the most robust data protection regimes in the world of law enforcement. This allows the organisation to effectively support and strengthen European Union (EU) Member States' efforts to prevent and combat serious crime and terrorism while duly respecting individuals' rights to privacy.

The European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) at Europol was established to strengthen the law enforcement response to cybercrime in the EU and to help protect European citizens, businesses and governments. Its creation was a priority under the EU Internal Security Strategy. However, striking the right balance in cyberspace has become particularly challenging due to the ever increasing use of encryption and online anonymity tooling.

The availability of these technologies is important and legitimate in many cases. This can range from citizens with a simple desire for privacy, and businesses wanting to keep their strategies confidential, to activists needing to report safely from within oppressive regimes, journalists protecting their sources and military, as well as law enforcement, shielding their sensitive communications.

However, the reality is that cybercriminals are also actively abusing encryption and anonymisation solutions to protect their identities, their communications, the data they store, and to use virtual currencies to obfuscate their financial transactions – all done in a way which often makes it impossible to bring these individuals to justice.

Are we as a society ready to accept this as 'collateral damage' to our freedom? How should law enforcement authorities deal with a situation in which they are not able to gather the required evidence to fight crime and terrorism? Or should we not strive to seek a more balanced approach as was achieved for various forms of communication in the past?

The current discussion between law enforcement agencies, on the one hand, and privacy advocates, on the other, all too often has the characteristics of a zero-sum game. What is needed is a constructive debate with the goal to make the Internet both an open and safe space.

This conference will bring together stakeholders from various backgrounds, including law enforcement agencies, as well as representatives of the legislator, justice, private parties, academia, NGOs and any other experts willing to share their perspective in order to contribute to effectively

striking the right balance between freedom and security.

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