

TEAMING UP FOR 'COMBATING THE ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN' (COSEC)

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At the end of October 2017, the 18th Europol training course on 'Combating the Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (COSEC)', took place in Selm, Germany, at the Police Academy of North Rhine Westphalia.

This 10-day course provided training for 65 representatives from EU Member States, non-EU States, Europol and INTERPOL. The training was delivered by police trainers from Europol, Australia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, New Zealand, OLAF, Portugal and one from Ireland on behalf of INHOPE. Trainers had extensive knowledge and experience in investigating and combating the sexual abuse of children online.

The objective of this course is to give investigators and magistrates the required knowledge to understand the environment in which these crimes are committed. Whilst focusing on fundamental internet technologies used by online child sex offenders, the course follows a practical approach continuously linking topics to current cases and trends in offending, and stressing the importance of international police cooperation. Other topics such as offender psychology or crime scene management complement the curriculum in order to draw a comprehensive picture of this criminal environment.

Over the last few years the curriculum has been adapted to reflect the victim centric approach

adopted by Europol's Cybercrime Centre's EC3 and its partners. Students, leveraging newly acquired technical and investigative knowledge, participate in victim identification workshops based on live cases yielding concrete operational outcomes.

In addition to lectures, ranging from perpetrator psychology and the latest online investigation techniques, to international cooperation, the course programme included a wide range of hands-on exercises with the intention of aligning law enforcement investigation standards.

Steven Wilson, Head of Business at Europol's European Cybercrime Centre: "Investigators need to be constantly trained and updated in the skills and technology required to do their work in this challenging area. In this EC3-COSEC training, law enforcement officers from around the world learn the value of practical international cooperation and how to continue that in their daily work. This is the most effective way to combat the transnational nature of online child sexual exploitation and the crimes that enable it. The training course is delivered by international subject matter experts and it continues to be an excellent example of the commitment that Europol and its law enforcement partners make to tackling online child sexual exploitation."

Since this highly respected Europol course first course took place in 2000, it has provided expert training to approximately 865 law enforcement officers and members of the judiciary from EU Member States and from countries around the world.

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