NeCS project to fill the gap in required cybersecurity experts for industry

Cyber-security is a crucial societal need, with a specific demand of high-qualified specialists in cyber threats management that requires multidisciplinary expertise, including also technical and legal policy compliance

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Over the past decade, cyber-security attacks have become increasingly complex motivated in part to the emergence of an illegal black market around personal information extracted from businesses, governments and public administration. The growing realization that valuable intellectual property can be stolen from IT systems also contributes to foster the security threats. Some estimates put the global cost to business as high as $1 trillion.

It is this threat that forced the UK Government to boost its investment in cyber-security. Over £860 million has committed to protect UK businesses in 2015. It is not an isolated case; most of European countries have developed a cybersecurity strategy to face cybercrime next years.

The growing importance of cybersecurity for the digital society has increased the demand of qualified workers in this field. Employment of computer security specialists is expected to increase by 27 percent by 2016, which is much faster than the average for all occupations, according specialized job searching web sites notices; other sources observe that there is a critical need to fill 50,000 cyber-security jobs in the near future in the US federal government and private industry.

Indeed, several sources confirm there is a lack of expertise in information and computer security, despite the high demand. It is also interesting to notice that the demand of experts able to cope with regulatory and compliance aspects is increasing. Considering that several EU member state government agencies also report a declining number of students studying computer science at University, analysts predict that the skills shortage in the cyber-security sector may continue for up to 20 years. Further evidence is found in a recent survey among ISACA members, a nonprofit, global association addressed to share knowledge and practices for information systems; it was found that 92% of those planning to hire more cybersecurity professionals this year highlight their difficulties in finding skilled candidates.

NeCS (European Network of Cyber Security) is a European initiative funded by the European Commission under the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) theme of the Horizon 2020 framework program (H2020 – ICT – 2014) that aims to contribute to reduce the gap between training of cybersecurity researchers and job market demand, helping and supporting researchers with a remarkable background in cybersecurity to access to career opportunities that fit with their profiles in the IT industry. NeCS has as major goal to create an European Network for Cybersecurity (NECS), formed in response to the unsatisfied demand.

However, job placement for these researchers is just the beginning of the story; the NeCS network goes well beyond this by developing an effective research training infrastructure that is an asset at the European level of its own.

Fabio Martenilli, Consiglio Nacionale de Ricerche, coordinator of NeCS project, says: "…………………………"

NeCS will impact European cybersecurity sector at several levels, creating a new wave of experts in cyber-security. In the meantime, the research activities performed will produce several direct and indirect results, contributing to create and disseminate new knowledge and expertise in several disciplines and boost new technology development.

The initiative will also focus in training and research infrastructures as a way to increase the number of human resources trained and created at European level. The training material and events developed will be the actual seed that will benefit many other researchers in Europe.

The number of trainees in the relevant network-wide events will be high, and not just limited to researchers, there will be set up specific courses than will enable the direct or indirect uptake of cyber-security solutions and products.

The project started in September 2015, coordinated by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, scientific research public organization set in Italy, with partners Universidad de Málaga (UMA), Poste Italiane (Italy), Technische Universitaet Darmstadt (Germany), Universita degli studi di Trento (Italy), University of Kent (UK), British Telecommunications (UK), Atos (Spain). More information about the project is available at www.necs-project.eu. For information, please contact the project coordinator, Mr. Fabio Martinelli at Fabio.Martinelli@iit.cnr.it