# European Commission: Combatting Cybercrime and Ensuring Network Security

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On 30 January 2001, the European Commission presented a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament on its policy orientations concerning improving the security of information infrastructures and combating computer-related crime. The importance of network security and the fight against cybercrime are highlighted in the eEurope Action Plan launched by the Commission in June 2000 (see IRIS 2000-6: 5).

The Commission feels that information and communication infrastructures have become a critical part of national economies and therefore need to be protected against their own vulnerabilities and against criminal activities. In the Communication, computer-related crime is addressed in the broadest sense, as any crime that in some way or other involves the use of information technology. A distinction can be made between computer specific crimes, such as virus attacks, and traditional crimes performed with the aid of computer technology, such as using the Internet for smuggling, counterfeiting, etc.

The European Union has already taken a number of steps in this area, such as fighting harmful and illegal content on the Internet and protecting intellectual property and personal data. This Communication aims at forming a harmonised policy to combat computer crime and install necessary mechanisms, without hindering the rapid development of e-commerce in the EU, and respecting the fundamental right to privacy.

For the future, the Communication announces both legislative proposals and non-legislative measures. The legislative proposals will deal with child pornography offences, the trafficking in human beings, actions against racism and xenophobia on the Internet and an approximation of substantive criminal law in the area of high-tech crime. The non-legislative measures will focus on encouraging awareness and training among various information security actors, the creation of an EU forum and the training of law enforcement staff on high-tech crime issues via existing Commission programmes.

***Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Creating a Safer Information Society by Improving the***

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