

Discovering the Top Young European Master Hackers

This is the day that has been anticipated in the past few weeks and months by **the best young cyber talents in Austria, Germany, Romania, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom**. Each country ran a national competition to form a team of its top 10 talents to participate in the final of the first **European Cyber Security Challenge**, an initiative supported by ENISA, the EU Agency for Network and Information Security. This year, the teams travel to Lucerne, Switzerland to compete against each other in various disciplines related to IT security.

Lucerne, October 21st, 2015 – on the 21st of October, the top young European hackers meet in Switzerland to both infiltrate and secure computer systems and to uncover the wrongdoings of cyber criminals. It sounds like a scene from a movie – but that is the setting at the European Cyber Security Challenge final (ECSC). These high school and college-age students are the best up-and-coming talents in the IT security sector.

The Road to Victory

The young hackers have to find security vulnerabilities in web applications, decipher encrypted documents, or gain access to a protected system to prevent that cyber criminals are the first to find and exploit them. However, technical skills are just one side of the medal; soft skills like their ability to work on a team or their presentation style are of similar importance on the road to victory. “It’s not enough to simply find security problems and fix them. Working out a solution as a team and being able to communicate with others is just as important for a ‘good hacker,’” explains Nicholas Hansen of Swiss Cyber Storm. That’s why the winning team won’t necessarily be the one with the best technical masterminds; good planning, teamwork and a strategy how to approach and distribute the different tasks is just as important.

Hacking – An unique Hobby but for people with White Hats only

“One requirement for participants is that they have not completed any higher education degree in IT security (e.g., a Master’s degree in Information Security) or a related field. This means the participants acquired the majority of their knowledge in their free time” explained Steve Purser Head of Core Operations at ENISA.

It is important to note that only so-called White Hat hackers are accepted to compete in the European Cyber Security Challenge. In contrast to Black Hats, white hat hackers break security for non-malicious reasons, mainly to test their own security system or while working for a security company which makes security software. The term "white hat" in Internet slang refers to an ethical hacker. Companies and the public sector both profit from this trend as well: the young cyber talents acquire additional skills while learning their hobby that are in high demand on the job market.

“With increasing digitalisation, information security considerations are becoming more and more important. Organisations rely on specialists who know how to protect their infrastructure. This includes knowing what cyber criminals are capable of and how they attack our systems. That’s one important piece in the puzzle to reliably secure systems and repel attacks,” Bernhard Tellenbach, president of Swiss Cyber Storm, explains.



“The European Cyber Security Challenge is an opportunity for participants, who are not IT professionals, to test and put their digital skills to work. On the other hand it acts as a platform for the exchange of good practices among contestants, and to motivate young people to enhance and develop further their skills to tackle online threats. As practice has shown, cooperation is key to achieve cyber resilience. ENISA supports the initiative is keen on establishing the activity within the NIS community” said Steve Purser.

If you wish to be among the competing teams, countries and organisers are invited to get in touch with **ENISA** who is organising next year’s European Cyber Security Challenge. Improve your skills and staying safe online! Who knows, it may lead to a career in cyber security!

Notes to editors:

About ENISA: The European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) is a centre of expertise for cyber security in Europe. ENISA supports the EU and the Member States in enhancing and strengthening their capability and preparedness to prevent, detect and respond to network and information security problems and incidents. ENISA also supports the development of the European Union (EU) policy and law on matters relating to network and information security (NIS), thereby contributing to economic growth in Europe’s internal market.

Switzerland: <http://challenge.swisscyberstorm.com/>

Germany: <http://www.cscg.de/>

Austria: <http://www.verbotengut.at/>

UK: <http://cybersecuritychallenge.org.uk/>

Spain: <https://cybercamp.es/>

Romania: <http://www.cybersecuritychallenge.ro/>

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