

OPINION

EUROPEAN CYBERSECURITY MUST BE STRENGTHENED



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European Cybersecurity Forum, CYBERSEC, was a success. It was great to meet cybersecurity experts from so many countries, discussions were both topical and interesting, and arrangements worked perfectly. A warm thank to the organisers and colleagues. We'll see again next year!

Cybersecurity has entered the domain of foreign and security policy due to the ever-globalising world. In this digital domain, strategic advantage can be either lost or won. It is very significant to encourage us Europeans to think over cybersecurity issues together especially from the strategic point of view. We are no longer securing computers – we are securing societies and our way of life. We are also protecting our values. As it says in the EU Cyber Security Strategy, *"The EU's core values apply as much in the digital as in the physical world."*

Most European countries have cyber strategies on paper, but public discussion at policy and doctrinal levels and practical measures are not as mature as they are for example in the United States. Without serious efforts in Europe the gap is only likely to widen. This would increase the potential for Europe to become the focal point for more serious cybercrime, espionage and even debilitating attacks.

But it is not easy to deal with 28 countries and despite these steps at the EU level, European cybersecurity remains almost exclusively a national prerogative. This must be changed. The most important driving force for a new "Cyber Europe" could be European industry. At the moment companies outside of Europe are dominating the rapidly growing cybersecurity market. For example, in the latest list of "cybersecurity companies to watch in 2015" there are few European companies in Top 100.

At the moment there is a special opportunity for European companies because there is a lot of suspicion in the market towards cybersecurity products from the US, China, and Russia. European companies would be able to enter the market as a more trustworthy partner.

Europeans are very dependent on foreign internet services, especially GAFA, which stands for Google-Apple-Facebook-Amazon. Nine out of ten Internet searches in Europe use Google. Where are European alternatives, many people ask? It is a very relevant question. This dominance should worry Europe, even if the current situation works fairly well.

In the US, Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon are generally praised as examples of innovation and the same kind of innovativeness must be encouraged and supported in Europe. The question is not only how much Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon dominate every facet of our lives, but also how important and precious is the data they possess in today's world. This data should be understood as a part of cyber power - and Europeans are letting it go abroad.

European cybersecurity companies and digital platform industries must transform themselves and become more competitive. This development has to be supported strongly. It is also the job of politicians and lawmakers to protect both European industries and European digital rights. Cybersecurity issues should be brought more actively into the political discussions in European governments and Europe must clearly outline its own policy – and practical activities – on topical cybersecurity questions. We have to understand that without European cybersecurity industry there will not be credible European cybersecurity. This is the only way to secure European cyber future. ■