European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)

Annex I

Approved by the EUCPN Management Board in 2014

Please complete the template in English in compliance with the ECPA criteria contained in the Rules and procedures for awarding and presenting the European Crime Prevention Award (Par.2 §3).

General information

- Please specify your country.

Austria

- Is this your country's ECPA entry or an additional project?

It is our ECPA entry.

- What is the title of the project?

Watchlist Internet

- Who is responsible for the project? Contact details.

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- Start date of the project (dd/mm/yyyy)? Is the project still running (Yes/No)? If not, please provide the end date of the project.

03/07/2013, ongoing project

- Where can we find more information about the project? Please provide links to the project's website or online reports or publications (preferably in English).

www.watchlist-internet.at (only German, website and reports)

- Please give a **one page** description of the project (**Max. 600 words)**

The "Watchlist Internet" is an independent information platform to prevent and fight internet fraud and other online traps. It is an extension of the long-established Austrian online dispute settlement body "Internet Ombudsmann.at". The project closely cooperates with this legal advisory unit and passes on cases to law enforcement agencies when necessary. Established in 2013 the Watchlist Internet is since then growing in terms of visibility and usage. 81.000 users visit the website of the Watchlist Internet each month to report and inform themselves on internet fraud.

The cases are gathered on the one hand by the project team of four legal and consumer protection experts, on the other hand, in close interaction with a group of public and private stakeholders from the financial, policy as well the executive sector. This encompasses the biggest e-commerce platform of Austria "willhaben", the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, the Labor Chambor Austria (AK Österreich), the Bank Austria and the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Also, users are encouraged to report online if they for instance find a fake shop or receive suspicious emails. In total, 4.036 cases of internet fraud were reported to the Watchlist Internet by citizens in 2016. The team then researches into the cases and posts relevant information and warnings on the website as well as in the other channels used such as social media and a newsletter.

The key mechanism of the project that ensures its success is the focus on search engine optimization. Citizens need to be reached in the moment before they close a dubious deal online, thus, it is essential that the webpage's content on current cases of cybercrime appears within the top results of search engines. In practice, around 78% of the users find the website through a key-word search online.

In sum, the website encompasses warnings and information on current internet fraud cases, as well as awareness raising content on a more general level. It is remarkable to note that the project reaches mostly over 50 years old citizens, as well as men and women equally distributed. Hence, a special emphasis is put on an easy language for news articles, which include the minimum of necessary, technological details.

The European relevance of this project lies in the fact that internet fraud is a growing issue and cannot be resolved by dispute settlement, but requires a combination of efficient warning systems for users, easily-accessible reporting systems as well as digital literacy among internet users. The Watchlist Internet aims to reach these three objectives: by first building a publicly widely-known knowledge base on internet fraud, second, by strengthening the public awareness on the theme, and third, by closely working within a network of relevant stakeholders.

- **The project shall focus on prevention and/or reduction of everyday crime and fear of crime within the theme.**

  - How does the project contribute to crime prevention and/or to the reduction of crime or the fear of crime? (**Max. 150 words**)

The Watchlist Internet contributes to crime prevention, because it serves as an information platform and as a point of contact for internet users that encounter dubious sites or other online traps. The interaction with users and with the dispute settlement body "Internet Ombudsmann" is essential to meet the objective of prevention. In total, 4.036 cases of internet fraud were reported to the Watchlist Internet by users in 2016. Additionally, there are cases of actual victims to internet fraud, which address Ombudsmann.at for legal support. In 2016, 61 percent of its 6.000 cases were about internet fraud and could not be solved with dispute settlement. Further, the Watchlist Internet contributes to reducing online fraud, because it obtains news on current cases also in close interaction with relevant stakeholders. The project exchanges information also with the cybercrime-competence-center of the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

  - How is the project contributing to raising citizens' awareness of crime prevention? (**Max. 150 words**)

The user statistics of the Watchlist Internet are an indicator of its success in awareness raising issues. Since the start of the project (07/2013-08/2017) 890 news articles have been published on the website. More than 3,2 million visitors were counted and, currently, the website has approximately 81.000 visits per month. Most of the users, around 78%, find the website through search engines in the moment of their doubt on certain transaction partners and websites. Since the project start, 18.434 user reports have been filed, currently, this amounts to approx. 240 per month. The website reaches its audience also directly per newsletter (3500 subscribers) and a Facebook page (6200 likes). Due to the high media interest in the project – often, contact is established on current cases – the awareness raising is successful: so far, there were more than 570 media reports on the project (TV, radio, print, online).

- **The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives.**

  - What was the reason for setting up the project? What problem(s) did it aim to tackle?

Increasingly consumers do their shopping on the internet and while most transactions turn out well, there is a constant increase in online traps and internet fraud. These cases were originally collected on the website of the "Internet Ombudsmann", an independent dispute settlement and advisory entity of the ÖIAT. Due to the rise in cases, the Watchlist Internet was launched as a prevention project that bundles its strength on warnings and the awareness-raising issue on these themes. Internet fraud and online traps cannot be solved with dispute settlements, they require efficient mechanisms to quickly warn users on current cases and pro-actively provide them with the knowledge they need to spot dubious transaction partners in advance. In 2016, 55% of the cases of the "Internet Ombudsmann"

concerned internet fraud and online traps. Thus, the need for the Watchlist Internet as an information platform to support and warn internet users, while using their knowledge to detect new cases, is highly actual.

- Was the context analysed **before** the project was initiated? How, and by whom? Which data were used? (**Max. 150 words**)

The analysis of the context beforehand by the team of the Internet Ombudsmann, was the cause to start the project. The rise of internet fraud cases that cannot be settled by the dispute settlement body, was calling to raise the efforts in awareness raising measures. In 2012 there were 5.617 such cases, a rise of 18 percent to the year before. Based on this data, the Watchlist Internet was founded by the Austrian Institute of Applied Telecommunication (ÖIAT) in July 2013. From its beginnings, the project cooperated with the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social and Consumer Protection, the Austrian Chamber of Labour (AK) and the biggest Austrian online-trade platform „willhaben.at". These partners contribute since then to the funding of the project, supported by the Bank Austria and by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in Austria.

- What were the objective(s) of the project? Please, if applicable, distinguish between main and secondary objectives. (**Max. 150 words**)

The main objective of the Watchlist Internet is to be an independent information platform on concrete cases of internet fraud and other online traps. Citizens shall find warnings with a keyword-search online within the top results. To ensure serious, comprehensive and up-to-date information, the team researches into every report filed by users and closely cooperates with its advisory council of stakeholders and the Internet Ombudsman.

The secondary objectives are awareness raising measures to prevent online crime. The website consists also in a resource platform for citizens, for media and consumer protection or advisory agencies. The news articles insofar also give pro-active tips and information to online users on how to recognize trustworthy sites in general. The team focuses also on PR and uses methods such as workshops to raise awareness.

- Did you build in internal goals to measure the performance of the project? If so, please describe at what stage of the project and how you measured whether the project was moving in the planned direction. (**Max. 150 words**)

The internal goals to measure the performance of the project concern on the one hand the visitors of the website Watchlist Internet, the output of news articles by the team and the response of users on social media. The project has been successful since its beginnings, with a yearly growth of all these indicators. The goals set for 2017/2018 the goal have already been met, such as to have more than 80.000 visitors per month for the website of Watchlist Internet, to reach more than 3.500 subscribers to the newsletter, publish more than 150 news articles and/or warnings, and to attain more than 6.000 likes for Facebook posts.

- Has there been a <u>process evaluation</u>? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?) and what where the main results? (**max. 300 words) -** *for more information on process evaluation, see EUCPN Toolbox No.3, p.9-10 & part 2 - section 2A*

> There has been an internal process evaluation in August 2014 in form of an online survey among readers of the Watchlist Internet website to optimize the work. Among the interesting results were for instance the age groups: 24,31% of the users were 56 to 65 years old and 20,44% were 66 to 75 years old. This has shaped the focus of the Watchlist Internet on adequate language to catch the readers. Already then, the feedback on the content was highly positive and 75% of the respondents indicated that they already had been on the website more than once. Not only do the warnings reach an audience, but also the information-based articles: 18,24% were on the website to gain information on a specific case, but 44.03% to generally inform themselves about internet fraud. Interestingly, 34% of the respondents had already been victim of online fraud. The results of the survey helped to further shape the project after the first year.

- Has there been an <u>outcome or impact evaluation</u>? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?), which data and evaluation method where used and what were the main results? (**Max. 300 words**) *- for more information on outcome or impact evaluation, see EUCPN Toolbox No.3, p.7-9 & part 2 - section 2A*

> There has been no external outcome or impact evaluation. The internal impact evaluation is done on a yearly basis and is based on the Google analytics (user statistics, website visitors, visit duration, etc.), the feedback from users and funding partners, as well as constantly with checks on whether news about internet fraud lead to the disappearance of a fake-site. The user statistics show an increase in interest for the project. The feedback from users is mainly positive, the funding partners show continuous support since the start of the project and new partners could be acquired. The advisory board with public and private stakeholders is also one key mechanism to evaluate the outcomes and the impact of the project in its continuity.

- **The project shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches.**
  - How is the project innovative in its methods and/or approaches? (**Max. 150 words**)

> The innovative approach of the Watchlist Internet consists in its closeness to the online fraud scene – the webpage's content is optimized to be found in search engines within the top results, in order to ensure that users find information at the tip of their fingers in the moment of doubt. The methods used for awareness raising are innovative insofar as they are not solely text-based, but for instance use videos and workshops for awareness raising issues. Also, a special emphasis is put into reaching the digitally less-literate target groups, such as senior citizens, with the use of an easy language which includes technical details only if necessary.

- **The project shall be based on cooperation between partners, where possible.**

  - Which partners or stakeholders were involved in the project and what was their involvement? (**Max. 200 words**)

The work is carried out in close cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, the Labor Chambor Austria (AK Österreich), the largest online shopping platform of Austria „willhaben.at", the Bank Austria and the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The Watchlist Internet was initiated by and is since then in close cooperation with the online dispute settlement body Internet Ombudsmann. All the stakeholders contribute also to the content, as soon as they encounter potential and actual fraud cases. The yearly meeting of all stakeholders in the advisory board consists in an important contribution to the networking between these actors in the fight against and the prevention of online crime.

- **The project shall be capable of replication in other Member States.**

  - How and by whom is the project funded? (**Max. 150 words**)

The Watchlist Internet is currently funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, the Austrian Chamber of Labour, the largest Austrian online market place willhaben.at and the Bank Austria. The project leader is the non-profit organisation "Austrian Institute for Applied Telecommunications" (ÖIAT).

  - What were the costs of the project in terms of finances, material and human resources? (**Max. 150 words**)

The yearly costs of the project amount to approx. 65.000 Euro/year. The large part goes to human resources and the team of four experts on internet security and consumer protection. (Approx. one full-time equivalent) Also, resources are spent on the website, the videos and print material such as folders.

  - Has a cost-benefit analysis been carried out? If so, describe the analysis, including how and by whom it was carried out and list the main findings of the analysis. (**Max. 150 words**)

To assess the benefit of the online crime prevention project "Watchlist Internet" is a highly complex issue. Though, the positive response by users is one reliable indicator, another one is the rise in usage. Also, it has to be stated that the resources used (approx. one full-time equivalent) are minimal regarding the high output and the continuity of the project.

  - Are there adjustments to be made to the project to ensure a successful replication in another Member State?

The project has its focus on Austria and is thus solely available in German. To ensure the successful replication in another Member State, it seems essential to establish close contact with relevant bodies such as for dispute settlement, but also consumer protection

agencies and ideally policy actors. This is relevant because their support with the provision of current cases is crucial for the success of the project. The concept as such can be easily applied in terms of technological requirements (website, search-engine optimization) and resources, but needs to be adjusted according to the national context (relevant actors, cases, policy processes)

- How is the project relevant for other Member States? Please explain the European dimension of your project.

Online crime has no borders. The cases of for instance fake shopping sites documented by the Watchlist concern German, Swiss and other nationalities. The documentation includes numerous international websites and is not restricted to the German-speaking world. The Watchlist Internet participates in the Cyber Security Month in October of the EU, which aims to raise the awareness on cyber security threats. The increase in online fraud is indeed a European phenomenon, which has been addressed the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (enisa) on multiple occasions. The Watchlist Internet complies to the objectives of the enisa to enhance fraud awareness and anti-fraud skills.

Please provide a short general description of the project (abstract for inclusion in the conference booklet – **max. 150 words**).

The Watchlist Internet is a project to prevent and to fight against online crime such as fraud and other online traps. Since 2013 the project team researches into fake sites and online fraud cases, with the objective to seriously inform the public at large with news articles on its website. Its unique selling points are continuity and effective search engine optimization. The project also contributes to fighting online crime at large by the network it has established between e-commerce platforms, private banks, governmental bodies and law enforcement agencies in Austria. Essential to the success of the project is also the close cooperation with the online dispute settlement body "Internet Ombudsmann" and with the stakeholders and users of the website, which contribute to reporting cases.