

GEIGER aims at protecting small businesses against cyber threats

On June 1, 2020, a consortium of 18 organisations launched “GEIGER”, an innovation project that aims to develop a solution that allows small businesses and entrepreneurs to become aware of their risks related to data protection, privacy, and cybersecurity, and get help in reducing these risks.

“COVID-19 lockdowns have forced many small businesses with little to no experience in digital technologies to bring their businesses online. This ‘going digital’ increases the likelihood of incidents due to negligence or malicious attacks and puts the business and clients’ data at risk. GEIGER aims at letting these small businesses know their risks and minimise them with the help from certified security defenders,” said Samuel Fricker from the FHNW University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland, the coordinator of the GEIGER project. “There are plenty of cybersecurity solutions available, but they don’t match the needs of small businesses with no expertise and resources to invest in costly and complicated solutions. We want to close this gap.”

Much like radioactivity, cyber threats are hard to detect without proper tools. The project will collaborate with security specialists, cyber ranges, and national cybersecurity centres to develop GEIGER, a “Geiger counter” for cybersecurity, which will help small businesses to become aware of cyber threats. A small business can use GEIGER on the web or the smartphone, and it dynamically shows the level of current risks for the company. Seeing high risk allows the user to react immediately and to take simple measures or get help in lowering the risk exposure significantly.

To assist the businesses that seek protection, GEIGER aims at building an ecosystem of competent individuals and organisations that offer help. GEIGER collaborates with schools and partners to develop a standardised learning programme, the “Certified Security Defenders.” The project will pilot the programme in Switzerland with the BBB vocational school and the association of small and medium-sized enterprises SKV, in the Netherlands with the accountants’ association SRA, and in Romania with the startup and innovation hub CLUJ IT. After completing the training, the Certified Security Defenders will be acting as “ambassadors” who will pass on their knowledge to the small businesses with whom they work.



Coiffure Loredana from Mollis, Switzerland, participates as a small business in the piloting of “GEIGER”. She will know whether her business is at risk and, if the risk is high, receives support from the certified security defender of her choice.

Tech.eu is leading GEIGER's dissemination work. GEIGER has a vision of being more than just another cybersecurity tool – the goal is to build an entire ecosystem that includes the tools to detect and mitigate threats, but also communities that can successfully introduce these tools to small businesses and support them in their use. Responsible for the project's communications, Tech.eu will play a crucial role in building these communities.

"There are 25 million SMEs and micro-enterprises in the EU, and many of them are at risk without even being aware of it, let alone knowing how to avoid those threats," said Heini Jarvinen, Marketing and Communications Lead at Tech.eu. ***"Reaching out to these small businesses with an easy and affordable solution will have a major impact for improving their level of security, privacy, and data protection, and for protecting the European economy from damage."***

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The GEIGER project is carried out by FHNW University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland and 17 partners from around Europe: Utrecht University, Berufsfachschule BBB, Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg, Kaspersky, Montimage, KPMG, ATOS, Tech.eu, Schweizerischer KMU Verband SKV, Samenwerkende Registeraccountants en Accountants-Administratieconsulenten SRA, CLUJ IT, CERT-RO, Coiffure Loredana, Haako, E-abo, Braintronix, and Public Tender. These organisations well reflect the competences needed for bringing about the GEIGER innovation, and each will bring valuable contributions to the project.

GEIGER started on June 1, 2020, and will be running for 30 months. This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 883588 (GEIGER). The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the funding body.