Report – GFCE Europe Regional Meeting

Hybrid Meeting on 24th April 2024 | Brussels

Summary

The Europe Regional Meeting held on April 24th, 2024, was hosted in Brussels back-to-back with the Microsoft European Cyber Agora. The meeting served as a platform for GFCE European members and partners, and organizations that work together with European members and partners, to discuss cyber capacity building (CCB) needs and best practices, and the role that the GFCE can play in this.

This regional meeting focused on existing CCB projects and platforms in the region; how the role of the GFCE has changed over the past 9 years; what the GFCE can do to help its community; information sharing; opportunities on the regional and national level; and how to strengthen relationships between EU member states and other regions.

David van Duren, Director of the GFCE Secretariat, opened the session, highlighting the changing role of the GFCE and the CCB domain over the past years. While coordination, knowledge sharing and matchmaking remain key objectives of the GFCE, in the last 9 years the focus of the GFCE has shifted more and more from awareness raising towards implementation. This is supported by, for example, the GFCE Working Groups and Regional Hubs. The CCB domain has also matured a lot. Presently it is important to consider what the future concept of global coordination might look like in the future. This can be understood through the concept of a *Cyber Coordination Chain,* consisting of three phases:

1. *Identification* of needs.
   - Through regional and national assessments and strategies of CCB programs of key players, for example, the needs of different stakeholders can be brought together, filtered and clarified.
2. *Allocation* of programs and resources.
   - Once an overview of the needs has been established, it is necessary to identify the gaps in regard to those needs and coordinate the allocation of tasks within the CCB domain.
3. *Implementation*.
   - Implementation can be and is done by several organizations. Going forward, it is important that lessons learned and outcomes of implementation are compiled and presented to the wider CCB community.

Within this Cyber Coordination Chain, regional organizations will play a key role in bridging local needs with global support, which itself requires strong international partnerships between key CCB stakeholders.

After the introduction by David van Duren, a panel discussion followed which provided the following key takeaways:

- Regional cooperation is important and necessary. However, it should not replace activities on the national level.
    - Regional events can create 'peer pressure' and help highlight topics on the agenda.
- Focus on sustainable CCB.
    - It is important to understand and develop digital governance within a country.
    - Activities should take place continuously to ensure their long-term effects.
- Information sharing is a key component in CCB.
    - Through this, it can be ensured that organizations cooperate with each other.
    - Through mapping, an overview of CCB activities can be created of which all institutions can benefit.
        - The GFCE Cybil Portal is an example of such mapping.

Panel overview

Moderator

Tereza Horejsova – GFCE Outreach Manager

Speakers

Moctar Yedaly – GFCE Africa Hub Director

Miguel Exposito - Deputy Head of Unit for Science, Technology, Innovation and Digitalization at the European Commission's DG INTPA

Silja-Madli Ossip - Community Lead at EU CyberNet

Cormac Callanan - Cyber Security Coordinator of the ESIWA

Panel discussion

The panel discussion, moderated by Tereza Horejsova, Outreach Manager of the GFCE, brought together experts from various organizations to discuss current projects they are working on in, and outside, the region and best practices, and in particular, to explore concrete ideas for cooperation and building on each other's efforts.

The discussion covered the following points:

- What projects are GFCE partners and members working on and how are they involved in different regions?
- How can the European organizations help other regions and what are some of their needs?
- The importance of information sharing.
- Why is it important to have both regional and national level activities?
- How can organizations ensure that their CCB capabilities are focused on sustainable initiatives?

Ongoing projects of the panelists' organizations:

- LAC4
    - LAC4 is a Cyber Competence Centre implemented by the EU CyberNet project based in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic.

- - - Partners that wish to organize in person activities (e.g., events, training seminars) in Santo Domingo can reach out to the organization.
    - o The Centre organizes events on cyber awareness, best practices and much more.
  - EU Cybernet
    - o By establishing a network and practical learning platform, the EU CyberNet aims to strengthen and reinforce the EU's cyber capacity building initiatives.
      - This is done through the creation of, for example, a Knowledge Hub, a Summer School for experts, and other global projects.
  - D4D Hub
    - o The aim of the Digital for Development Hub is to strengthen cooperation between EU Member States and partner countries in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the EU Eastern Neighborhood.
  - ESIWA
    - o Developed by the EU and supported by the German Federal Foreign Office and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, this project aims to coordinate relationship building efforts between Europe and Asia.
      - Cybersecurity is one area of focus in this project.
    - o When exchanging best practices and experiences between EU and partner countries, it is important for countries that have not yet developed a national strategy to start with the basics and not immediately take example of the EU, which is currently on their third strategy.

Additional perspectives

- While EU sponsored projects focus on promoting a European approach and perspective, many non-European countries are ranked higher on the ITU Cybersecurity Index, so these projects do not anticipate that the European perspective is better.
- African partners need the EU to not only bring their experience but also provide resources where available.

Information sharing

- Information sharing and discussions, both formal and informal, are important to ensure that organizations can effectively implement different projects while complementing each other, and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Mapping of events and projects, etc. can be very beneficial to ensure CCB projects are not all focused on the same aspects.
  - o The GFCE Cybil Portal is an example of such mapping which can be practical in planning new CCB activities.
- Global, regional, or national level?
  - o Cooperation on a regional level is necessary but not sufficient.
  - o Cybersecurity can differ greatly per country and, therefore, regional activities and written resources can be difficult to realize.
  - o Organizing regional activities, though, can be strategic as it can create "peer pressure" and help highlight CCB topics on the agenda.

What can the GFCE do?

- The GFCE can help with relationship building and matchmaking between organizations.

- Share opportunities and actors, matchmake donors and potential projects.
- Other organizations do not always have a complete overview of the global CCB landscape, and the GFCE can support this.

- Due to its network, the GFCE can help with bringing stakeholders together to carry dialogues and prioritize topics on the agenda.