

30 Jun 2004 -19:45

Belgium now also has its Computer Emergency Response Team

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The BELNET CERT will increase the security of the Internet mainly through international cooperation with other CERTs. BELNET is first focusing on its own customers but it will also inform other Belgian Internet providers and users in the event of security problems. From tomorrow onwards everyone will be able to keep up with the latest updates on the security status of the Internet via the website

<http://cert.belnet.be>. The Internet is a fantastic medium that we can use even better. We can drive back hackers and computer criminals through international coordination, legislation and intervention, according to Pierre Bruyère, general manager of BELNET. Since our foundation eleven years ago, we have seen the security situation just grow worse. We are now going to take action to make the Internet as secure a highway as possible. The first CERT was established in the US in November 1988, after the worm virus Morris paralysed a great part of the Internet of that time. The American coordination centre of the CERT was run by the Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) from Pittsburgh, owner of the trade name CERT. BELNET has permission to use this trade name. There are more than 100 CERT organisations all over the world: most of them are members of FIRST (Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams), which is responsible for promoting international collaboration. In 1988 the American CERT coordination centre reported six security incidents; in 2003 there were nearly 140,000. Security comes top of the wish list. A customer satisfaction survey from last year revealed that security is the main concern. 88% of the respondents placed it as the top priority for new services, according to Pierre Bruyère, general manager of BELNET. So we decided to set up a CERT, a first for Belgium. Our CERT team is now ready to react to problems relating to security of the Internet. As a government agency, BELNET can report on problems with complete independence. Moreover, BELNET will not only respond to security incidents but also publish them, give security advice, undertake national and international coordination and continually exchange information with other CERTs. Because we run our own network, we know about the habits of our customers and our advice will be of pragmatic and practical use. In fact, the users have to decide for themselves how to protect themselves. Only in very exceptional situations will we take action to isolate computers or put a part of the network into quarantine. If the suspected computers do not operate inside our network, of course we will inform the other Internet service providers, according to Jan Torreele, technical manager of BELNET. Already in our test phase we were contacted by the Swiss SWITCH-CERT because an attack had been set up from Belgium. We were able to isolate the computer concerned within the hour. Very soon BELNET will itself be accredited by FIRST and by TERENA, the European association of research networks (Trans-European Research and Education Networking Association). This official acknowledgement is important because organisations must be able to trust each other implicitly when they pass on warnings and decoded information. You will find more information about FIRST and TERENA at <http://www.first.org/> and <http://www.terena.nl/> respectively.