

# Prosecutors to stop online dark markets



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European prosecutors are considering a pan-European project aimed to fight dark markets on the internet.

They are claiming that bitcoin is the main tool for all these illicit markets.

The project is called Illegal Trade on Online Marketplaces, ITOM for short, and was introduced by the Openbaar Ministrie, the Dutch Public Prosecution Service.

The work started with a meeting held in April 2014. It brings law enforcement from different European countries together with the hope to stop all sort of illegal trade online. Some of the related agencies are Europol, law enforcement from Portugal, UK and Germany.

In its beginning stage, the project has targeted bitcoin as a prime pillar assisting illegal trade. Thus, it will focus carefully on the crypto currency as a part of the dark market they want to diminish.

Spokesperson for the Openbaar Ministrie, Wim de Bruin, thinks the crypto currency is valuable for the global economy but Bitcoin's use in illicit fields cannot be ignored.

He further explained that even though crypto currencies are seen as a great addition to the economic trade, they seem to offer many benefits for illegal international money transfers, illegal trade and money laundering.

The project's goal is to stimulate the community to reduce the digital currency's involvement in illegal field. The bitcoin system is expected to become more self-regulating.

De Bruin also said that the company contacted several banks, Bitcoin exchanges and other third parties.

A detailed meeting was held in June by the ITOM to discuss multidisciplinary interventions. De Bruin refused to discuss operational matters but a document was published by the Openbaar Ministerie outlining the goal of the project.

The document sketches the group's vision for the financial trade of the ecosystem, breaking it into 7 small steps. The steps are obtaining goods, offering goods for sale, connecting to the Internet, shipment, contacting with buyers, payment and financial services to handle the revenues.

The document also describes the illegal players in between these steps. A detailed list of partners that they hope to work with was provided too. The list includes ISPs, drug prevention groups, logistics services, customs and the bitcoin community.

The Minister stressed in a statement to the Dutch Newspaper called Volksrant that the ITOM is an effort to target global illegal trade by associating with countries across Europe.

It even vowed to destruct the dark markets. It was mentioned that the minister will rely on mail and logistics services as delivery mechanism for illegal goods.

De Bruin stated that the research might stimulate new policies for crypto currency policies at EU level.

He explained in a statement that they hope to gain a better insight into the importance and effects of regulations involving crypto currencies after the project will end in 2015.

It is expected that new legislation might increase visibility into bitcoin transactions. While this project seems right to many, a group of people are not happy.

Particularly, the members of the Bitcoin community are not ready to accept the move.