

Cybersecurity talent flourishes thanks to '*Challenge the Cyber*'

Increasing the pool of cyber security talent, further developing their competencies and stimulating interest in the field: these are the main objectives of '*Challenge the Cyber*' (CTC). If the Netherlands wants to achieve a top position in cybersecurity, we need excellent professionals. That is why dcypher supports CTC. And we invite other organizations to do the same.

It started with the European Cyber Security Challenge. This championship for young cyber security talents has been organized for years by ENISA, the European agency for network and information security. But for a long time the Netherlands did not participate. A missed opportunity, according to the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the former dcypher. Therefore, in 2019 they organized Challenge the Cyber for the first time: a Capture The Flag (CTF) competition to select 10 talented young people to participate in the European challenge. Since then, CTC has taken place every year and the activities have been continuously expanded.

Bridge between theory and practice

"With Challenge the Cyber we want to build a bridge between the theory and practice of cybersecurity," says Melanie Lemmen, organizer of the first hour. "At universities and colleges, students gain a lot of theoretical knowledge. But their future employers like to see that they can also apply that knowledge practically. That means they have to be able to hack responsibly. During our challenges we build an environment in which they can do that freely on the basis of various assignments. At the same time they train their 'soft skills', such as working together and presenting. This also benefits their future employers."

On the way to the European top

Both the European and the Dutch challenge are intended for young people aged 13 to 25 years. One of whom is student Diederik Bakker, who achieved the 9th place with the Dutch team at the European challenge this year. He has now joined the CTC organization: "That 9th place tasted like more: in the coming years we want to reach the top with the Netherlands. That is why we are not only organizing the CTC competition, but also a cyber bootcamp for the best 30 participants. Moreover, next year we want to organize an online warm-up, with a month of challenging cyber security assignments for every young person interested. This way, we are trying to lower the threshold for the competition and get even more people excited."

Win-win for students and companies

The organization of the CTC activities is largely volunteer work. In addition, several companies have committed to CTC, including ABN Amro, Cisco, Deloitte, NFIR, Secura and KPN Security. "They contribute to our goals in various ways," says Melanie Lemmen. "For example, by thinking along with us about our activities and the competencies that professionals need. But also by giving workshops, making facilities available or offering financial support. They are happy to do so, because they have a great need for practical cyber talents. It

therefore regularly happens that participants get a job at these companies. This way the knife cuts both ways."

Interested?

Would you and your organization also like to contribute to Challenge the Cyber? Then contact us at vrienden@challengethecyber.nl. For more information, visit <https://challengethecyber.nl/>. The next competition will take place on May 14, 2022.