PRESS RELEASE

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New ways for better understanding and fighting corruption: Social scientists, data analysis experts and law enforcement practitioners join forces in EU research project FALCON

Whilst there is no doubt about its detrimental effects, corruption is a complex phenomenon that is hard to precisely grasp and measure. Thus, policy decisions are poorly informed, and technological tools to support the fight against corruption are lacking. The recently launched Horizon Europe project "Fight Against Large-scale Corruption and Organised Crime Networks (FALCON)" will tackle these challenges. To this end, 25 partner organisations from 15 countries join forces. The 3-year interdisciplinary project is funded by the European Union with 4.7 million Euros under Grant Agreement ID 101121281. It is being coordinated by the Institute of Communication and Computer Systems (ICCS), Greece. The kick-off meeting was held September 20-21 in Athens (see photo).

 "We are excited to be embarking on this mission with such an excellent and diverse consortium, including not only technological research institutions and companies, but also social science experts and, particularly noteworthy, law enforcement agencies from 6 EU member states", said Dr Evgenia Adamopoulou, computer scientist with ICCS and lead coordinator for FALCON. "Thus, we have all the necessary competences at hand, plus extensive experience from earlier projects which were also dedicated to supporting law enforcement agencies by providing big data analysis capabilities. I am positive that we will be able to make a tangible contribution to effectively fight corruption both on policy and operational levels."

Corruption Intelligence Pictures to provide evidence-based, comprehensive view

A key concept within FALCON are so-called Corruption Intelligence Pictures or CIPs, which will provide a holistic view of specific areas of corruption. There are four corruption phenomena addressed by FALCON as pilot cases: public procurement fraud, circumvention of sanctions against oligarchs and kleptocrats, corruption schemes linked to smuggling at border crossings, and conflicts of interest of politically exposed persons.

To establish these CIPs and then to gradually refine and increasingly base them on objective evidence rather than subjective measures, the various disciplines and actors in the consortium must be intertwined and collaborate closely. First, new indicators of corruption that can better inform policy decisions need to be developed and validated. Then, following a data-driven approach and building upon existing assets and prior work by the consortium partners, FALCON

will design, implement and integrate powerful data analytics tools, data pipelines and applications.

Software tools for risk assessment, investigation and decision support

These software tools will help update the CIPs, thereby enabling comprehensive corruption risk assessment and informed policy making. On the other hand, the tools will also support law enforcement and help to investigate individual cases.

On the technological side, FALCON will create a "common representational model". This is a sort of knowledge graph that will allow to incorporate heterogeneous data from a wide range of sources like, for example, public procurement data, news archives, cryptocurrency transactions, or video surveillance footage from border crossings, and analyse and fuse this data coherently.

Fraunhofer IOSB takes role as technical coordinator

As artificial intelligence (AI) methods will play an important role in this analysis, ethics requirements will be addressed in a dedicated work package, in order to comply with privacy and data protection and to ensure AI models will be unbiased, non-discriminating and trustworthy.

In Germany, the Fraunhofer Institute of Optronics, System Technologies and Image Exploitation IOSB is part of the FALCON consortium and will leverage its extensive experience in the areas of applied AI, interoperable data spaces and architectures, and assistance systems. In particular, IOSB will take the role of technical coordinator in FALCON and be responsible for the creation and implementation of the common representational model.

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