The latest by AIDA Project

First Edition of AIDA's Bi-Annual Newsletter
January 2021

Welcome to the first edition of AIDA's newsletter!

We are delighted to present to you the AIDA Project, an EU-funded, Horizon 2020 project that tackles the challenges posed by cybercrime and terrorism for modern policing in Europe.

The team represents 21 organisations and 11 countries, gathering the diverse skillset required for such a complex endeavour.

Running from 1 September 2020 until 31 August 2022, AIDA will equip law enforcement authorities with innovative tools and services to collect structured and unstructured data from open and privileged sources, leading to an increase in the speed, efficiency and accuracy of operations.

Driven by end-users needs and expectations, AIDA will focus on two use cases in the crime areas of cybercrime and terrorism.

We hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter; for additional information on the project and media requests, please visit www.project-aida.eu

An Interview with AIDA's Coordinator

Mr. Ernesto La Mattina, head of the Homeland Security Unit at the software company Engineering Ingegneria Informatica (Italy), coordinates the project.

What excited you when you first imagined this project?

AIDA, as Innovation Action, has the strong ambition to put on the road tailored solutions to provide Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in the EU Member States with innovative, dedicated, and sustainable digital technologies to facilitate the entire Big Data analytics cycle as part of their investigative and proactive prevention capabilities on cybercrime (CC) and counterterrorism (CT).

Recognising the effectiveness of the tools which represent the technological starting points of the AIDA outcomes, the partners of the consortium that started the proposition of AIDA project, envisioned evolving and enhancing such promising machine learning and artificial intelligence solutions to prevent, detect, analyse, and combat criminal activities. The envisaged solutions have been imagined for offering a complete set of effective, efficient and automated data mining and analytics solutions to deal with standardised investigative workflows, extensive content acquisition, information extraction and fusion, knowledge management and enrichment through novel applications of Big Data processing, Machine Learning, AI and predictive and visual analytics.

How do you hope AIDA will contribute to a more secure Europe?

A [European approach](#) to equip law enforcement authorities with adequate tools to ensure the security of citizens, with appropriate safeguards for the respect of their rights, privacy and freedoms is increasingly urgent and AI can play a central role in this by enabling law enforcement agencies to fight crime more efficiently. For instance, by being able to identify online terrorist propaganda more quickly and effectively or detect suspicious transactions, AI tools can support law enforcement in better protecting EU citizens from crime and terrorism and - this is what AIDA promises - anticipating and responding more readily to future threats. AIDA aims to contribute to EU security providing novel collaborative applications to enhance MS LEAs investigation capabilities with:

- A set of innovative Big Data Analysis and ML/AI services for the automated analysis of online multimedia and multi-language contents
- A set of customisable and adaptable Big Data Analytics to enable:
  - A strategic approach for processing, fusing and combining data in the context of CC and Counterterrorism CT in full compliance with EU and national legislations on protection of personal data
  - A strategic assessment of short, medium and long-term trends in cybercrime and terrorism vectors, tactics and countermeasures
- A Security Sandbox of tools and services completely managed by Europol that aims to raise the technological readiness level of the solutions through their application in simulated operational environments
- A validated TRL-7 system prototype exploiting and integrating the functionalities and capabilities offered by the above-mentioned services.

What would you say is AIDA's main added value?

AIDA consortium includes high-level of professionalism and multidisciplinary excellence on several research areas, all of whom are synergically collaborating among them to achieve the selected objectives. Having the responsibility to coordinate such prestigious consortium and having the honour and privilege to collaborate with so high degree of expertise represent a continuous stimulus and the opportunity to learn every day something new.

To ensure the achievement of the so ambitious project objectives it is essential to leverage on Europol and LEAs 'expertise on cybercrime and terrorism, capitalising on the research and innovation excellences of the consortium and tuning their fruitful collaboration to deliver novel performing tools for supporting cybercrime and counterterrorism investigations, deploying the AIDA solutions in operational environment allowing iterative refinement of the implemented technologies.

LEAs take the floor

The AIDA project counts on seven Law Enforcement Agencies, representing Estonia, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the UK. As future users of AIDA's solutions, they are fully involved as co-creators across the project work plan, from user requirements to the system design, integration, piloting and dissemination.

What drove them to become partners, and how do they hope they will benefit from this endeavour? Here below you can read a summary of their thoughts in response to these questions.

We all see the consequences of serious criminality through the victims of incidents such as cybercrime, organised crime and terrorism. Modern crime is directly or somehow indirectly related to cyberspace: criminals are either active in the Internet or they have left a digital footprint which might be used to identify them or gather additional background information.

It is common for all EU LEAs to have a lot of intelligence in digital format that is obtained during the criminal investigations. This may include audio, video, pictures or gigabytes of text files. All this information needs be thoroughly analysed, to be able to create links and find relations between individuals, objects they have used or events they might have participated in. Sometimes there are terabytes of CCTV videos and the task is to find a specific person.

Quite often all this information is processed manually in order to find relevant evidence. This kind of approach is time consuming and might not be effective, because in this case the human factor also plays a role.

It is not a secret that LEA investigators are becoming more and more aware of the possibilities that cyberspace offers when there is a need for intelligence gathering.

Unfortunately, it is not a secret as well that gathering intelligence from the Internet demands additional knowledge, time, technical resources and a strong will to do it.

Personnel capacity is a challenge for most LEAs in the EU. And since all crime is spreading online, and, many times, it is the product of automation (malware etc.), LEAs should automate and enhance their crime fighting abilities. They all are constantly searching for ways to become more effective.

AIDA is a particularly interesting and innovative project, attempting to unify, automate and enhance (using AI) current investigative processes and procedures.

The project's goals are aligned with many of the participating LEAs' objectives. AIDA's results promise to provide much better possibilities for information analysis, information gathering and processing of possible evidence, therefore helping to detect and prevent crime, reduce the number of victims and keep the public better protected and as safe as possible.

The consortium is an added reason, since it is comprised of experienced partners that offer the best expertise in the field.

Use of AI by the police: what's your stance?

We want to make sure we build technology that benefits society as a whole, and we want to support law enforcement in their communication and engagement with citizens and social actors.

To achieve this, we are investigating how the increasing capabilities of police officers in using large and heterogeneous data sets in cybercrime and counter-terrorism cases impact on society's perceptions of their security, as well as individuals 'behavioural changes and societal developments at large.

As a first step, we aim to understand the diversity in perspectives about police use of AI. For this purpose, we are currently running an online survey in which we would like to know your position in the debate: what are your personal values, your crime and privacy concerns, your past experiences with crime and with police?

Please take 5 minutes to fill in this survey:
https://shusls.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4YDivN8n0X7xkWh

All data will be collected anonymously and will be summarised in confidential reports to the European Union and in academic publications. Most importantly, they will be used to help design and deploy all AIDA solutions.

Stay tuned for key takeaways that will be published on our website and in our next newsletter.

News and opportunities:

AIDA's project
first press release
All the information you need about our project.

Visit the Page

Safer Internet Day:
9 February 2021
An annual celebration to promote a responsible, respectful, critical and creative use of digital technologies.

Visit the Page

A new Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU
The Commission presented a new Agenda illustrating the new collective approach to combat terrorism.

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Staying safe during COVID-19: reports and resources
Seven public reports by Europol on how criminals are adapting their crimes to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic.

Visit the Page

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