

PRESS RELEASE

CYBERCRIME IN STEP WITH COVID JUMP IN CYBER ATTACKS IN SEPTEMBER AFTER THE DECLINE OF THE SUMMER MONTHS

The Exprivia Cybersecurity Observatory has recorded 148 attacks, incidents and violations of privacy in Italy in the last quarter, half of which occurred in September alone.

Public Administration has been most affected, with Italian Municipalities among the most vulnerable targets.

The Guarantor has fined 18 million euros for breaches of privacy.

5 November 2020 – After the exploit of the month of June and with the lockdown having just ended, **the summer months** featured a **decrease in cybercrime in Italy**, but in **September** it made a significant comeback.

According to the **third report on cyber threats in Italy in 2020** prepared by the **Exprivia Cybersecurity Observatory**, which analysed 42 public information sources, from **July to September** there were **148 events** between attacks, privacy violations and incidents, compared to 171 from April to June and 49 between January and March.

The report by Exprivia, which is committed to spreading the culture of cybersecurity, shows that the decline in July and August coincided with the slowdown in production activities and the summer holidays. On the other hand, the increase in September, in which half of the criminal events (70) of the entire quarter were concentrated, shows a **trend** which seems to go **hand in hand with that of the coronavirus pandemic**. And Covid-19 itself continues to be linked to most of the phenomena reported.

Domenico Raguseo, Exprivia's Cybersecurity Director, said, *“Cybercrimes over the last quarter seemed to follow the trend of the coronavirus pandemic in Italy, with a curve growing in September at an equal pace with the recovery of industrial activities and those working from home. Moreover, our data also clearly reveal the mass of IoT devices connected in the network without any protection, which exposes also individual private users to many risks. Our research pool continues to insist on the importance of spreading digital culture at all levels, from citizens to companies to the Public Administration. It is increasingly important to invest in training and protection systems that should be implemented already in devices’ production phases to make them less vulnerable”*.

Compared to the previous quarter, the number of episodes concerning the **Public Administration** doubled among **the sectors most affected**, with **34 attacks**, half of which occurred in September alone due to the resumption of electronic procedures. The targets preferred by criminals include Municipalities, often unable to adequately deal with cyber threats.

Following PA **with 23 episodes** is the **Finance** sector (**+44%** compared to the second quarter of the year), which had already registered an exponential increase from a single episode in the first quarter to 16 in the second, indicating cybercriminals’ growing interest in a profitable sector.

Industry (+33%) was also highlighted in the Observatory, with attacks that concerned in particular energy and manufacturing companies, often victims of industrial espionage, and **Healthcare**, where the phenomena increased by **38%**. Last on the list of the most affected sectors is **Retail**, which has seen **events almost triple** in the last three months.



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One of the sectors in decline is **Education**, which suffered only **a quarter of the phenomena detected in the previous quarter**, likely due to the lack of school and university activities in summer.

In addition, the events recorded in the Others category were halved, with this category including minor production sectors and other areas such as access systems to Citizens' networks and fraud against them, as well as attacks on the social profiles of public figures.

The Exprivia experts highlighted an **11% decrease in cyber attacks** during the analysis period compared to the April-June quarter (**from 119 to 107**), while **the incidents (25)**, or successful attacks, decreased even further, equal to **46%**. The attack techniques are likely increasingly more complex and it is more difficult to effectively identify cybercriminals and therefore raise awareness of incidents. Despite a **slight decrease**, **over 58%** of episodes continue to cause **data theft**, far surpassing both money losses and privacy breaches, which still total an impressive **16 episodes (almost triple the number of the previous three months)** for a total of about **18 million euros** of penalties imposed by the Guarantor for the protection of personal data.

The techniques most exploited by cybercriminals count firstly **phishing-social engineering** (62 events), which particularly affects distracted users or those with little knowledge of how to spot traps via email or social networks. Following this technique, and both with 37 events, are **malware**, whose use has tripled over the course of the year, and **unknowns**, new methodologies tested by hackers to avoid being detected by traditional defence mechanisms.

Exprivia's Cybersecurity Observatory also explored the landscape of the **Internet of Things**, a rapidly growing market worth 6.2 billion euros in Italy. There are **about seven million exposed devices on the internet** in Italy, including cameras, smart TVs, printers, firewalls, routers, healthcare technologies and industrial devices, with a number of **protocols entirely lacking any sort of authentication** reaching **8,694 units**.

In addition to the report, the Exprivia website www.exprivia.it also has a list of [courses](#) organised for training in the field of IT security and risk management.



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Exprivia

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www.exprivia.it

Contacts

Exprivia SpA

Investor Relations

Gianni Sebastiano

gianni.sebastiano@exprivia.it

T. + 39 0803382070 - F. +39 0803382077

Press office

Sec Mediterranea

T. +39 0805289670

Teresa Marmo

marmo@segrp.com

Cell. +39 3356718211

Gianluigi Conese

conese@segrp.com

Cell. +39 3357846403

Sec and Partners

T. +39 063222712

Martina Trecca

trecca@segrp.com

Cell. +39 3339611304

Andrea Lijoi

lijoi@segrp.com

Cell. +39 3292605000

