EU adopts powers to respond to cyberattacks

May 17 2019, by Lachlan Carmichael

EU ministers said the 28-nation group would, for the first time, be able to impose asset freezes and travel bans on individuals, firms and state bodies implicated in cyberattacks.

The European Union on Friday adopted powers to punish those outside the bloc who launch cyberattacks that cripple hospitals and banks, sway elections and steal company secrets or funds.
EU ministers meeting in Brussels said the 28-nation group would now, for the first time, be able to impose asset freezes and travel bans on individuals, firms and state bodies implicated in such attacks.

"The Council (of EU countries) established a framework which allows the EU to impose targeted restrictive measures to deter and respond to cyberattacks," it said in a statement.

It added that sanctions will be considered if a cyberattack is determined to have had a "significant impact" on its target.

The goal is to bolster the security of EU institutions, firms and individuals against what Britain called an increase in the "scale and severity" of cyberattacks globally.

"This is decisive action to deter future cyberattacks," British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said after Britain and its EU partners drafted the measures.

"For too long now, hostile actors have been threatening the EU's security through disrupting critical infrastructure, attempts to undermine democracy and stealing commercial secrets and money running to billions of euros," Hunt said.

"Our message to governments, regimes and criminal gangs prepared to carry out cyberattacks is clear," Britain's top diplomat added.

"Together, the international community will take all necessary steps to uphold the rule of law and the rules based international system which keeps our societies safe."

The British government has pledged to continue close cooperation with the EU after it leaves the bloc in line with the 2016 referendum.
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