



Eldert van Wijngaarden and Minister Grapperhaus. Photo by Bart van Vliet.

Groningen company Web-IQ wins Mr. Gonsalves award 2017

GRONINGEN – Web-IQ wins Mr. Gonsalves national innovation award for law enforcement 2017.

Minister Grapperhaus of Security and Justice handed the Mr. Gonsalves award to Web-IQ CEO Eldert van Wijngaarden yesterday (November 13). The company has developed technology that can be used to discover crime on the internet. The actual award is a bronze sculpture. Prior to the award ceremony, Ronald Prins, founder and CEO of Fox IT, held a reading on the threats of cybercrime named “Op het internet geldt nu het recht van de sterkste. Wat gaan we er aan doen?” which can be loosely translated to “The law of the jungle reigns the internet. What are we going to do about it?”

Web-IQ developed a product called “Voyager”, a software program that methodically and automatically browses the internet. This technology can be used to track down child pornography and other criminal activities on the internet. For the past two years, Web-IQ has also searched the anonymous part of the internet, the so-called Darkweb, to look for child pornographic material and possible perpetrators of child abuse. Several municipalities and police departments have been successful in their approach to human trafficking, illegal prostitution and child abuse thanks to Web-IQ’s Voyager. Voyager has not only proven successful in the Netherlands, but also internationally. Europol and other international organisations are using data and knowledge that has been acquired using Web-IQ’s technology.

The projects ‘Gravesac’, an investigative project by the National Investigation Agency, a part of the National Unit of the National Police and the Public Prosecution Service and ‘Sweetie 2.0’ by Terres des Hommes were the other two nominees for the Mr. Gonsalves award. Gravesac enabled the police to arrest several drug dealers by taking over and temporarily running *Hansa Market*, an illegal marketplace where drugs were traded on a large scale. During this project, they worked together with, among others, the FBI.

The project *Sweetie 2.0* by Terre des Hommes was set up following the ‘Sweetie Project’ that was first set up in the Philippines in 2013. In collaboration with Leiden and Tilburg University, new software was developed that made use of artificial intelligence and avatars: virtual children. Using these techniques, Terre des Hommes wants to track down, identify and scare off potential perpetrators

Taking on the internet’s anarchy

According to the jury, all three nominees were good examples of an innovative approach to cybercrime. The internet’s greatest strength is its openness. But just like in the real world, not everyone on the internet operates with good intentions. Criminals use the anarchy that rules some parts of the internet. It is this anarchy which the three nominees focused on, all in their own way.

The jury was taken by the fact that when it came to Web-IQ, it was a company that coincidentally came across criminal activities on the internet and subsequently decided to use their existing knowledge and skills to fight it. The company’s interest was put at the service of a greater good: societal interest. Thanks to the technical resources that were developed especially for this greater good, police and municipalities have been able to find and free victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution.

It is the societal involvement of Web-IQ and the public-private collaboration that emerged from it that made this contribution so special, according to the jury. More often will it be necessary to appeal to private parties to help in the fight against cybercrime. Web-IQ’s sense of responsibility and its subsequent behaviour is an encouraging example for other companies in this sector.

The jury that determined the nominees and pointed out the winner is presided by mr. A.W.H. (Arthur) Docters van Leeuwen. The other jury members are Nicole Bogers, Mr. Erik van den Ernster, Mr. Sadik Harchaoui, Ahmed Marcouch and Drs. Bernard Welten. Chairman of the Mr. Gonsalves award board of trustees is Wim Deetman.

The Mr. Gonsalves Award is accommodated by ProDemos – House for Democracy and Rule of Law (www.prodemos.nl) and is awarded every two years to a person, organisation or project that has contributed to innovation within law enforcement

In 2015, the award went to the Police Unit of The Hague for its approach to radicalisation and terrorism. Previous editions were won by the Custodial Institutions Agency for prison renovation, Emergo (fight against serious crime in the Amsterdam Red Light District), Unit Multi-Ethnic Police work from Police Haaglanden, Project SMS Alert from Police Midden and West-Brabant and Leen Schaap, a police officer from Amsterdam, as a tribute to the SWAT team that often has to work under difficult circumstances.