
COVID-19 Coronavirus: Von der Leyen (EU), online scam warning. “Cybercrime on the rise. Beware!”

“To reduce the spread of the coronavirus, many Europeans simply have to stay at home. As a result, people telework and spend much time online. Unfortunately, criminals take advantage of this. They follow us online and exploit our concerns about the coronavirus. Our fear becomes their business opportunity”. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said this in a video message today, warning against cybercrime. Von der Leyen had an exchange of views today with Europol’s Executive Director Catherine De Bubbles. Cybercrime in the EU “has increased. The number of fake medicines, disinfection sprays or miracle cures sold online is staggering. We work with the national governments and the EU agencies - she said - to address this and to keep people safe”. Europol has supported “in the past weeks a global operation against trafficking in counterfeit medicines. More than 4.4 million units of illicit pharmaceuticals were seized worldwide. 37 organised crime groups were dismantled, 121 arrests were made. 2,500 links – websites, social media, online marketplaces, adverts – were taken down”. “Our European Union agencies provide advice about how you can protect yourself”, but “please check whether websites are really maintained by a trustworthy entity”. “If a vaccine against the coronavirus is developed - the EC president told citizens -, your government and public institutions in general will announce it. You will know about it from trustworthy sources”.

Gigliola Alfaro