



The UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.



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ICO's blog on its international work

Colleagues from across the organisation share their experiences and involvement in the ICO's ongoing contributions to the upholding of information rights across the globe.

6 January 2017 | Adam Stevens

Since 2004, government and public agencies from 27 countries have been working together to tackle unsolicited marketing messages. This group is now known as UCENet (Unsolicited Communications Enforcement Network) and the ICO is part of its Executive Committee.

In late 2016, Steve Eckersley Head of Enforcement, Andy Curry Enforcement Group Manager and myself, Adam Stevens Team Manager – Intelligence Hub (Enforcement) met with the members of UCENet at a four day event hosted by the Messaging Malware Mobile Anti-Abuse Working Group (M3AAWG) in Paris. There was a busy schedule of sessions during the event, including training and presentations on enforcement and intel gathering methods and enforcement activity various authorities have undertaken.

We delivered a presentation on the ICO's Operation BOWLER, an operation that involves seeding personal data to monitor which organisations send unsolicited marketing messages. We also presented on our intel processes and procedures and our PECR enforcement approach, in order to share different methods with our UCENet colleagues. The three of us also joined M3AAWG workshop sessions in order to gain a better understanding of industry approaches to spam and current technology so we can continue to improve the practices of the ICO.

During the event, discussions were held around the networks 2016-2018 operational plan and the four key areas of work identified within it:

- Intelligence;
- enforcement;
- training; and
- communications.

We also discussed UCENet's rebrand from the London Action Plan as well the revamp of the website (www.ucenet.org). We continued with the development of a Memorandum of Understanding between the network members to assist with information sharing and we also discussed plans for the networks first ever Sweep on affiliate marketing, which is due to take place this year. A Sweep involves multiple organisations coming together to target a particular area by gathering intelligence, developing their understanding of the issue and identifying enforcement opportunities where necessary.

Unsolicited marketing messages are a nuisance to individuals and a persistent problem to government and public agencies across the globe. The ICO is committed to tackling this issue and trying to put a stop to it.