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JKU Students Qualify for International "Hacker" Competition in Russia

Computer science students from the JKU and FH Hagenberg qualified for the finals of the international "hacker" competition VolgaCTF.

Teilnehmer am HackerInnen-Wettbewerb: von links nach rechts: oben: Markus Vogl, Tobias Höller; unten: Mario Kahlhofer, Thomas Pointhuber

An unrelenting competition is taking place at the "cyberfront". There is no end to reports on critical security incidents and the fear of cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. In an attempt to combat the situation, an increasing number of young computer scientists are focusing more on IT security. The Upper Austrian team, UpperSec - made up of students from the JKU Linz (SIGFLAG team) and FH Hagenberg (HgbSec team) – have been successful in this respect.

UpperSec won the international IT security competition "VolgaCTF" as the best German-speaking team, securing a coveted spot at the finals in Samara, Russia. With over 1,000 competing hacking teams from around the globe behind them, UpperSec will now compete against 18 other finalists as the best German-speaking team. To be nominated, students had to take part in Capture the Flag (CTF) competitions, allowing the students to try out what they have learned in an exciting way and in a controlled environment. Last spring, the 20-strong team took part in the qualifying competitions, spending 48 hours searching for security gaps in various programs.

The finals will take place from September 17-20 and the teams will face more difficult tasks, playing an Attack-Defense CTF in which each team must protect an assigned virtual computer. Points are given when a team successfully finds one or more weak points in the opposing teams' computers or when a team is able to successfully protect its own computer against attacks.

The LIT Secure and Correct Systems Lab (headed by Prof. Robert Wille) will support the SIGFLAG team. The Lab focuses on researching secure and correct IT systems and supporting young talent. As part of the Linz Institute of Technology (LIT), the lab brings the expertise of nine institutes from different departments together.

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JOHANNES KEPLER UNIVERSITY LINZ
Altenberger Straße 69
4040 Linz, Austria

T: +43 732 2468 0
F: +43 732 2468 4929
Contact

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