

UNODA ICT Mapping Exercise ahead of the seventh session of the OEWG

Inputs provided by UNICRI

- As a UN research and training institute mandated in the field of criminal justice and crime prevention, UNICRI has continued to closely monitor and analyze new trends and developments with respect to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), as well as emerging technologies closely related to ICTs, such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things, biometrics, and augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR). Given UNICRI's mandate, this has primarily focused on the use and misuse of ICTs and emerging technology in the context of cybercrime, as well as related cybersecurity aspects. The work of UNICRI in this field is guided by the Institute's strategic priority on "Promoting responsible use of new and emerging technologies to address crime and exploitation" in UNICRI's 2023-2026 Strategic Programme Framework.
- In November 2023, UNICRI released a study on SDG 16 focusing on the impact of digitalization and the use of digital technologies. This study broadly explores the intricate interplay between the trend toward digitalization and the pursuit of peace, justice, and strong institutions, looking at universal connectivity and the digital divide; legal and digital identity; illicit financial flows and their digital enablers; misinformation and disinformation online; and conflicts in the digital space.
- UNICRI is currently conducting a study on the use of the Dark Web by terrorist groups and individuals in the context of the cyber-crime as a service model. The study, conducted in partnership with the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, seeks to better understand terrorist activity on dark web marketplaces, and by extension related illicit channels on platforms such as Discord, Telegram and Rocket.Chat, in the context of cyber threats and support law enforcement and counter-terrorism agencies to better conduct investigations in this space.
- Since 2017, UNICRI has actively explored advancements in the field of AI through its Centre for AI. The Centre has focused on advancing understanding of AI use cases in the context of law enforcement, in particular in domains such as child sexual exploitation and abuse and countering terrorism online, and the promotion of responsible AI innovation in law enforcement. In 2023, UNICRI notably released its Toolkit for Responsible AI innovation in Law Enforcement. UNICRI has also explored the malicious uses of such technology, analyzing the impact of AI in cybercrime and the risk of terrorist and violent extremist use of AI in respective studies with Europol, Trend Micro and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism.
- In 2023, UNICRI launched a new Master's Programme (LL.M) in Cybercrime, Cybersecurity and International Law in partnership with UPEACE. The programme provides participants with an advanced education in international law and applied practices to investigate and combat malicious cyber activities, as well as in-depth knowledge of existing cybercrime prevention strategies at various levels, with a focus on the international dimensions of cybercrime and cybersecurity.
- From the perspective of its work on providing legal support to Member States on illicit financial flows and asset recovery, UNICRI has extensively explored new modalities to capture cryptocurrency and other virtual assets linked to criminality. In the context of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) risks, UNICRI has analyzed the role of virtual assets in CBRN proliferation financing and is currently developing a guidelines handbook for the timely identification of red flags of suspected proliferation financing for the private sector, which include a focus on new/alternative payment methods and systems, including virtual assets. UNICRI has also provided capacity-building support on preventing and combating online drug trafficking, which has included investigations into the use of virtual assets.

- Misinformation, disinformation and hate speech online is an issue of cross-cutting interest for UNICRI. Notably, UNICRI runs an annual Summer School on Misinformation, Disinformation and Hate Speech, an introductory course aimed at understanding the phenomenon of disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech, how they manifest and the tools available to combat them. In the specific domain of CBRN risks, UNICRI has conducted a study on misinformation and disinformation and, in January 2023, released a handbook on combatting CBRN disinformation. The role of AI in the generation of such fake content, and in particular deepfakes, is also an area of relevance for UNICRI, with UNICRI having run deepfake detection hackathons in 2019 and various workshops focused on deepfakes and deepfake detection.
- Starting in 2023, UNICRI also commenced an exploration of the use of ICTs and emerging technology in the context of prison rehabilitation. This work analyzes existing initiatives that leverage technology to support rehabilitation and reduce reoffending and seeks to identify and establish ethical and human rights principles to guide digital rehabilitation in prisons and develop a comprehensive report assessing the risks, benefits, and challenges of introducing new prison technologies. A report on this will be released in early 2024.
- UNICRI participates in an initiative led by the European Space Agency aimed at developing understanding around the use of satellites and space-based technology in crime prevention, specifically looking at combatting organized crime and terrorism, environmental crime and trafficking and war crimes.