



Bitcoin, Tor and Gates Foundation join task force to prevent child exploitation

By [Olivia Solon](#) - September 13, 2013

Thomson Reuters has teamed up with the [International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children](#) (ICMEC) to form the Digital Economy Task Force, which aims to address some of the risks surrounding digital currencies and the wider digital economy.

"This is a complex issue," said Ernie Allen, president and CEO of ICMEC. "Technology has created a new digital economy, which is being used by some to produce and sell child pornography, and for trafficking and child exploitation. This is a serious problem that requires serious solutions. Our task force will offer balanced, effective solutions for policy makers, law enforcement, regulators and the public."

The Task Force, which launched in August, is not solely focussed on child exploitation. It has developed working groups that aim to combat a range of illicit activities, to safeguard human rights and to encourage inter-agency coordination and law enforcement. It was launched off the back of [a report](#) by Thomson Reuters Fraud Prevention and Investigation unit about digital currency laundering.

The report detailed how criminal and terrorist organisations have turned to digital currency to reap profits from drug trafficking, prostitution and the dissemination of child abuse images.

Steve Rubley, managing director, Government Segment for the Legal business of Thomson Reuters points out that the digital economy provides a plethora of new opportunities and is central to how business is conducted but there are also "dark corners" where drug cartels can easily launder money and human sex traffickers operate in near obscurity.

The Task Force will include the Bitcoin Foundation, The Tor Project, Trend Micro, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Cato Institute, The Brookings Institute, the US Agency for International Development and Vital Voices. The group will educate the public and work collaboratively across stakeholder groups including government agencies, law enforcement, academia, NGOs and industry.

A [statement released by Thomson Reuters and ICMEC](#) said: "The approach will be a balanced view of both the advantages and disadvantages surrounding the digital economy -- a place where people can enjoy the convenience of digital currencies, but where there are controls in place to regulate them like any other form of money."

The Digital Economy Task Force will produce a report in February 2014 which will aim to inform lawmakers globally about the current state of the digital economy and help people understand the risks associated with it.

