27.01.2025

What's a DDoS attack?

There have been an increasing number of reports in the media of DDos attacks on several Swiss companies and institutions over the last few days which were launched in connection with the World Economic Forum (WEF). But what really is a DDoS attack?

A Distributed Denial of Service attack (DDoS attack) targets a website, an online service or an IT infrastructure aiming to make them inaccessible, by overloading this website, online service or IT infrastructure with a flood wave of queries. Such queries usually originate from a network of compromised devices, so-called bots, which are controlled by hackers.

The effects of such DDos attacks are severe: Companies and institutions could suffer lost revenues, customers might lose access to important data, and the trust into system security could be dealt a severe blow.

The WEF connection

Cyber attacks, in particular DDos attacks, are frequently mounting during such global events as the WEF. They attract the attention of activist groups and cyber-criminals who use the high media visibility to spread political or economic messages.

Protective measures against DDos attacks

Unfortunately, there is no 100% sure-fire way of protecting yourself against DDos attacks. Companies and institutions could use testing services to recognise and block DDos attacks early on. Based on the distributed nature of such attacks, this is only possible to a certain degree though.

However, reducing the attack surface helps to greatly minimise the effects of such an attack – find out more about this in our article on "Denial-of-Service attacks (https://www.ebas.ch/en/denial-of-service-attack/)" and our "Tips for SME (https://www.ebas.ch/sme)" column.

Copyright – All rights reserved. Lucerne School of Information Technologies