



The new face of fraud: Deepfakes and Impersonation Fraud Risk Guide



Imagine a significant amount of money was transferred from your company bank account authorised by a senior executive in your organisation.

Later, however, you discover you have been a victim of fraud...

Unfortunately, this scenario is becoming more and more common.

At PwC, we are seeing this as a **growing global trend** — and Central Eastern Europe is no exception, with companies across several industry sectors falling victim.



According to the **Global Economic Crime Survey 2024**, cybercrime, including impersonation fraud using deepfake technology, is the top reported type of fraud in the CEE.

According to the Global Digital Trust Insights Report **2025**, security executives report that GenAI (67%) and cloud technologies (66%) have expanded the cyberattack surface over the past year. This means companies are more vulnerable to sophisticated threats.



What is impersonation fraud?

Impersonation fraud is a growing threat in our digital world where **criminals imitate legitimate representatives** of companies to steal sensitive information or money.



This can include:



01

Phishing:

Fraudsters send deceptive emails pretending to be trustworthy individuals or organisations to trick people into providing sensitive information.

02

Business email compromise:

Cyber criminals use email-based social engineering to defraud businesses by impersonating executives or employees.

03

Deepfakes:

This involves the use of deepfake technology to mimic the voices or appearances of executives, often targeting junior staff or those less familiar with these individuals.

These techniques have become more sophisticated with AI and deepfake technology, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between **genuine communications** and **fraudulent attempts**.

Impersonation fraud can target individuals, businesses or even government entities, often leading to **significant financial losses or data breaches**.

What can be a legal consequence of deepfakes?

Deepfakes can lead to serious legal implications, including:

Damage to reputation –
especially when deepfakes are used to impersonate or discredit individuals or brands

Violation of personal data protection

— for example, when personal data such as an individual's image or name is used. These consequences can be more severe when special categories of personal data are involved, such as information revealing racial or ethnic origin or sexual orientation.



Criminal & administrative liability

- criminal liability would appear in cases involving fraud, defamation, or extortion, etc.,
- administrative sanctions might appear in case of use of deepfake in deceptive use which might be considered forbidden practices or harm consumers rights

Infringement of personal rights

– if someone's photos/voice is used without consent

These are among the most common legal risks. However, depending on the context, **civil, administrative and criminal liability may be most severe.**

Choosing the right legal strategy requires a detailed, case-by-case assessment.

**Who:**

The impersonation
of executives

C-suite executives, particularly CEOs and CFOs,
are the most common targets of deepfakes.

How:

A plausible story through
multi-layered,
multi-factored fraud

Fraudsters use deepfake technology to mimic the voices or appearances of executives, often using deepfakes to target junior staff or those less familiar with the executive to manipulate them into circumventing controls.

Fraudsters combine deepfakes with traditional phishing techniques or social engineering. For example:

- Targeted attacks are often initiated using WhatsApp, before moving to deepfake video calls
- Fake voice notes or video calls are often paired with phishing emails to create the pretence of multi-factored authentication
- Fraudsters exploit the lack of cross-verification during remote interactions, especially in virtual meetings and voice calls.







The number of deepfake attacks in the corporate world has recently escalated

A series of sophisticated **impersonation frauds** rocked **multiple industries** worldwide, showcasing the alarming capabilities of advanced deepfake technology and social engineering tactics.

Cybercriminals **manipulated digital communications** to defraud multinational corporations across finance, energy, advertising, luxury goods, and technology sectors, resulting in losses in the millions. The various reported and unreported losses across all affected businesses, highlighting the **severe financial impact of these sophisticated impersonation frauds**.



The scam strategy:

 <p>Preparation and intelligence gathering:</p> <p>Fraudsters meticulously gather publicly available information about the company's local CEO and CFO. This includes video footage from interviews, voice recordings from earlier calls and personal details from the company's website and the senior executives' social media profiles.</p>	1	
	2	 <p>Technology preparation:</p> <p>Using the collected data, criminals employ advanced AI algorithms to create convincing deepfake videos and voice clones of the CEO. They also develop fake email accounts and messaging profiles that closely mimic those of the executive team.</p>
 <p>Trust building:</p> <p>Scammers send an email to a mid-level finance manager, seemingly from the CEO's assistant. This mentions an upcoming confidential project and is loosely based on current events within the organisation. This initial contact was designed to establish credibility without raising immediate suspicion and is usually followed by a request to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Over the next few days, the fraudsters exchange several emails with the finance manager, providing believable details about the supposed project and gradually building trust. Bad actors also pretend to be real consultants or external lawyers from reputable firms – which adds to credibility of the storyline.</p>	3	
	4	 <p>Voice cloning:</p> <p>Once a foundation of trust is established, the scammers arrange a voice call between the finance manager and the "CEO" using their AI-generated voice clone. During this call, the fake CEO discussed the urgency of a highly confidential acquisition.</p>
	5	 <p>Video conference deception:</p> <p>The fraudsters hold a fake video call, pretending to be the CEO and CFO, to discuss the secret deal and stress the need for non-disclosure.</p>
 <p>Fund transfer request:</p> <p>With trust and urgency in place, the fraudsters request the transfer of a substantial sum to a specified account, ostensibly to secure the acquisition deal</p>	6	

We see a number of deep fake cases where professionals are left scratching their heads over how this fraud could have occurred despite all the controls and safeguards being in place. Hindsight can be a great thing – but the fact is, this is happening, and **organisations are having to learn the hard way.**



Naturally, reported cases are only the tip of the iceberg. There are unreported cases and cases where fraudsters are unsuccessful due to **the strength of controls**, or more importantly, **vigilant staff**.

If you are a victim of an impersonation fraud, what do you need to do?

You need to act fast. Questions a company should be asking itself in the event of falling victim to impersonation fraud are:



How did the fraudster attain confidential information that was used against the company?



Was anyone within the company involved in the fraud?



Which security measures failed and how can the company ensure this type of fraud does not happen again?

Key essential steps to take by management in response to an attack

Step 1

Immediate Response: Isolate the incident by taking steps to limit the spread and influence of it.

Step 2

Investigate and assess:

- Assess the scope and determine the extent of the breach
 - Conduct a forensic/cyber investigation that includes interviews, corporate intelligence, e-discovery, transactional analysis and any other appropriate measures
 - Analyse the nature of the attack, identify vulnerabilities and suspects and understand how the impersonation occurred
 - Determine the extent of the breach, including which systems, data, and accounts have been compromised.
-

Step 3

Recovery:

- Tracking where the monies were transferred and seek legal options for recovery
 - Assess whether this is an insured event according to your insurance policy.
-

Step 4

Remediation:

- Limit the damage, remove the threat and restore normal operations
- Set up systems monitoring for any signs of residual malicious activity
- Enhance controls that may have failed or provide training to team members
- Recover any lost or compromised data from backups.

How can you defend your organisation from impersonation fraud? (1/2)

Impersonation risk assessment:

- **Threat analysis and identification:** Conduct thorough analysis of past incidents, industry trends and potential threat actors. Evaluate the likelihood of impersonation attempts by reviewing access points, communication channels, and user interfaces that could be exploited.
- **Vulnerability Assessment:** Comprehensive review of your organisation's systems, processes and controls to identify any potential weaknesses.
- Perform data due diligence by **review publicly available information** on the key management and the company (particularly audio/voice data).

Cybersecurity crisis readiness and management

- **Incidents inevitably happen** – and if not responded to properly they lead to crisis with a potentially devastating impact
- **Incident Response Readiness:** Review of your organisation's procedures aimed at incident response & crisis management, conduct readiness exercise to practice in safe
- **Crisis Management, Incident Response & Resilience:** Activate the prepared plans, gain control of the incident to contain damage and proceed to eradication of threats and returning to normal in a resilient way.

Awareness training:

- **Awareness training/workshops on deepfake technologies:** These can be organised as part of in-house training or conferences.
- **Increased awareness:** This should give employees the knowledge that media content can be faked. This is aimed at improving organisational security and mitigating security risks well as increasing awareness.
- **Preventing fraud:** employees understand how deepfakes are made and learn how to recognise deepfakes

Discover how we can support your organisation to defend itself against impersonation fraud.

How can you defend your organisation from impersonation fraud? (2/2)

Fighting Deepfakes: what legal actions can you take?

01

Protecting privacy – support in cases of unlawful image use, disinformation, or manipulation involving personal data or/and personal rights.

02

Filing complaints to the Data Protection Authority – in case personal data is involved e.g. use of the personal data without legal basis for it.

03

Assessing personal data breaches – supporting in risk assessment, notification of the breach to the Data Protection Authority and notifying data subjects involved.

04

Evaluating copyright infringement – including unauthorized alteration or stylistic imitation of a work/image/voice etc.

05

Defending brand reputation and intangible assets, affected by deepfakes targeting your business.

06

Initiating and assisting in criminal proceedings – in cases involving identity theft, fraud, or extortion

Deepfakes can harm your image, reputation, and rights. Our legal team offers comprehensive support to help you respond effectively and strategically.

Our Regional Team

Czech Republic and Slovakia

Katerina Halasek Dosedelova

Director, Forensic

Mobile: + 420 724 369 351

Email: katerina.halasek-dosedelova@pwc.com

Michal Wojnar

Director, Cyber Security

Mobile: + 420 724 726 166

Email: michal.wojnar@pwc.com

Jakub Javorsky

Senior Manager, Forensic Technology

Mobile: + 420 737 276 903

Email: jakub.javorsky@pwc.com

Lubomir Almer

Senior Manager, Cyber Security

Mobile: +420 731 652 038

Email: lubomir.almer@pwc.com

Poland and Baltics

Marcin Klimczak

Partner, Forensic

Mobile: +48 502 184 087

Email: marcin.klimczak@pwc.com

Marek Chlebicki

Partner, Cyber Security

Mobile: +48 519 507 667

Email: marek.chlebicki@pwc.com

Aleksandra Bańkowska

Partner Legal Business Solutions

Mobile: +48 519507324

Email: aleksandra.bankowska@pwc.com

Angelika Ciastek-Zyska

Director, Forensic

Mobile: +48 519 507 289

Email: angelika.ciastek-zyska@pwc.com

Hungary

Peter Durojaiye

Partner, Cyber Security

Mobile: +36 706 850 360

Email: peter.a.durojaiye@pwc.com

Livia Eichardt

Director, Forensic

Mobile: +36 70 225 0282

Email: livia.eichardt@pwc.com

Eurasia

Vitaly Falin

Director, Forensic

Mobile: +7 701 950 0038

Email: vitaly.falin@pwc.com

Romania

Mircea Bozga

Partner, Cyber Security

Mobile: +40 722 200 909

Email: mircea.bozga@pwc.com

Ana Sebov

Director, Forensic

Mobile: +40 723 179 127

Email: ana.sebov@pwc.com

South-Eastern Europe

Petko Petkov

Partner, Cyber Security

Mobile: +359 895 421 042

Email: petko.petkov@pwc.com

Jovana Zelic

Director, Forensic

Mobile: +381 64 8573927

Email: jovana.zelic@pwc.com

Ukraine

Alex Yankovski

Partner, Cyber Security

Mobile: +380 503 157 995

Email: alexey.yankovski@pwc.com

Andriy Tretyak

Director, Forensic

Mobile: +380 44 354 04 04

Email: andriy.tretyak@pwc.com



Thank you!

**Discover how we can support your organisation
to defend itself against impersonation fraud**

Contact us



Sirshar Qureshi

Partner – EMEA Forensic Leader

Mobile: + 420 602 348 926

Email: sirshar.qureshi@pwc.com



Petr Spirik

Partner – Cyber Security

Mobile: + 420 774 191 101

Email: petr.s.spirik@pwc.com



Aleksandra Bańkowska

Partner – Legal Business Solutions

Mobile: +48 519507324

Email: aleksandra.bankowska@pwc.com