



TABARA
DE TESTARE

Cracking the Code: My Path to Becoming a Penetration Tester

26th February 2026

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GSE #298, Head of Offensive Security Services





#whoami

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Agenda

- Why ?
- How ?
- Certifications (?)
- Events (conferences)
- Sample of cool projects





Life as a Pen(etration) Tester – WHY ?



What my friends think I do



What my mom thinks I do



What society thinks I do



What hackers think I do



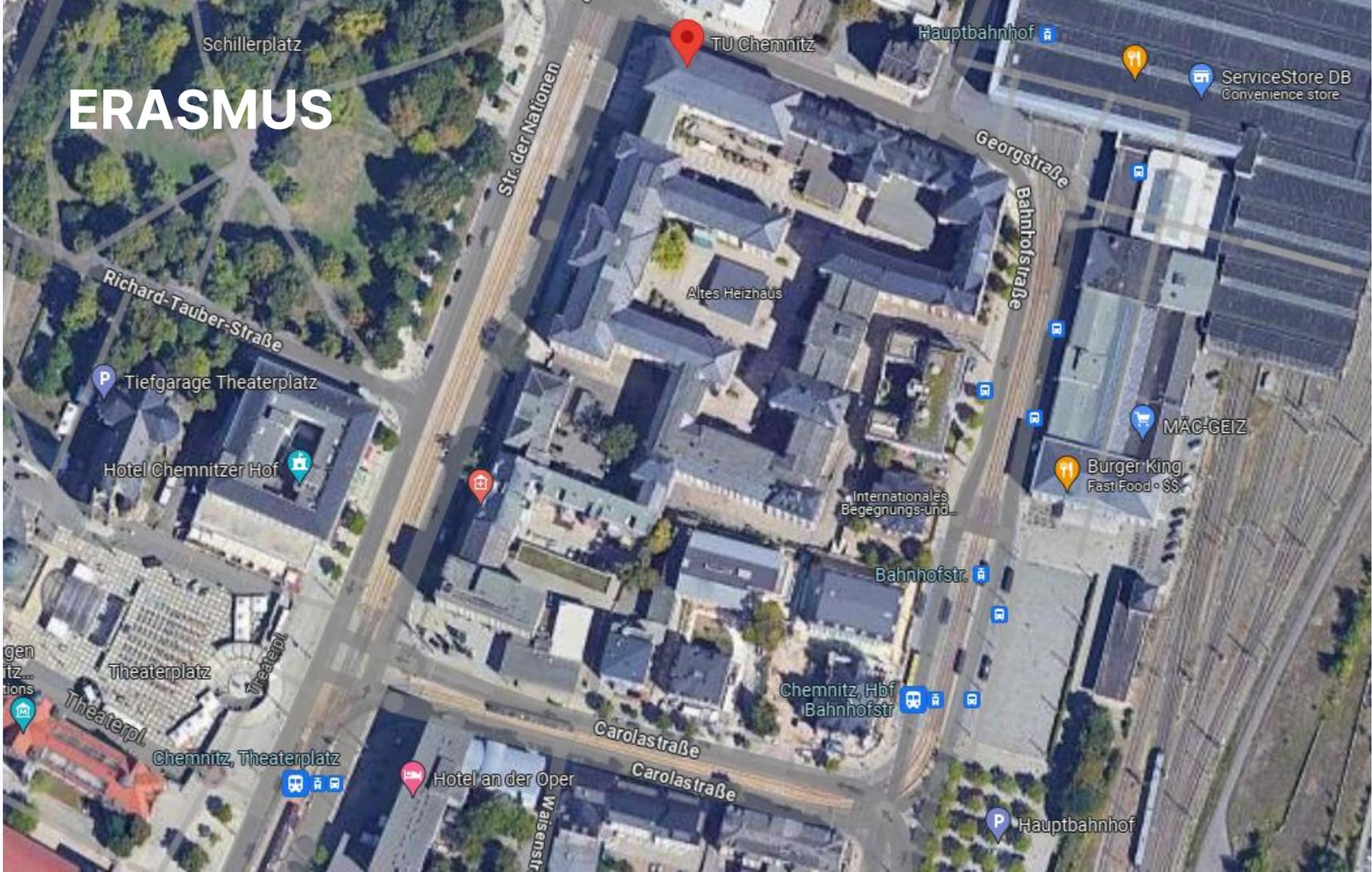
What I think I do



What I actually do



ERASMUS



Schillerplatz

TU Chemnitz

Hauptbahnhof

ServiceStore DB
Convenience store

Str. der Nationen

Georgstraße

Bahnhofstraße

Richard-Tauber-Straße

Altes Heizhaus

Tiefgarage Theaterplatz

Hotel Chemnitzer Hof

MÄC-GEIZ

Burger King
Fast Food • \$\$

Internationales
Begegnungs- und...

Bahnhofstr.

Chemnitz, Hbf
Bahnhofstr.

Theaterplatz

Chemnitz, Theaterplatz

Hotel an der Oper

Carolastraße

Carolas traße

Hauptbahnhof

Waisenstr.



The “long” road to success

More Learning

- University of Politehnica, MSc in Security of Complex Networks (SRIC)
 - My first failed exam ☹️
 - My first “real-world” certification – LPIC-1
- Learn to build, break and fix
 - Coursera



By <http://www.backtrack-linux.org/wp-content/gallery/backtrack-5/bt5-g0.png>,
GPL, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16164718>



Practicing

- <https://pentest-ground.com/>
- <https://www.vulnhub.com/> - VMs – Get Root style (OffSec / g0tmi1k)
- <https://hackthebox.com/>
- <https://www.pentesteracademy.com/topics>
- <https://www.pentesterlab.com/>
- <https://tryhackme.com/>
- <https://portswigger.net/web-security/dashboard>
- <https://academy.tcm-sec.com/>





Vulnerable apps to benchmark your scanners and your skills

Pentest Ground is a free playground with deliberately vulnerable web applications and network services. You can use them to test how effective vulnerability scanning tools are or for educational purposes.



Vulnerable systems

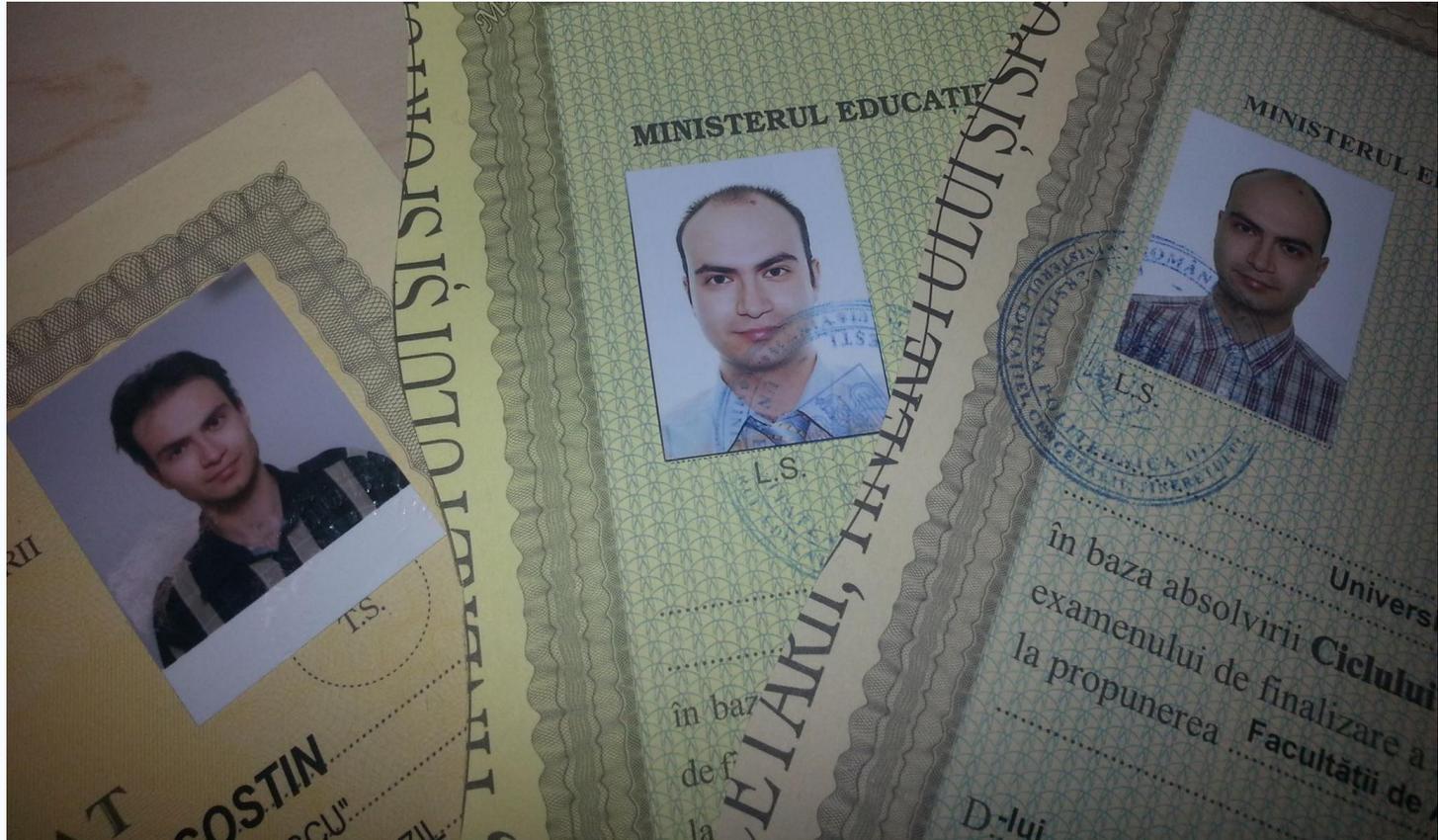
NAME	URL	TECHNOLOGIES	VULNERABILITIES
Damn Vulnerable Web Application	https://pentest-ground.com:4280	Classic Web App	CSRF , XSS , SQLi
Damn Vulnerable GraphQL Application	https://pentest-ground.com:5013	GraphQL	CMDi , XSS , SQLi
RestFlaw	https://pentest-ground.com:9000	REST API	SQLi , Code Injection , XXE
CipherHeart	pentest-ground.com:6379	Redis	CVE-2022-0543 (RCE)
GuardianLeaks	https://pentest-ground.com:81	Web App	XSS , SSRF , Code Injection

What you need to get started





How school shaped my head mind





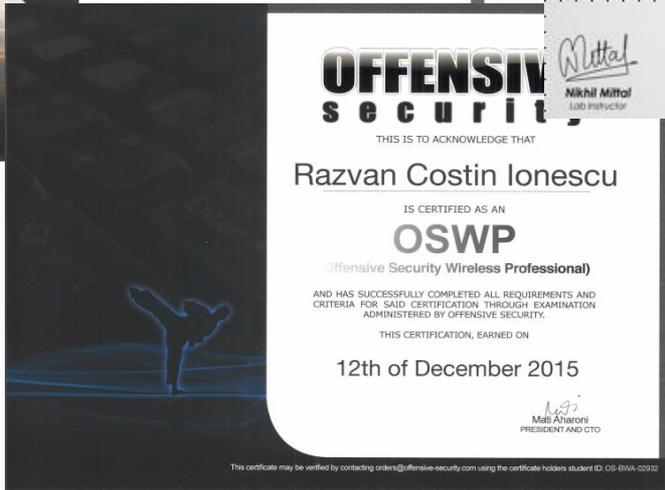
Training-on-the-job

- Internship
- Practice
- Start a career – from Jr. to Infinity and beyond
- <https://pentest-tools.com/jobs>





Certifications everywhere





Have I told you about certifications ?

Few personal recommendations



HACKTHEBOX





Why apply to speak at events & what that gets you





32C3





Visiting BlackHat US





Visiting DefCon - Vegas



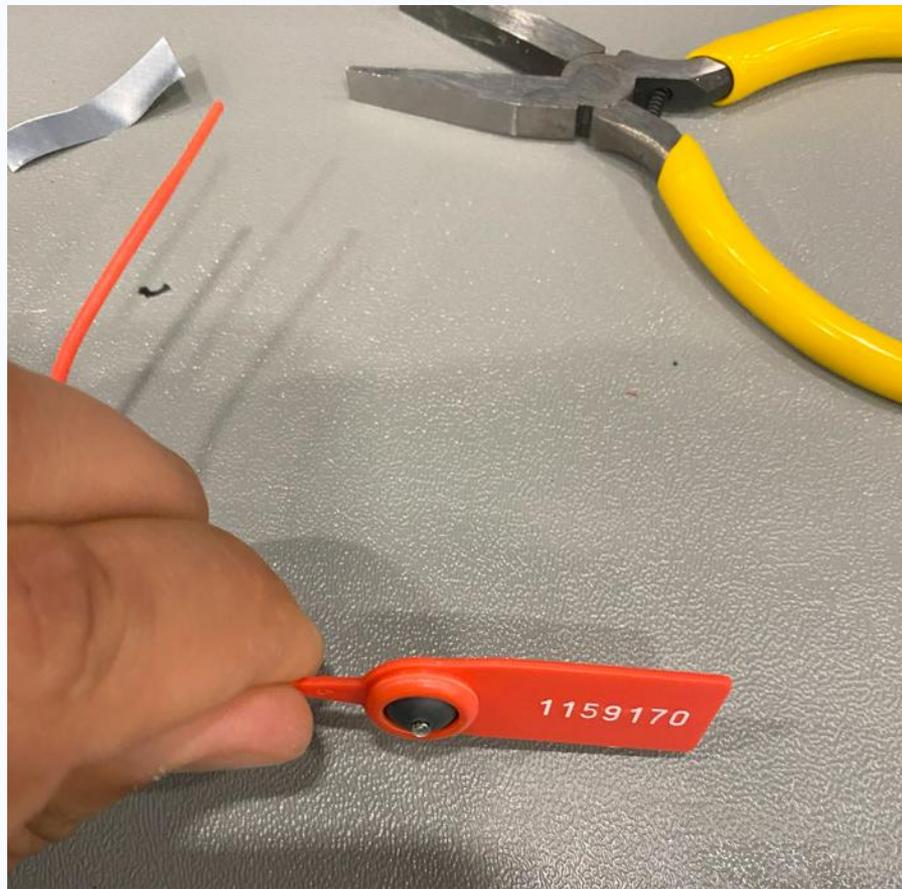


Visiting DefCon



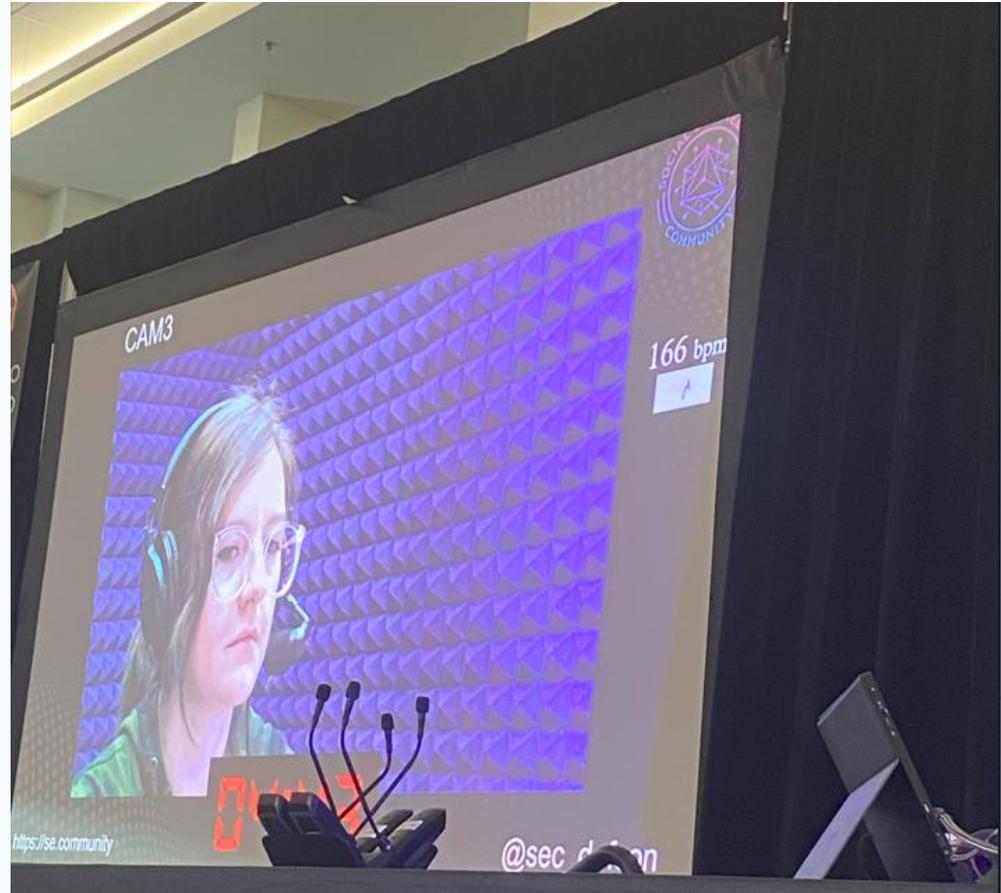
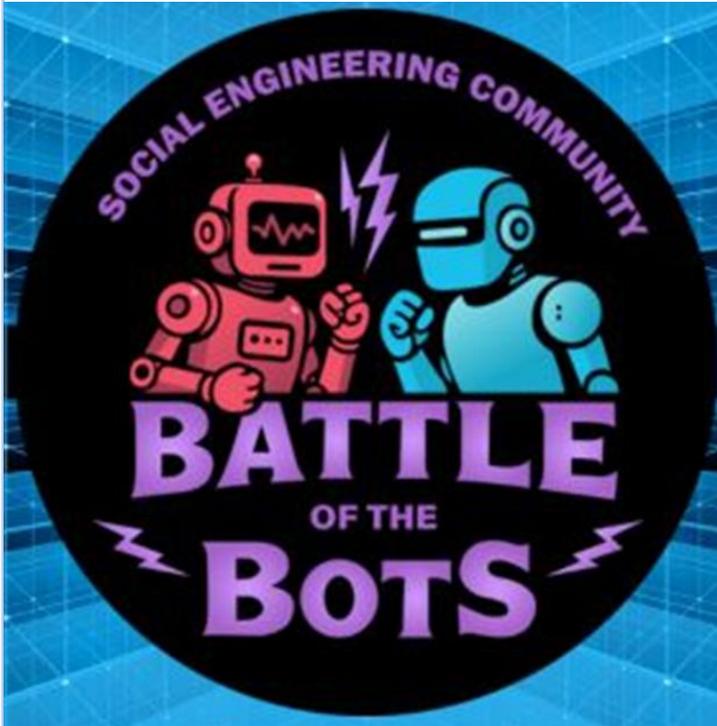


DefCon – Tamper Evident Village





DefCon – Social Engineering Village





Meeting VIPs at DefCon





Cybersecurity Community



OWASP
Open Web Application
Security Project

SECRETELE SPECIALIȘTILOR

SEZONUL 1
EPISODUL 8

**RĂZVAN
IONESCU**

**penetration tester
cyber security expert**

+ head of pentesting



**viorel
mocanu**

**podcast de
carieră în IT**



How They Hacked the Prime Minister From 1 Instagram Post 📉 Darknet Diaries Ep. 84: Jet-setters



Jack Rhysider 
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- 



When you browse Instagram and find former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott's passport number

- <https://mango.pdf.zone/finding-former-australian-prime-minister-tony-abbotts-passport-number-on-instagram>

Instagram

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hontonyabbott • Follow

hontonyabbott • A big thank you to all the team on QF26 from Tokyo. Hope to see you flying again soon! This will pass.

33m

Stay well and safe mate

AU

21m Reply

come and jump on calderwood's truck lol

15m Reply

Liked by [redacted] and 243 others

33 MINUTES AGO

Add a comment... Post

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Bank in Lebanon



Salut Razvan!

Multumesc pentru acceptarea cererii de conectare pe LinkedIn. Te contactez pentru un proiect in cybersecurity/pen testing care s-ar putea sa te intereseze.

Proiectul dureaza 20 zile din care 15 se lucreaza remote si 5 vor fi on site in orientul mijlociu (cu avion si toate cheltuielile decontate separat). Bugetul proiectului pentru acest rol este [redacted]

Cererea vine de la o companie care tocmai a semnat un contract pentru servicii de networking si securitate informatica si este urgenta. Intre timp te rog sa ma anunti cu ce intrebari sau detalii te mai pot ajuta si cand am putea sa ne auzim pe un telefon ca sa povestim despre acest proiect.

Sa ne auzim cu bine,

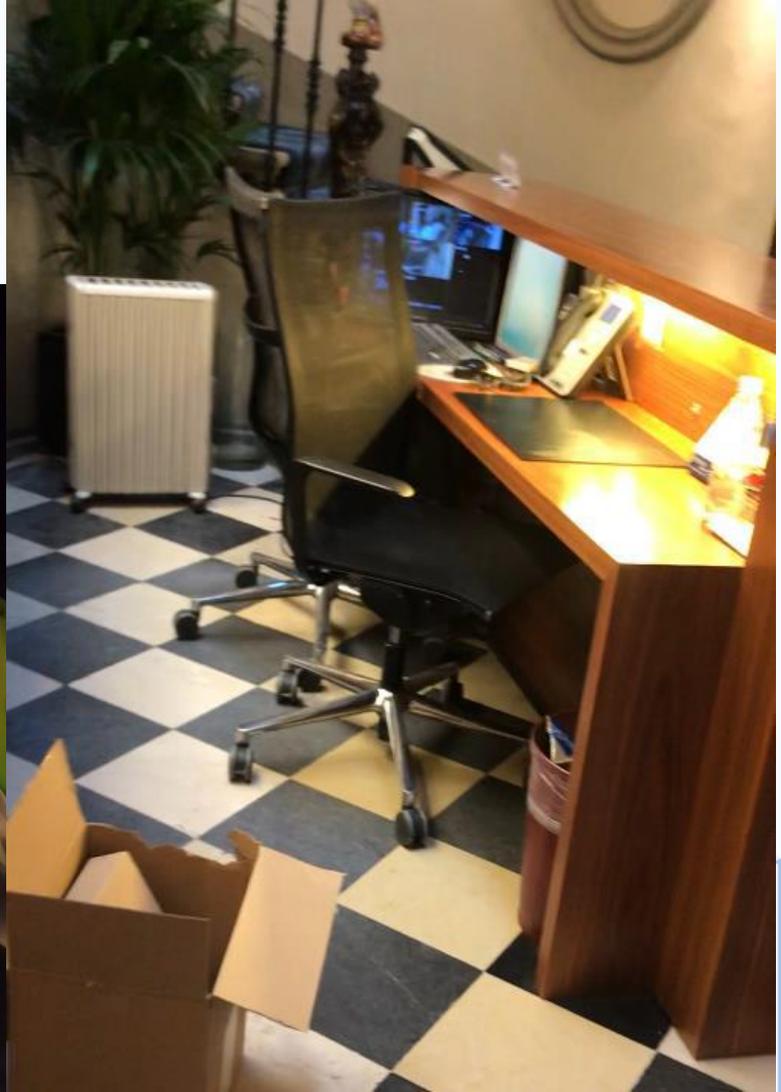


Metro station in Dubai





Swiss Private Bank





What are my personal recommendations to you





Misc

- <https://www.youtube.com/@ViorelMocanu> ->
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy8GNrGtPzs>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@PentestToolscom/podcasts>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@cyberempathy>
- <https://darknetdiaries.com/>
- <https://pentest-tools.com/jobs>



Q & A

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<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ionescr/>

