

Summary of a working meeting for public institutions, academia, NGOs and experts in the area of countering hybrid threats

Warsaw, 28.02.2023

It was another meeting where a group of practitioners dealing with the topic of countering hybrid threats gathered at the invitation of the Polish Platform for Homeland Security (PPHS). **The purpose of the gathering was to discuss activities related to combating disinformation, promoting media literacy, citizens' resilience and strategic communications.**

The meeting was held within the EU-HYBNET project, whose goal is to develop a European network of practitioners aimed at preparing for, detecting and combating hybrid threats in advance. The meeting was attended by two consortium partners of the EU-HYBNET project (PPHS, Terrorism Prevention Centre of Excellence Internal Security Agency) and network partners (Academic Centre for Strategic Communication, Demagog Association, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Polish Association for National Security), as well as institutions that are interested in joining the EU-HYBNET network of practitioners.

The event, held at the SWPS University Conference Centre in Warsaw, was attended by 28 representatives from 13 institutions:

1. Academic Centre for Strategic Communication War Studies University (Ministry of National Defence)
2. Terrorism Prevention Centre of Excellence Internal Security Agency
3. Geremek Foundation
4. Cybersecurity Institute Foundation
5. Google News Lab (Central and Eastern Europe)
6. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, StratCom Unit in Press Office
7. NASK – National Research Institute
8. Polish Platform For Homeland Security
9. Polish Association for National Security
10. Demagog Association
11. SWPS University/CEDMO
12. University of Wrocław
13. The Polish Financial Supervision Authority (UKNF)

The meeting began with two presentations, introducing the main topic of discussion:

1. Prof. Karina Stasiuk-Krajewska of SWPS University and also a member of CEDMO (Central European Digital Media Observatory) introduced the vision and activities of this independent and multidisciplinary hub, which identifies, researches and pinpoints the sources and causes of disinformation in Central Europe (mainly in Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia);
2. Head of StratCom Unit Press Office Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Paulina Deryło-Peltz – presented the activities of the StratCom team, a special unit of the Ministry acting as a Polish point of contact in the Rapid Alert System, created by the European Union, in the field of disinformation in relation to Poland's foreign policy priorities.

Those presentations were an important introduction to a moderated discussion, during which the following topics were addressed:

1. Detection of Disinformation Delivery Proxy Actors;
2. Identify and Safeguarding vulnerable individuals.

A longer discussion on the following two topics was also planned, but due to limited time and the lively discussion on the above topics, participants of the meeting were only able to briefly exchange the ideas on:

1. Impact and Risk assessment of critical infrastructures in a complex interdependent scenario;
2. Rapid Alert System.

We will return to these two topics at the next meeting as part of the discussion of the results of the EU-HYBNET project.

Key findings from the meeting

- Media literacy and critical thinking are invariably cited as the greatest and most urgent needs to effectively combat the impact of manipulated information on citizens. Significantly, there is no "most" vulnerable group in society, but it should be emphasized that raising awareness from an early age has a positive impact on building society's resilience. Nevertheless, it is important to build critical thinking skills competence in all age groups. Special attention was paid to the fact that media education should be comprehensively extended to journalists, including journalism students.
- Although grassroots initiatives and campaigns bring positive changes, there is a need for systemic solutions, with a larger scope, which, in addition to their effectiveness, can contribute to the growth of public trust in public institutions, and thus allow for coordinated cooperation between government organizations (including Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of the Interior and Administration) and local governments with NGOs, universities, research centres and other institutions dealing with the subject of countering disinformation.

It is also essential to emphasise that the gathering of participants representing so many different environments in one place was conducive to making new contacts and taking up the subject of joint plans for the future.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on the possibility of cooperation among the meeting participants in future joint initiatives. It was agreed that PPHS will serve as the secretariat of the group of experts participating in the meeting.

For more information or to get involved in the PPHS' activities related to combating disinformation, please contact:

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