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ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF SECURITY SCIENCES

## **Hybrid Threats and Their Impact on European Security**

16–17 June 2021

The Internal Security Institute of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, in a close cooperation with the Intelligence College in Europe, held a web-based seminar on hybrid threats and their impact on European security in Tallinn, Estonia, on 16–17 June 2021. At the event, many distinguished speakers from Estonia, Ukraine, Finland, UK, US, Canada, and EU were represented, covering different angles of hybrid threats and their methods. The target group of the event were leaders and senior officials of European security and intelligence services, law enforcement authorities, representatives of respective ministries, and educational institutions.

**The seminar gave the audience an overview of hybrid threats from the perspective of politicians, policy makers, researchers, and practitioners.** It also provided the audience with an opportunity to ask questions from globally recognized experts on the subject matter as well as high-level practitioners with extensive experience in the field.

### **Here are some of the recommendations suggested by the speakers:**

When it comes to **countering hybrid threats, the West has been slow and showed the lack of initiative**, which has made its actions rather reflective. NATO-EU joint declarations, the EU INTCEN hybrid cell, cooperation between member states and also the work of private companies (for instance, Bellingcat) and individuals (for instance, Jessikka Aro) shows that the West has now understood what it is facing and is constantly developing its awareness and resilience inside the institutions and also with different partners. Consequently, there are almost no disagreements inside the EU anymore when it comes to hybrid threats. **There is more common ground and mutual understanding in this field than ever before.**

However, it does not cover all areas of hybrid threats. For example, the EU has not been very active in taking steps to deal with the Russian state-controlled media channels. There should also be common understanding that these channels do not serve the free media but the narratives and goals of the Russian state. Ukraine has been more concrete here, banning Russian social media channels in 2017 and sanctioning three Kremlin-linked TV channels in 2021. Some steps have also been taken against the Russian media channels in the Baltics. However, to counter Russian state-controlled media successfully, the EU should be more united in that, too.

**To counter hybrid warfare efficiently, early warning and situational awareness are also one of the key elements.** Early warning, as in every other war-related situation, is crucial to increase resilience and prepare the counterattack on time. The West should cooperate internally and also externally with the like-minded partners to create a better situational awareness among the authorities and also among the population. The population needs to be aware of the situation, since educated population is the key for building resilience and strength. Working together with governments, NGOs, the media and other actors makes the West more united and, therefore, better prepared to counter the hybrid threats we are facing today.

The Internal Security Institute of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences **recommends continuing with joint conferences, seminars, and meetings on hybrid threats.** This will allow finding common ground and share experiences that are not covered with different levels of classification. During the forthcoming meeting, the Internal Security Institute recommends discussing **whether the EU members should need hybrid defence strategies.** Also, academic discussion allows elaborating on the hypothesis about the **necessity of hybrid attack strategies.**

The Internal Security Institute of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences