



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

# **OSCE 78th Joint FSC - PC Meeting: Hybrid Threats and Modern Warfare**

**Vienna, 15 July 2020**

The EU and its Member States thank the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship and the Ukrainian FSC Chairmanship for bringing the interesting topics of hybrid threats and modern warfare to the joint meeting of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Cooperation.

Mr. Chairperson, hybrid threats are one of the most serious and sophisticated challenges that all States, including EU members, are facing these days. They undermine our core values, pose risk to our societies and the proper functioning of democratic States. Hybrid threats combine conventional and unconventional, military and non-military activities that can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific political objectives.

The EU and its Member States take this challenge seriously, with awareness, resilience and response being at the centre of our action to counter hybrid threats. First, at national level, EU MS focus on strengthening their resilience through the establishment of a whole-of-government approach that allows early detection, quick recovery and more coordinated response among government agencies. Second, actions at European level, such as coordination, sharing situational awareness and best practices also contribute to countering hybrid challenges and bolstering resilience. We conduct, for example, regular joint EU exercises aimed at improving our preparedness and joint responses to such attacks. The establishment of the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell as well as the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats are just two examples of actions identified and implemented since

the adoption of the Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats by the EU in 2016.

The spread of deliberate, large-scale, and systematic disinformation, especially as part of hybrid warfare, is an acute and strategic challenge for our democratic systems that requires an urgent response while fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The EU has set up the Rapid Alert System to facilitate the exchange of analysis between the EU Institutions and the MS on disinformation and foreign influence operations. The EU Action Plan against Disinformation sets out key actions for coordinated response to disinformation. It has recently been adapted and extended in view of experiences during the COVID19-pandemic, where we have witnessed State and non-state actors attempting to exploit abusively the COVID-19 situation to advance their own political agendas. Within the European External Action Service, the STRATCOM Division with special Task Forces was created with the objective of analysing and exposing disinformation activities, including through a dedicated [euvsdisinfo.eu](http://euvsdisinfo.eu) website and related accounts on social media. The STRATCOM Division also actively cooperates with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society. We continue to work to develop capabilities and cooperation platforms within the Member States and with partners to increase our resilience, to detect hybrid attacks early on, to recover from them faster and to be able to respond jointly through all diplomatic means at our disposal, including potentially with restrictive measures.

We note that malicious cyber activities can be a part of hybrid threats. In this context, the EU developed a cyber diplomacy toolbox. Cybersecurity is thus another field of close cooperation among EU MS, Commission and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA). Within the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Cyber Rapid Response Teams (CRRTs) have been launched to develop joint multinational cyber defence capability. The CRRTs will be able to carry out cyber vulnerability assessments, take preventive actions, neutralise and investigate dangerous cyber incidents virtually and, if necessary, physically. CRRTs could be used to assist European institutions, EU Member States and partner countries.

The EU also engages with like-minded partners to improve our situational awareness and collect best practices in different regions. In 2016, countering hybrid

threats was also identified as one of the fields for EU-NATO cooperation, including by bolstering resilience, working together on analysis, prevention, and early detection, through timely information sharing and cooperation on strategic communication and response. For the countries in the neighbourhood, we offer a hybrid risk survey that helps them identify key vulnerabilities for which EU assistance can be provided. We have also linked the EU's Rapid Alert System closely with the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, to ensure close international cooperation on the topic of disinformation and foreign influence operations among like-minded partners.

In the long-term, our shared objective is to become more resilient against hybrid threats, including disinformation. This requires, first and foremost, continuous and sustained efforts to support education and media literacy, independent journalism and civil society as a whole. Germany, which chairs the Council of the EU this semester, will organise, together with other relevant stakeholders, a Europe-wide citizens' dialogue on these issues in October.

Mr. Chairperson, in relation to modern warfare, the use of new technologies in the military domain is, to a large extent, understandable and unavoidable. At the same time, we should be aware that their use creates challenges and influences threat perceptions of others. We remain strong supporters of full implementation and a substantial modernisation of the Vienna Document and welcome proposals on strengthening its provisions. We also value voluntary briefings in the FSC, which also aim to increase transparency, dispel concerns and strengthen confidence between OSCE participating States, whilst noting that these briefings cannot be a substitute for mandatory transparency and reporting measures. Furthermore, we recall the Hamburg Declaration: Together we will work towards creating an environment conducive to reinvigorating arms control and CSBMs in Europe. We also recall the strong commitment to full implementation and further development of arms control agreements, which is essential for enhancing military and political stability within the OSCE area.

Mr. Chairperson, since modern warfare and hybrid threats, including disinformation, represent a challenge for all participating States, we see a merit in the continuation of these discussions in the OSCE.

The Candidate Countries the REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO, ALBANIA, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\*The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.