

## 2018 Ranking of countermeasures by the EU28 to the Kremlin's subversion operations

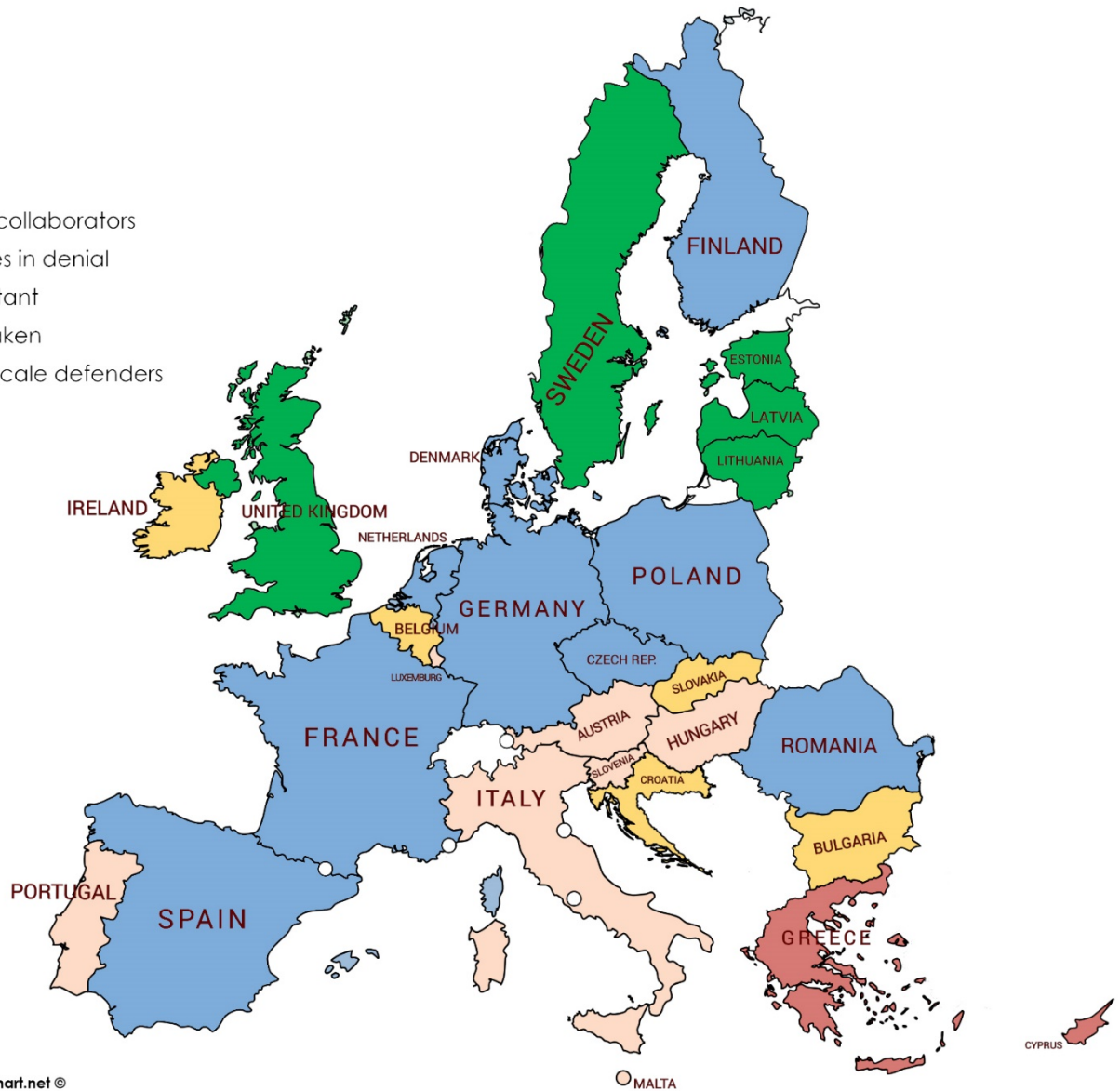
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### Kremlin Watch Team

This report has been consulted with 16 governmental and non-governmental experts from 12 European countries.

Kremlin Watch is a strategic program which aims to expose and confront instruments of Russian influence and disinformation operations focused against Western democracies.

- Kremlin collaborators
- Countries in denial
- The hesitant
- The awoken
- The full-scale defenders



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## 1. Introduction

This report is a follow-up to the Overview of countermeasures by the EU28 to the Kremlin's subversion operations conducted by the European Values Think-Tank and published in May 2017<sup>1</sup>. It summarises the attitudes, policies, and strategic responses of the EU28 to Russia's disinformation campaigns and other hostile influence operations. The special focus in this updated issue is on the main developments and changes, positive or negative, which took place during the months after the original report was published. Specifically, the developments have been updated up to June 1st, 2018.

The second half of 2017 and first half of 2018 have been far from uneventful. The Kremlin's hostile activities are becoming ever bolder each month. Europeans have witnessed more attempts to meddle in domestic affairs and elections, increased activity of automated bots and trolls on social media, and even a physical attack on their own soil in the case of the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the public and political debate has also progressed. The mentioned events stirred wider discussions about the responsibility of social media platforms and the urgent need for media literacy amongst European citizen.

The findings of the Report are based on a qualitative analysis of national strategy documents, reports, and official statements from all 28 member states that reveal the priorities of their individual foreign, security and defence policies. Specifically, this Report aims to summarize how individual EU member states are reacting to the growing threat of Russian subversion in three separate domains: 1) the government and political establishment, 2) the counterintelligence community, and 3) the non-governmental (civic) sector. The Report thus provides a comprehensive comparative overview of the current state of play in Europe, identifying common strengths and weaknesses between countries.

Of course, it is important to keep in mind that typological studies are inherently reductive and thus cannot fully account for the particularities and complexity of individual cases (in this instance, the EU28 country profiles). Nonetheless, the identification of regional and group patterns, common challenges and proven best practices is a valuable exercise for gaining a deeper understanding of both the threat in question and the most effective palliative policies. The authors hope the Report fulfils these objectives and, furthermore, that it stimulates political will for decisive and internationally-coordinated action against Russian disinformation and other means of subversive influence. Any errors or omissions are our own.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.europeanvalues.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Overview-of-countermeasures-by-the-EU28-to-the-Kremlin%E2%80%99s-subversion-operations-1.pdf>

## **2. Method**

Country profiles detailing the of state of play in each EU member state were compiled using policy reviews, media analyses, and independent expert data. We reviewed official strategy documents and summary reports of each member state, together with recent statements made by their political representatives and security/intelligence officials. Our analysis centred on content pertaining to the influence of foreign powers, cyber-security, disinformation campaigns, counterintelligence activities, and media literacy programs. We searched for all available data on policy proposals and countermeasures (both planned and implemented), as well as evidence of their effectiveness, using open-source, online, and academic sources. We also utilised the expertise gained through our cooperation with numerous institutions and organisations in the countries under review, in order to identify the most effective national projects and local response initiatives. If we have missed any relevant initiative, we will gladly update the Report as feedback arrives.

The chief methodological contribution is the development of a rating system based on three qualitative measures: 1) political acknowledgment of the threat by state representatives, 2) government strategy and applied countermeasures, and 3) counterintelligence responses. The tables below define and operationalise the scale for each of the three measures. Based on each country's total score (the sum of all three measures), we generated an overall symbolic ranking and grouped the EU28 into six categories based on their recognition of and response to the Russian threat. This categorisation is the basis of the Report's conclusions and also structures our final recommendations based on individual states' experience and capabilities. These recommendations follow the experiences and best practices of the EU countries that are most advanced in countering disinformation and hostile influence.

## Analytical framework: Operationalization of the rating scale

### Political acknowledgment of the threat

RATING	DESCRIPTION	SYMPTOM	CRITERIA
0	COLLABORATION WITH HOSTILE FOREIGN INFLUENCE	Governing politicians play a cooperative role with Kremlin foreign influence.	Clear signs of cooperation of governing politicians with hostile foreign influence & any attempt for a state response to the Threat is stopped.
1	THREAT DENIAL	Critical mass of the governing politicians denies or systematically underplays existence of the Threat	No relevant state response to the Threat is allowed by the government.
2	THREAT PARTIALLY ADMITTED	Individual politicians in the government admit existence of the Threat. Critical mass of governing politicians is reluctant to the threat	Ad hoc minor non-coordinated initiatives by individual state experts are allowed, but complex policy is not pro- actively pursued by the government.
3	GOVERNMENT ADMITS THE THREAT	Critical mass of the governing politicians admits existence of the Threat and allows individual government bodies to start under-radar ad-hoc responses	Specific government ministers seek to develop a policy response, individual counter-measures are already implemented in practise, others are being planned. Agreement on the political direction.
4	GOVERNMENT ASKS FOR POLICY COUNTER-MEASURES	Steps for setting up national defence system to counter hostile foreign influence operations are being developed.	The government directly tasks its security institutions to create a complex policy to counter the Threat, not only ad hoc non-coordinated initiatives.
5	ALL-GOVERNMENT POLICY COUNTERMEASURES IN PLACE	An all-government approach adopted, policy is established and implemented.	Specific initiatives are already put in practise, and no significant political setbacks are present while policies are implemented.

## Government counter-activities

RATING	DESCRIPTION	SYMPTOM	CRITERIA
0	COLLABORATION	The government helps Russian influence to spread, either from conviction or for opportunistic reasons.	The government takes specific measures limiting the resilience of the country towards Russian influence or enabling the fulfilment of the goals of the Kremlin, i.e. limiting the freedom of the press, collaboration with extremist parties, etc.
1	IGNORANCE	The government is not concerned with disinformation and influence operations; it does not consider them a threat and takes no steps to counter them.	There are no signs of any acknowledgement of the disinformation and influence operations coming from Russia or elsewhere.
2	PARTIAL INITIATIVES IN SOME AREAS	There are a few single initiatives and steps being taken to counter disinformation and influence operations. The effectivity of these measures is questionable.	One or only a few departments of the state administration show concern with disinformation and influence operations and takes steps to counter them. They are focused on specific problems, for example cyber-security or media literacy. The lack of resources or support prevents these initiatives from being fully efficient. The country has a representative in at least one of the international bodies countering disinformation operations. There is no sophisticated and coordinated policy in place.
3	SOPHISTICATED INITIATIVES IN SOME AREAS	There are a few single initiatives and steps being taken to counter disinformation and influence operations. They are widely supported and show efficiency.	One or only a few departments of the state administration show concern disinformation and influence operations and takes steps to counter them. They are focused on specific problems, for example cyber-security or media literacy. They have enough resources and support and clearly show positive results. The country has a representative in at least one of the international bodies countering disinformation operations.
4	INITIATIVES LAUNCHED IN ALL AREAS	There are initiatives and steps being taken across the state administration, in all relevant departments. There is a lack of coordination and efficiency.	All the relevant departments of the state administration have their programs for strategic communication. These steps are targeting hostile interference and subversion comprehensively and are focusing on all the important areas. The country actively supports (either financially or logistically) at least one of the international bodies countering hybrid threats. These programs are not fully efficient, due to lack of resources, coordination or a conceptualized policy.
5	SOPHISTICATED INITIATIVES IN ALL AREAS	There are initiatives and steps being taken across the state administration, in all relevant departments. They clearly show positive results.	All the relevant departments of the state administration have their programs for strategic communication. These steps are targeting hostile interference and subversion comprehensively and are focusing on all the important areas. The country actively supports (either financially or logistically) at least one of the international bodies countering disinformation operations. These programs are efficient, well-funded and coordinated due to a sophisticated comprehensive policy and good coordination methods.

## Publicly known counter-intelligence activities

RATING	DESCRIPTION	SYMPTOM	CRITERIA
0	COLLABORATION	The intelligence services are taking steps limiting the ability of the society to counter hostile interference and subversion.	There are cases of unlawful investigation or attacks on domestic journalists, threats against local population, etc.
1	IGNORANCE	The intelligence services are not concerned with hostile interference and subversion in any way.	The intelligence services do not express concern with hostile interference and subversion. They do not mention disinformation and influence operations as a threat to the security in their reports or in any kinds of public statements.
2	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE THREAT	The intelligence services are aware the threat exists but do not consider it a priority.	In public reports and statements, the intelligence services briefly address the existence of hostile interference and subversion. They do not analyse the issue or describe its different aspects, perpetrators and motives.
3	UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT	The intelligence services have wider understanding of hostile interference and subversion and how disinformation and influence operations are conducted in the country.	In public reports and statements, the intelligence services address hostile interference and subversion in detail. They were able to analyse the issue, identify its channels, perpetrators and motives.
4	OCCASIONAL INTERFERENCE	The intelligence services understand the issue and in one or two cases acted in order to counter disinformation or influence operations.	Besides detailed address of hybrid threats in public documents and statements, there are single cases when the intelligence services acted in order to counter them, i.e. uncovering Russian spies, investigation of a disinformation project.
5	ACTIVE COUNTERING	The intelligence services understand the issue and systematically act in order to counter disinformation or influence operations.	The intelligence services consider hostile interference and subversion a priority and systematically act to prevent them. There are regular cases of investigation and uncovering Russian connections in the country, training programs for public officials or / and cyber-attacks prevention.

### 3. Summary and Conclusions

#### Overall Ranking of the EU28

	EU28	Political acknowledgment of the threat	Government counter-activities	Known counter- intelligence activities	Total
GROUP "E" "Kremlin collaborators"	Cyprus	0	0	0	0
	Greece	0	0	0	0
GROUP "D" "Countries in denial"	Hungary	1	0	1	2
	Austria	1	1	↓ 0	2
	Luxembourg	1	1	1	3
	Malta	1	1	1	3
	Portugal	1	1	1	3
	Slovenia	1	1	1	3
	Italy	1	↓ 1	1	3
GROUP "C" "The hesitant"	Croatia	↑ 2	1	1	4
	Ireland	1	2	1	4
	Bulgaria	↓ 1	1	2	4
	Slovakia	↑ 2	↑	1	5
	Belgium	2	2	2	6
GROUP "B" "The awakened"	Spain	↑ 3	2	2	7
	The Netherlands	↓ 2	↓ 2	3	8
	France	↑ 4	↑ 3	↑ 2	9
	Romania	↓ 3	3	↓ 3	9
	Germany	↓ 3	3	4	10
	Finland	3	4	3	10
	Czech Republic	↓ 3	3	4	10
	Denmark	↑ 4	↑ 4	↑ 3	11
	Poland	4	3	5	12
GROUP "A" "The full-scale defenders"	UK	4	↑ 5	4	13
	Sweden	4	↑ 5	4	13
	Estonia	5	5	5	15
	Latvia	5	5	5	15
	Lithuania	5	5	5	15



### Engagement with European institutions<sup>2</sup>

	EU28	EEAS East STRATCOM Team (Brussels)	NATO STRATCOM COE (Latvia)	Finnish COE on Countering Hybrid Threats
<b>GROUP "E"</b>  "Kremlin collaborators"	Cyprus			
	Greece			
<b>GROUP "D"</b>  "Countries in denial"	Hungary			
	Austria			
	Luxembourg			
	Malta			
	Portugal			
	Slovenia			
	Italy		Sponsoring nation	Participating country
<b>GROUP "C"</b>  "The hesitant"	Croatia			
	Ireland			
	Bulgaria			
	Slovakia			
	Belgium			
<b>GROUP "B"</b>  "The awakened"	Spain			Participating country
	The Netherlands		Sponsoring nation	Participating country
	France		Joining nation	Participating country
	Germany		Sponsoring nation	Participating country
	Romania			
	Finland	Has sent seconded-national expert	Partner country	Participating country
	Czech Republic	Has sent seconded-national expert		Participating country
	Denmark	Has sent seconded-national expert		Participating country
	Poland		Sponsoring nation	Participating country
<b>GROUP "A"</b>  "The full-scale defenders"	UK	Has sent seconded-national expert	Sponsoring nation	Participating country
	Sweden	Has sent seconded-national expert	Partner country	Participating country
	Estonia		Sponsoring nation	Participating country
	Latvia	Has sent seconded-national expert	Founding nation	Participating country
	Lithuania	Has sent seconded-national expert	Sponsoring nation	Participating country

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stratcomcoe.org/participating-countries>, <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/about-us/>

Group	Range
"E" - Kremlin collaborators	0
"D" - Countries in denial	1-3
"C" - The hesitant	4-6
"B" - The awakened	7-12
"A" - The full-scale defenders	13-15

## General Conclusions

- The Kremlin's use of aggressive hostile influence tactics like disinformation, together with its support for European extremists and radical leaders, has **strongly alienated at least 14 countries out of the EU28** (*Groups A & B*)
- We identify **two outright "Kremlin collaborators"** within the EU28 – **Greece and Cyprus** (*Group E*) – which have shown no meaningful resistance to Russia's subversive activities
- We identify a group of **7 EU states which largely continue to ignore or deny** the existence of Russian disinformation and hostile influence operations - **Hungary, Austria, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia** (*Group D*)
- Five states partially acknowledge the existence of the threat, but do not demonstrate adequate understanding of it and hesitate to implement noticeable countermeasures (*Group C*):
- The hesitation of **Ireland** is attributable to **geographic distance and historical neutrality**
- **Bulgaria** has often stayed away from being vocal about Russian aggression mainly due to its **complicated historical relations with Russia**. There are also considerable **internal political divisions** regarding this issue.
- **Belgium** recognizes the threat of Russian disinformation abroad, particularly in the Eastern neighborhood, but **does not consider this to be a problem for its internal security**, and therefore does not consider it a national priority. Its security institutions predominantly focus on the threat of Islamist terrorism.
- In **Croatia**, the activities of the government and the civil society are **limited to enhancing media literacy**, nevertheless, the country's leadership is **starting to acknowledge the threat more**, as Croatia was one of the eight EU member states to sign a letter requesting EU High Commissioner Mogherini to fight Russian propaganda.
- **Slovak** political representation is in a state of denial at the highest level, however, **President Andrej Kiska acknowledges the threat very much**. Also, the country became one of the pilot countries for the global campaign **"We Are NATO"** and it has an **active civil society**.
- We identify a large group of member states that not only acknowledge the existence of the threat but also seek to understand and analyse its particularities, as well as develop relevant and effective countermeasures (*Groups A & B*):

- **Nine of these states** experienced a strategic shift or “awakening” after the annexation of Crimea or direct attempts to meddle in their internal affairs and are now **nearing the helm of the fight** against Russian hostile influence operations. However, their practical **strategies for countering Russian subversion** are still under development, and some have **weak spots** that require redress (*Spain, France, The Netherlands, Germany, Romania, Finland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Poland*) There are noticeable differences in the depth and complexity of their national strategies (*Group B*).
- **Five states** show the **highest levels of activity, resilience, and readiness** with respect to the threat, given their historical experiences with Russia: **Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania**, and most recently **the United Kingdom**.

## Main developments in 2017-2018

### Political acknowledgment of the threat

#### Positive changes

- **Croatia** stepped outside its normal behavior and joined 7 other EU countries in signing an open letter to the High Representative Federica Mogherini, calling for enhancing the capabilities of the EEAS East Stratcom, especially in terms of funding and institutional basis.<sup>3</sup>
- Strategic documents have been updated in **Slovakia**. The new Security Strategy of Slovak Republic and the Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic both reference propaganda and disinformation. The support of a comprehensive approach and wider cooperation between the EU and NATO with respect to countering disinformation and cyber-defence became one of Slovakia's foreign policy goals. The threat (without attribution to the Russian Federation however) is also mentioned in connection with social polarization in Slovakia and the weakening of public trust in the democratic process and rule of law.
- **Spain** joined the group of “Awakened” countries after it appeared that Russian-based bots were active on social media in support of the separatist government in Catalonia. Both the Minister of Defence and Minister of Foreign Affairs publicly talked about this problem, admitting that many of these activities are coming from Russian territory.
- Even though the position of **France** towards the Kremlin is often swinging from bold statements accusing it of disinformation efforts to appeasing visits between their main leaders, it can be concluded that the French political elite has taken a harsher stance towards Russia in recent months.
- **Denmark** further confirmed its understanding of the threat in its Foreign and Security Policy Strategy from 2017. In the document, Denmark expresses its concerns about the threat of Russian influence campaigns and vows to direct attention to the issue as well as developing stronger resilience against them via an inter-agency approach.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://euobserver.com/foreign/139573>

## Negative changes

- **Bulgaria** failed to move forward in terms of political acknowledgment of the threat. Prime Minister Boyko Borisov avoids disaffecting his pro-Russian coalition partners and President Rumen Radev has repeatedly questioned EU sanctions against Russia.
- Despite having direct experience with pro-Kremlin disinformation campaigns connected to the investigation of the shooting of MH17 and the association agreement with Ukraine, the majority of **Dutch** MPs backed a motion in parliament urging the government to lobby for the abolition of "EUvsDisinfo", a product of the EEAS East StratCom Task Force.
- Even though the authors of the report had high hopes for **Germany** to become a game-changer and set the example for other countries in the area of countering Russian subversion, the political debate in Germany is stagnating. Not only is there no political discussion about new measures to be taken, the German government has also been pushing for the Nord Stream II pipeline project behind closed doors.<sup>4</sup>
- The situation deteriorated in **the Czech Republic** after the latest Parliamentary elections, which enabled the far-right SPD party to gain parliamentary seats. Together with the Communist party of Bohemia and Moravia and the pro-Kremlin president Miloš Zeman, they are legitimizing the Russian regime and act as allies in the ongoing information war.<sup>5</sup>

## Government counter-activities

### Positive changes

- Even though on a minor scale, Slovakian Ministry of Foreign Affairs put some resources into strategic communication. Furthermore, it became one of the pilot countries for the global campaign "We are NATO". One of the goals of this campaign is to "fight against fake and misleading news" concerning institutions like NATO and the EU.<sup>6</sup>
- **French** authorities are currently developing a new legislative proposal to tackle disinformation in the time prior to elections. According to the French Minister of Culture, spreading of fake news should be limited by a judicial procedure. The new law should also increase the responsibility of media platforms and their transparency when it comes to sponsored content.<sup>7</sup>
- **Denmark** has been very practical in tackling disinformation campaigns and influence operations. In 2017, the Danish government set up an inter-ministerial task force to counter influence operations including disinformation.<sup>8</sup> Denmark also trains its soldiers for combating pro-Kremlin disinformation before deployment to countries like Estonia.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Schwepe, C. & Arab, A. (2017) "Brisante Nähe". *Die Welt*. 15 December 2017.

<https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article171601464/Brisante-Naehe.html>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.europeanvalues.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Legitimization-of-the-Russian-Federation-regime-by-the-members-of-parliament-of-the-Czech-Republic.pdf>

<sup>6</sup><https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20708269/slovakia-launches-campaign-pointing-to-the-benefits-of-slovakias-membership-in-nato-and-the-eu.htm>

<sup>7</sup><http://www.france24.com/en/20180204-rapid-response-central-french-anti-fake-news-law>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.mm.dk/artikel/danmark-faar-ny-kommandocentral-mod-misinformatiohttps://euvdisinfo.eu/denmark-to-educate-soldiers-in-combatting-disinformation/>

<sup>9</sup><https://euvdisinfo.eu/denmark-to-educate-soldiers-in-combatting-disinformation/>

- The **British** authorities became much more vocal with their concerns about the threat of Russian subversion after the attempted murder of Sergey Skripal and his daughter. However, several counter-measures have been taken prior to the incident. In November 2017, the Electoral Commission in the UK opened two probes to investigate Russia's influence in the Brexit referendum campaign and the general elections. The investigation process is ongoing and continuously seeks cooperation from social media entities, among others. The British Parliament sets an example for other national parliaments in Europe which have similar capabilities but do not use them.
- The **Swedish** government has excelled in its preparation for potential meddling into elections ahead. The Swedish Contingency Agency (MSB) has been educating election officials to be prepared for election meddling or influence operations targeting the elections which will take place in 2018. Furthermore, a new government agency tasked with creating a "psychological defence" is to be established.

### Negative changes

- The new **Italian** government coalition consisting of populist parties shows no promise in stepping up Italy's response to pro-Kremlin disinformation and influence operations, despite several studies showing that automated bots and pro-Russian trolls played a significant role during the latest elections.
- Despite the **Dutch** government being involved in funding the International Visegrad Fund tasked with combatting Russian disinformation in Europe (among other things), the government officials have been unsupportive of the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force, even calling for its abolishment.

### Publicly known intelligence activities

#### Positive changes

- French intelligence agencies have few public outputs. However, in 2017, they stepped away from their usual standards and issued a public warning against Russian efforts to sway the presidential elections.<sup>10</sup> They also invited all political parties to be briefed on Russian cyberattacks.<sup>11</sup>
- The Danish Defence Intelligence Service, in one of its intelligence risk assessments, pointed out that the Russian Federation has been one of the countries which is most heavily invested in hacking operations. The report also mentions the Russian threat in areas of military threats, hybrid threats and terrorism.<sup>12</sup>

#### Negative changes

- In the eyes of many experts, Austria has become an unreliable country in the area of intelligence services. The political leadership of the FPÖ resulted in police raids of a Austrian BVT domestic intelligence agency and of the homes of some of its staff. Western intelligence agencies, including i.e. German BfV, avoid sharing data and otherwise cooperating with them, because of their concerns about leaks of sensitive data.

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<sup>10</sup> Emily Tamkin: "French Intelligence Agency Braces for Russian Bots to Back Le Pen". Foreign Policy. 8 February 2017. Available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/08/french-intelligence-agency-braces-for-russian-bots-to-back-le-pen/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://infowar.cepa.org/EditorsNote/The-French-presidential-elections-High-tide-for-Russian-information-war>

<sup>12</sup> [https://feddis.dk/SiteCollectionDocuments/FE/EfterretningsmaessigeRisikovurderinger/Risikovurdering2017\\_EnglishVersion.pdf](https://feddis.dk/SiteCollectionDocuments/FE/EfterretningsmaessigeRisikovurderinger/Risikovurdering2017_EnglishVersion.pdf)

## The action taken after the Skripal case
















- The approach of European intelligence services has not generally changed that significantly in recent months. However, there was momentum after the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia on British soil, which resulted in several countries expelling Russian diplomats (most of them probably intelligence officers). There are **19 countries** which considered this attack serious enough to send away at least one diplomat. Apart from Great Britain, which was the direct victim of the attack, no EU country decided to expel more than 4 diplomats from Russian embassies. On the other hand, **9 countries** did not expel any diplomatic or administrative personnel from Russian embassies: Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia. Most of these countries are ranked as “collaborators” or “in denial” in this Report, with the exception of Bulgaria and Slovenia, which are considered “hesitant”.

Country	No. of expelled Russian diplomats after the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal <sup>13</sup>
UK	23
Germany	4
France	4
Poland	4
The Czech Republic	3
Lithuania	3
Denmark	2
Italy	2
The Netherlands	2
Spain	2
Belgium	1
Croatia	1
Estonia	1
Finland	1
Hungary	1
Ireland	1
Latvia	1
Romania	1
Sweden	1
Austria	0
Bulgaria	0
Cyprus	0
Greece	0
Luxembourg	0
Malta	0
Portugal	0
Slovakia	0
Slovenia	0

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/26/four-eu-states-set-to-expel-russian-diplomats-over-skripal-attack>

## 4. Individual profiles of the EU28

### I. Austria

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Austria's bilateral relationship with Russia is between 'friendly pragmatist' and 'strategic partner'
- With the FPÖ now being a junior member of the country's coalition government, a far-right political party with exceptionally close ties to the Kremlin has occupied the ministry of defence and interior among others
- Vienna is a major target for Russian intelligence activities as well as interference in domestic politics

#### Relations with the Russian Federation

Austria is a non-NATO EU member state with a long tradition of neutrality throughout the Cold War. Its relations with Russia have not suffered significantly due to the situation in Ukraine. In particular, energy interests continue to shape the two countries' relationship and remain a cornerstone of Austrian diplomacy with Russia. For this reason, Austria is sceptical about the EU sanctions regime against Russia and is less concerned than other EU member states about the threat Russia poses to European stability. What is deeply worrying, however, is that the FPÖ is part of a new government coalition, representing a party with close contacts to the Kremlin. Reportedly, FPÖ officials are widely believed to have been targets of Russian attempts to cultivate the "very upper echelons of the political systems". Although Austria will unlikely challenge Russia sanctions, the fear is that Austria will be part of European integration projects, including defence integration and intelligence cooperation, while passing notes to the Kremlin.<sup>14</sup> In sum, "Austrian behaviour reflects the habits of a small, isolated, and neutral country trying to get along in between rival political blocs."<sup>15</sup> However, a large Chechen diaspora in Austria (20,000-25,000), the product of Russian policy in the Northern Caucasus, is perceived to be a potential national security risk. Public support for Russia remains low: according to the latest Eurobarometer, 28% of Austrians had a positive view of Russia.

<sup>14</sup>Gressel, G. (2017). "Austria: Russia's Trojan Horse?". *European Council on Foreign Relations*. 21 December 2017. [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_austria\\_russias\\_trojan\\_horse](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_austria_russias_trojan_horse)

<sup>15</sup> Gressel, G. (2015). "How Should Europe Respond to Russia? The Austrian View". *European Council on Foreign Relations*. 21 January 2015. [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_how\\_should\\_europe\\_respond\\_to\\_russia\\_the\\_austrian\\_view405](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_should_europe_respond_to_russia_the_austrian_view405)



## Political acknowledgement of the threat

The threat of disinformation or other hostile influence operations stemming from Russia does not feature on the Austrian political agenda. As anti-American, anti-Western, and pro-Russian ideologies and conspiracy theories are fairly popular amongst members of all three big parties, it is often hard to distinguish Russian-orchestrated disinformation from indigenous ideological agitation. On the contrary, following its tradition of neutrality, and in order to protect its national energy and trade interests, Austria seeks to walk a conciliatory and diplomatic line between Russia and its commitment to Europe. This attitude is exemplified by the Austrian Foreign Ministry's long-term priorities for European, foreign, and integration policy: "As demonstrated by the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the EU and its members need a clear neighbourhood policy [...] which provides our Eastern neighbours with the opportunity to participate in common solutions and saves them from having to choose between Russia or the EU. [...] Sustainable safety and security in Europe can only be achieved in cooperation with Russia and not by working against Russia – and the same holds true vice versa: Russia too, can only ensure long-term safety and security by working with and not against Europe."<sup>16</sup> There is no mention of security threats associated with disinformation or hostile influence activities in particular.

## Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

The Austrian government is undertaking no discernible action to counteract Russian disinformation or other means of subversive influence. Indeed, Austria continues to see Russia (along with the U.S.) as a strategic partner in national and European security.<sup>17</sup> This failure to acknowledge Russian subversion is noteworthy given that Austrian politics have proven vulnerable to Russian meddling. The right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ), which won 47% of the vote in the 2016 presidential run-off and 26% of the vote in the 2017 legislation election, is the most notable proxy agent of Russian influence, frequently hosting Russian politicians and nationalist intellectuals. Following its strong performance in the 2016 election, the FPÖ signed a cooperation contract with the United Russia Party – an act that was widely criticized by other Austrian elites.<sup>18</sup> However, mainstream Austrian parties have also at times proven receptive to a pro-Russian agenda (e.g., the centre-left SPÖ and centre-right ÖVP, also currently in the coalition government).<sup>19</sup> For instance, current leader of the ÖVP and the Chancellor of Austria Sebastian Kurz, in his position as foreign minister and chairperson-in-office of the OSCE, repeatedly proposed a step-by-step approach to lift sanctions against Russia. The "system of punishment should be exchange for a system of stimuli", Kurz suggested.

Furthermore, Kurz criticized the June 2017 US sanctions bill due to its potential impact on Austrian firms (OMV) involved in constructing the NordStream 2 pipeline. Now Kurz's centre-right party will teamed up

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<sup>16</sup> Long-Term Priorities for Austrian European, Foreign, and Integration Policy. *Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Austria*.

[https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Zentrale/Ministerium/Schwerpunkte/HBM\\_long-term\\_priorities.pdf](https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Ministerium/Schwerpunkte/HBM_long-term_priorities.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Austrian Security Strategy (2013). *Republic of Austria*. [www.bka.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=52251](http://www.bka.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=52251)

<sup>18</sup> Weidinger, B., Schmid, F. & Krekó, P. (2017). "Russian Connections of the Austrian Far-Right". *Political Capital*. April 2017. [http://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_AT\\_20170428.pdf](http://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_AT_20170428.pdf)

Rohac, D., Zgut, E. & Györi, L. (2017). "Populism in Europe and Its Russian Love Affair". *American Enterprise Institute*. January 2017. <http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Populism-in-Europe-and-Its-Russian-Love-Affair.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Gressel (2015); Weidinger et al. (2017).



in a coalition government with the far-right FPÖ. With this kind of division of political power, Austria could turn into a leader of opposition against the EU sanction regime.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, then, a “dovish’ attitude” towards Russia dominates across the Austrian political spectrum, with vested interests eager to return to “business as normal” with Russia.<sup>21</sup> This became all too apparent in the Golowatow-affair, when the former special operation colonel thought after in Lithuania for manslaughter was arrested in Vienna – and quickly released after the Russian ambassador intervened at the then minister of justice.<sup>22</sup> The possibility to settle affairs “unofficially” and to put rule of law below personal ties and networks is exactly what the Kremlin desires – Austria is a perfect operational environment for Russian state operatives.

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

Vienna serves as the base of operations for a large number of Russian security service agents (estimates vary from several dozens<sup>23</sup> to several thousands<sup>24</sup>). According to experts, at least 50 % of the accredited diplomats in Vienna are spies, which is a number that far exceeds the number of counter-intelligence officers working to counter Russia in the Austrian Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “From time to time, the Austrian media report [...] on Russian secret service activities in Austria. The Austrian side is usually overly keen to restore everything to normality as soon as possible: From its point of view, spy scandals must not spoil its ‘good and cordial relations’ with Moscow – and, especially, the natural gas supply”.<sup>25</sup>

Gert René Polli, the former chief of Austria’s counter-terrorism agency, told The Telegraph, “Vienna is a stock exchange of information. We have the most liberal laws governing spying activity in the world.”<sup>26</sup> Austria’s annual constitution protection reports mention Russian secret service activities; the latest notable incident occurred in 2011, when a Russian secret agent couple with Austrian identification documents was arrested in Germany. The ensuing investigation “significantly substantiated the suspicion of illegal activity.”<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, the 2016 counterintelligence report (Verfassungsschutzbericht) does not identify Russia as a threat to Austrian security, but rather names Russia as an important partner in fighting Islamist terrorism.<sup>28</sup>

In the meanwhile, the situation of the Austrian intelligence is obviously deteriorating as police raids at Austria’s BVT domestic intelligence agency and the homes of some of its staff under the command of

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<sup>20</sup>Krekó, P. et al. (2017). “Will Austria's New Government End Sanctions on Russia?” *Atlantic Council*. 23 October 2017. <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/will-the-end-of-sanctions-on-russia-begin-with-austria>

<sup>21</sup> Krekó, P. et al. (2016). “The Weaponization of Culture: Kremlin’s Traditional Agenda and the Export of Values to Central Europe”. *Political Capital*. 4 August 2016. [http://www.politicalcapital.hu/wp-content/uploads/PC\\_reactionary\\_values\\_CEE\\_20160727.pdf](http://www.politicalcapital.hu/wp-content/uploads/PC_reactionary_values_CEE_20160727.pdf)

<sup>22</sup>Golowatow-Affäre: Polizeiakt stellt Regierung bloß, *DiePresse*, 28 July 2011, [https://diepresse.com/home/ausland/aussenpolitik/681566/GolowatowAffaere\\_Polizeiakt-stellt-Regierung-bloss](https://diepresse.com/home/ausland/aussenpolitik/681566/GolowatowAffaere_Polizeiakt-stellt-Regierung-bloss)

<sup>23</sup> Malek, M. & Luif, P. (2013). “Austria”. *National Perspectives on Russia: European Foreign Policy in the Making?* David, M., Gower, J. & Haukkala, H. (eds). Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 209-221.

<sup>24</sup> McElroy, D. (2014) “Vienna Named as Global Spying Hub in New Book”. *The Telegraph*. 31 July 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/austria/11003898/Vienna-named-as-global-spying-hub-in-new-book.html>

<sup>25</sup> Malek & Luif (2013).

<sup>26</sup> McElroy (2014).

<sup>27</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht (2015). *Republic of Austria*. [http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI\\_Verfassungsschutz/Verfassungsschutzbericht\\_2015.pdf](http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Verfassungsschutz/Verfassungsschutzbericht_2015.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Verfassungsschutzbericht (2015).

the FPÖ suggest.<sup>29</sup> As a result, Germany is reviewing intelligence sharing ties with Vienna over fears of sensitive data leaks.<sup>30</sup>

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

There are no significant non-governmental initiatives in Austria seeking to mitigate the threat of Russian disinformation and attempted hostile influence. However, the Austrian media (e.g., Der Standard, Die Presse) frequently reports about cases of Russian information manipulation, though primarily about incidents in other countries. In addition, several civic media watchdog groups have emerged in recent years that are concerned with fact-checking, debunking false stories, and media literacy. These include: FPÖ Watch, mimikama.at, hoaxmap.org, digitalks.at, werdedigital.at, saferinternet.at, oiat.at.

However, there is also an extensive and growing network of so-called 'NGOs' and think tanks agitating on behalf of Russia. These include the Suworow Institute in Vienna, which has ties to the FPÖ, and the Center for Continental Cooperation, which appears to benefit from Russian government financing. In addition, Russian influence is palpable at the level of far-right civic youth movements. In particular, the popular Identitarian Movement, an extremist group founded in 2012 opposing U.S. 'hegemony' over Europe, derives much of its ideological inspiration from the Russian nationalist intellectual Aleksander Dugin.<sup>31</sup>

Prominent FPÖ members as well as FPÖ front organisations also organise events, balls,<sup>32</sup> and congresses with right-wing Russian organisations, such as the "St. Blasius foundation" of the Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeev<sup>33</sup> or the annual congress "Defenders of Europe", which features right-wing and Russian disinformation, and is organised by FPÖ front organisations.<sup>34</sup>

But cooperation with Russian institutes is not limited to the political far-right. The Renner Institute, the SPÖ's party academy, long cooperated with the "Dialogue of Civilisations" (DOC) think-tank. Its then-director and former SPÖ chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer still works for this institute now residing in Berlin (previously Vienna). The then-socialist run Austrian Ministry of Defence is sponsoring "research projects" with the DOC on regional security in Europe.<sup>35</sup>

Since the onset of the conflict in Ukraine, a new Austrian fringe media has also emerged, united in its pro-Russian orientation and admiration for Vladimir Putin.<sup>36</sup> Three outlets are particularly prominent: Neopresse,<sup>37</sup> published since 2012; Contra Magazin,<sup>38</sup> founded in 2013 by right-wing activists; and Info

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-austria-politics-intelligence/austria-says-intelligence-raids-were-legal-but-political-storm-rolls-on-idUSKCN1GQ2R5>

<sup>30</sup> <https://euobserver.com/justice/141406>

<sup>31</sup> Weidinger et al. (2017).

<sup>32</sup> Russischer Neofaschist Dugin vor Akademikerball in Wien, Der Standard, 18 January 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000072514481/Russischer-Neofaschist-Dugin-kommt-vor-Akademikerball-nach-Wien>

<sup>33</sup> Strache soll sich mit russischen Oligarchen getroffen haben, Der Standard, 03. June 2014, <https://derstandard.at/2000001740015/Strache-soll-an-Geheimtreffen-mit-russischen-Oligarchen-teilgenommen-haben>

<sup>34</sup> "Verteidiger Europas" treffen sich in oberösterreichischem Schloss, Die Presse, 04. January 2018, <https://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5348172/Verteidiger-Europas-treffen-sich-in-oberoesterreichischem-Schloss>

<sup>35</sup> Between Fact and Fakery: Information and Instability in the South Caucasus and Beyond, Policy Recommendations, Study Group Regional Stability in the South Caucasus, 09-12 November 2017, [https://doc-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/PfP\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_16RSSC\\_2017-Reichenau\\_Web.pdf](https://doc-research.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/PfP_Policy_Paper_16RSSC_2017-Reichenau_Web.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Krekó et al. (2016).

<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.neopresse.com>

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.contra-magazin.com>

Direkt,<sup>39</sup> a medium published since 2015, with its server located in Moscow. Similar pro-Russian and deeply anti-American and anti-NATO agitation is issued by the FPÖ's indigenous media or media affiliated with the FPÖ: Aula, the freedom Party's student newspaper, and unzensuriert.at, a "counter-information" platform run by the FPÖ's communication manager Alexander Höferl.<sup>40</sup>

## II. Belgium

Political acknowledgment



Government activities



Intelligence services approach



- Though Belgium has historically maintained a pragmatic bilateral relationship with Russia, the Kremlin's destabilization efforts in Ukraine have elicited a strongly critical response from Belgium
- However, Russian disinformation or other hostile influence operations are not a security priority for Belgium
- Brussels is the target of extensive Russian intelligence activities, which are a major concern of the Belgian security services

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Trying to stay away from the issues.** Historical, energy-related or economically special relations with Russia. Neither feels threatened and nor acknowledges the threat, outside the conflict in Ukraine.<sup>41</sup>

Belgium is an integral EU and NATO member state, hosting both EU and NATO institutional centres. Though historically a pragmatist in its relations with Russia, Belgium is growing increasingly aware of the threat that Russia poses to the European Union. The conflict in Ukraine has made Belgium more eager to support Kyiv in the EU context and back pan-European measures to counter Russian aggression. However, the country's geographic distance from the Russian border, combined with internal political difficulties as well as the threat of Islamist terrorism, mean that Belgium does not perceive Russia as a primary security threat. Nonetheless, Belgium does not deny that Russia poses a serious security challenge to Europe, and maintains a particular concern with Russian intelligence activities within its borders. According to the latest Eurobarometer, 26% of Belgians had a positive view of Russia.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Disinformation and other hostile influence operations stemming from Russia are not a political priority for Belgium, given its geographic distance from Russia and other pressing domestic security issues.

<sup>39</sup> See <http://www.info-direkt.eu>

<sup>40</sup> See: <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Die-Wahrheit-ueber-unzensuriert-at/297203575>

<sup>41</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

Since the start of the crisis in Ukraine, Belgium has noticeably cooled its attitude towards Russia; previously, Belgium maintained a friendly pragmatist stance towards Russia, based primarily on its interests in trade and energy relations. While Belgium is not pursuing any explicit national strategies to combat Russian disinformation and hostile influence, the country acknowledges the threat and supports a unified EU/NATO response to growing Russian aggression. In July 2017, the Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Michel emphasized that the dialogue between the Russian Federation and the EU needs to be improved; however, the disinformation issue was not discussed in this context<sup>42</sup>.

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

With respect to the relationship with Russia, Belgium chiefly advocates multilateral action through the EU/NATO and other European institutions, including the OSCE and Council of Europe. On EU-Russia policy, Belgium consults with the Baltic states, the Visegrad countries, Romania, and Bulgaria, despite strong divergences vis-à-vis historic experience with Russia as well as national interests and preferences.

In its policy focus, Belgium is less concerned with the potential domestic impact of disinformation than it is with the Kremlin's destabilization efforts in Ukraine. The 2016 Strategic Vision for Defence acknowledges Russia's hybrid warfare and destabilization efforts in Eastern Europe, and commits Belgium as a NATO member to security efforts in the region.<sup>43</sup> Foreign Minister Didier Reynders declared the Ukraine crisis to be a priority of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of Europe 2014-2015, and visited Ukraine with colleagues from the other Benelux countries, reaffirming Belgium's support for Ukraine's territorial integrity. In a 2015 speech on the priorities of Belgian diplomacy, Foreign Minister Reynders decisively called on Russia to "respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine", but simultaneously stated that "Russia remains an important partner and we think it is important to keep the dialogue open".<sup>44</sup>

The threat of Russian disinformation and hostile influence in Europe proper remains a secondary concern. However, the events of October 2016 demonstrate that if the information war directly affects Belgium and its international standing, Belgian political leaders are able to defend themselves. Russia claimed that the Belgian F-16 fighter jets took part in the bombing of the Syrian village of Hassadjek near Aleppo, a strike that killed several innocent civilians. Belgian Defence Minister Steven Vandeput rejected this claim and replied that "it is probably a Russian move to sow discord among the coalition members by spreading false information." Similarly, Belgian Foreign Minister, Didier Reynders, also said that "Russia is spreading false information." Even though, this was a clear example of Russian disinformation, it has not drawn the media's attention; the Belgian diplomats, in order to maintain good relations with Russia, did not emphasize this and issued a statement saying that it is certainly a mistake the Russians will soon recognize and apologize for.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium/politics/8690/open-discussion-between-charles-michel-and-sergei-lavrov-on-ukraine-and-the-rule-of-law>

<sup>43</sup> Strategic Vision for Defence 2030 (2016). Ministry of Defence, Kingdom of Belgium. <http://www.vandeput.belgium.be/en/aiming-smaller-more-modern-defence-strategic-vision-2030>

<sup>44</sup> Speech by Minister Reynders on the Priorities of the Belgian Diplomacy, 17 January 2015. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Belgium. [http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/Newsroom/news/press\\_releases/foreign\\_affairs/2015/01/ni\\_190115\\_speech\\_minister\\_reynders](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/Newsroom/news/press_releases/foreign_affairs/2015/01/ni_190115_speech_minister_reynders)

<sup>45</sup> <http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News/1.2798294#>

## The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference

Belgium hosts international institutions such as the EU and NATO, which Russia considers an important element of the bilateral relationship that separates Belgium from other small EU member states.<sup>46</sup> Given this unique position, Brussels is also the target of Russian intelligence activities. The Belgian state security service regularly reports on Russian “interest” in Euro-Atlantic defence policy, EU political decisions, EU economic policy, and the Russian-speaking community in Belgium.<sup>47</sup> Spy scandals are also not an infrequent occurrence.<sup>48</sup>

According to the 2011 Annual Report of the Belgian State Security Service (VSSE), clandestine activities of intelligence officers under diplomatic cover and journalistic cover remain at a high level. Investigations led to the identification of several Russian intelligence officers who, for many years, operated in Belgium and/or abroad using falsified Belgian or other non-Russian identities, sometimes dating back to the 1960s. Several Belgian nationals were recruited and manipulated by the Russian intelligence services. Political developments (electoral fraud, protests) in Russia and the region are closely monitored by the VSSE, as they may have consequences for the Russian and Russian-speaking diaspora in Belgium, the legitimacy of the future president, and bilateral relations.<sup>49</sup>

## Activities of the non-governmental sector

Think tanks are the primary non-governmental actors in Belgium involved in research and counter-strategy vis-à-vis Russian disinformation and hostile influence operations. These include the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, Royal Higher Institute for Defense, and Ceci n'est pas une crise.

In the last three years, several NGOs (e.g., Bridge EU-Ukraine, Promote Ukraine) have emerged seeking to raise awareness about Russia's destabilization efforts in Ukraine, as well as to increase public support for Ukraine's future as a “progressive, European, and democratic society”.<sup>50</sup> These NGOs collaborate with Belgian universities and think tanks to organize educational events about the situation in Ukraine and Russian influence operations.<sup>51</sup>

The Belgian NGO sector acknowledges the danger of disinformation (though not necessarily that related to or stemming from Russia) and tries to educate Belgian society and boost media literacy. Média Animation ASBL, a prominent media education resource founded in 1972 and sponsored by the Belgian Ministries of Education and Culture, targets media literacy in schools as well as amongst politicians and other decision makers.<sup>52</sup> There is also an awareness centre, Child Focus, that offers children, parents, teachers and other professionals advice and tips about how to avoid risks when using the internet and

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<sup>46</sup> Casier, T. (2013). “Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands”. *National Perspectives on Russia: European Foreign Policy in the Making?* David, M., Gower, J. & Haukkala, H. (eds). Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 118-131.

<sup>47</sup> Clerix, K. (2012). “Espionage in Belgium: Recent Cases”. *EU Observer*. 18 September 2012. <https://euobserver.com/secret-ue/117564>

<sup>48</sup> Rettman, A. (2012). “Belgian Diplomat Suspected of Being Russian Spy”. *EU Observer*. 5 October 2012. <https://euobserver.com/justice/117772>

“Russia Involved in Spying Scheme in Belgium's Consulate in Casablanca”. *Morocco World News*. 23 March 2015. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/03/154624>

<sup>49</sup> Annual Report (2011). *State Security of the Kingdom of Belgium*. [http://justice.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/VSSE\\_rapportannuel2011\\_FR\\_web.pdf](http://justice.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/VSSE_rapportannuel2011_FR_web.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> See <http://en.eu-bridge-ua.org/> ; <http://www.promoteukraine.org/about-us.html>
















<sup>51</sup> See <http://www.vesalius.edu/role-of-civil-society-of-belgium-in-promoting-peace-in-the-ukraine/>

<sup>52</sup> See <http://www.media-animation.be/A-Media-and-multimedia-education.html>



take advantage of its potential. In collaboration with actors from Flanders and the French speaking community, Child Focus initiated an expert consortium the Belgian Better Internet Consortium in creating a Belgian platform of collaboration between all Belgian actors and stakeholders involved in e-Safety and online media literacy<sup>53</sup>. The Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy, the Flemish project partner of Child Focus, held its first Congress on Media Literacy in Belgium in October 2017<sup>54</sup>.

### III. Bulgaria

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Bulgaria has historically close relations with Russia due to shared cultural ties as well as energy dependence
- Bulgaria has considerable internal political divisions with respect to Russia
- Facing pressure from pro-Russian groups, the current government is pursuing a rather ambivalent stance towards Russia

#### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Below-radar supporter.** Concerns about Russia, but given complicated historical relations and local context, has most of the time stayed away from being vocal about the Russian aggression.<sup>55</sup>

Bulgaria is a more recent EU and NATO member with deep historical and cultural ties to Russia. Bulgaria is highly dependent on Russian fossil fuels; thus far, however, the government has steadfastly followed EU guidelines and rejected several Russian pipeline projects. Though not explicitly pro-Russian, the political mainstream in Bulgaria seeks to reconcile a firm pro-EU and pro-NATO stance with friendly relations with Russia. Bulgaria considers sanctions an obstacle for its own economy. At the same time, over the past few years, Bulgaria has grown increasingly aware of the threat Russia poses to the rest of Europe. Yet thanks to the deep penetration of Russian interests in the economy, combined with domestic corruption, Bulgaria must also contend with powerful Russian efforts to influence policy.

This situation of 'state capture' further complicates Bulgaria's response to malign Russian influence. As such, Bulgaria's relationship with Russia is best described as 'below-radar supporter', where concerns are tempered by historical relations and local context, and there is avoidance of vocal criticism. According to the latest Eurobarometer, 72% of Bulgarians had a positive view of Russia. On the other hand, another poll found that Bulgarians "do not believe that Russia can be a model for development

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/portal/practice/awareness/detail?articleId=1082641>

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.mtseducation.eu/congress-on-media-literacy-in-belgium/>

<sup>55</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

and provide more credible guarantees for prosperity and security than membership in the EU and NATO.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Political acknowledgement of the threat**

Internal political tensions in Bulgaria between pro-Russian and pro-Western factions have contributed at times to a less than coherent message about the role of Russian influence in the country. For example, in 2014, a team around former Defence Minister Velizar Shalamanov drafted a NATO strategy paper that named Russia as a threat to Bulgaria based on concerns including “propaganda warfare, Russia’s links with politicians and business people, energy dependence and influence over the media”.<sup>57</sup> However, after a domestic uproar and pressure from Russia, former Prime Minister Georgi Bliznashki withdrew and revised the report, eliminating explicit mention of Russia’s information war against Bulgaria.

Thus, although Bulgaria has seen some political acknowledgement of Russian disinformation and attempts to exercise hostile influence, competing (pro-Russian) voices try to drown out the message. These include several radical pro-Russian parties and political groups that fuel Soviet nostalgia and are critical of the West, such as the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the far-right and ultranationalist Ataka, the new centre-left Alternative for Bulgaria, and the National Movement of Russophiles.<sup>58</sup> Leaders of the BSP and ABV attended a United Russia congress in June 2016.<sup>59</sup> These actors, although they remain on the political fringe, serve as Kremlin proxies within Bulgaria, suppressing any notion of a Russian threat while working to advance Russian interests within the country.

The only major Bulgarian party that have sought to distance the country from Russia is the centre-right Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB).<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, Prime Minister Boyko Borisov (GERB) exercises greater restraint in his rhetoric to avoid disaffecting his pro-Russian coalition partners. In particular, he is politically constrained by a loose coalition of three nationalist and pro-Russian parties, the United Patriots.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Rumen Radev, the current President – though constitutionally independent – is supported by the Bulgarian Social Party and his political agenda remains unclear. He has repeatedly questioned EU sanctions against Russia and expressed his interest in balancing Bulgaria’s Euro-Atlantic orientation, while maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship with Russia.<sup>62</sup>

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Bulgaria has thus far undertaken little concrete action to address the threat of Russian disinformation and hostile influence operations in the country. Despite extensive proliferation of pro-Russian

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<sup>56</sup> Public Opinion Poll: Bulgarian Foreign Policy, the Russia-Ukraine Conflict and National Security (2015). *European Council on Foreign Relations*. 26 March 2015. [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/public\\_opinion\\_poll311520](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/public_opinion_poll311520)

<sup>57</sup> Bechev, D. (2015) “Russia’s Influence in Bulgaria”. *New Direction: The Foundation for European Reform*. March 2015. [http://europeanreform.org/files/ND-report-RussiasInfluenceInBulgaria-preview-lo-res\\_FV.pdf](http://europeanreform.org/files/ND-report-RussiasInfluenceInBulgaria-preview-lo-res_FV.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> Junes, T. (2016). “Bulgaria: How Not to Mistake Russian Propaganda for Russian Policy”. *openDemocracy*. 30 November 2016. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/tom-junes/bulgaria-how-not-to-mis-take-russian-propaganda-for-russian-policy>

<sup>59</sup> Conley, H. A., Mina, J., Stefanov, R. & Vladimirov, M. (2016). “The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe”. CSIS. October 2016. [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017\\_Conley\\_KremlinPlaybook\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017_Conley_KremlinPlaybook_Web.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Conley et al. (2016).

<sup>61</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/25/bulgarias-government-will-include-nationalist-parties-on-the-far-right-heres-why-and-what-this-means/?utm\\_term=.65d629d1984d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/25/bulgarias-government-will-include-nationalist-parties-on-the-far-right-heres-why-and-what-this-means/?utm_term=.65d629d1984d)

<sup>62</sup> Kumar, I. (2017) “Sanctions ‘hurt’ Russia and the EU, says Bulgaria President Rumen Radev”. *Euronews*. 16 February 2017. <http://www.euronews.com/2017/02/16/sanctions-hurt-russia-and-the-eu-says-bulgaria-president-rumen-radev>

disinformation by way of home-grown media outlets (e.g., A-specto, Duma, Rusia Dnes, Ruski Dnevnik), the Bulgarian government has been very slow to address this problem, and conspiracy theories are rife amongst the public.<sup>63</sup>

In 2014, former President Rosen Plevneliev stated, "90% of the media in Bulgaria work for Russian masters."<sup>64</sup> Given the competing political interests in the country, Bulgaria has often vacillated between "policy resistance and capitulation" with respect to Russian pressure and attempted influence.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, the current Bulgarian government is supporting a tougher stance on Russia, despite opposition from the domestic radical fringe and public preference for a more "risk-averse" approach.<sup>66</sup>

On sanctions, Bulgaria mostly continues to follow the lead of EU heavyweights like Germany and France. However, Prime Minister Borisov has publicly announced that he would seek lifting of sanctions against Russia: "During our term as chairman of the EU, we must work politically and diplomatically to lift sanctions from Russia"<sup>67</sup> Under Borisov, Bulgaria has also refrained from expelling Russian diplomats out of its country over the Skripal poisoning. An opinion poll has revealed that 88% of Bulgarians support their government in its decision.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, with Krassimir Karakachanov being the Defence Minister, a former member of the State Security agency in Socialist Bulgaria and a pro-Kremlin figure is occupying a strategically important position.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the government continues to be committed to both the EU and NATO, as well as to multilateral security and cooperation via other European and international institutions.<sup>70</sup>

The Bulgarian government has, for the first time, drafted an official document, signed by Prime Minister Borisov, that contains sharp criticism of Moscow and views Russia as a threat to its foreign policy. According to the report on the state of national security in 2016, "Russia's actions are a source of regional instability and threaten our main goal: a united, free and peaceful Europe."<sup>71</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The 2015 annual report on the state of national security names several threats originating from Russia that pose a risk to Bulgaria: the destabilization of eastern Ukraine; escalation of existing (frozen) conflicts; intensive attempts by Russia to restore and expand spheres of influence through military, economic and cultural means, including pressure on other states' foreign policy; hybrid war, involving attempts of foreign countries to influence public opinion through disinformation, propaganda campaigns, media manipulation, use of social networks and populist parties; and energy dependency.<sup>72</sup>

Given Russia's high stakes in the country, Bulgaria is also a key target for Russian intelligence operations. Earlier this year, Bulgarian officials revealed that a Russian spy delivered a document to the

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<sup>63</sup> Junes (2016).

<sup>64</sup> Bechev (2015).

<sup>65</sup> Conley et al. (2016).

<sup>66</sup> Bechev (2015).

<sup>67</sup> <https://uawire.org/bulgaria-to-look-for-lifting-of-sanctions-against-russia-during-its-chairmanship-in-the-eu>

<sup>68</sup> <http://bulgarianpresidency.eu/poll-88-of-bulgarians-side-with-russia-in-the-skripal-case/>

<sup>69</sup> <https://sofiaglobe.com/2018/03/16/bulgarian-defence-minister-on-overhaul-deal-with-russia-mig-29s-could-be-used-to-2030/>

<sup>70</sup> National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2011). Republic of Bulgaria. [http://www.dans.bg/images/stories/Information/strategiya\\_za\\_nacionalna\\_sigurnost-bul-2011.pdf](http://www.dans.bg/images/stories/Information/strategiya_za_nacionalna_sigurnost-bul-2011.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> Report on National Security (2016). Republic of Bulgaria. [ftp://193.109.55.85/30\\_08\\_2017/702-00-34\\_Godishen\\_doklad\\_sastoyanie\\_natsionalna\\_sigurnost\\_RB\\_2016.PDF](ftp://193.109.55.85/30_08_2017/702-00-34_Godishen_doklad_sastoyanie_natsionalna_sigurnost_RB_2016.PDF)

<sup>72</sup> Report on National Security (2015). Republic of Bulgaria. <http://www.bta.bg/en/c/DF/id/1408996>



leader of the pro-Russian Bulgarian Socialist Party detailing a strategy for the country's presidential campaign. This document provided instructions for planting fake news and drawing attention to rigged polls, along with criticizing the West and calling for an end to sanctions on Russia.<sup>73</sup>

### Activities of the non-governmental sector

In Bulgaria, there are no relevant non-governmental initiatives explicitly dedicated to tackling the issues of Russian disinformation and other subversive influence operations. However, a few Bulgarian think tanks and academic/expert fora are occasional contributors on this front.<sup>74</sup> These include: the Center for the Study of Democracy,<sup>75</sup> a public policy institute that analyses, among other things, the extent of Russian influence in Bulgaria and the post-Soviet space as well as Russian destabilization efforts with respect to Western institutions; Bulgaria Analytica;<sup>76</sup> and the Sofia Security Forum,<sup>77</sup> an NGO active in publishing and organizing conferences on matters of international security. There are no apparent initiatives dedicated to media literacy.

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<sup>73</sup> Parkinson, J. & Kantchev, G. (2017). "Document: Russia Uses Rigged Polls, Fake News to Sway Foreign Elections". *The Wall Street Journal*. 23 March 2017. <http://bulgariaanalytica.org/cbbss/?p=11089>
















<sup>74</sup> Bechev (2015); Conley et al. (2016).

<sup>75</sup> See <http://www.csd.bg/>

<sup>76</sup> See <http://bulgariaanalytica.org/en/>

<sup>77</sup> See <http://www.sofiaforum.bg/front/index.php>

## IV. Croatia

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- With rare exceptions, politicians in Croatia do not realize and acknowledge the threat in the form of disinformation and influence operations.
- The activities of the government and the civil society are limited to enhancing media literacy.
- Raising concerns of decreasing freedom of the press make Croatian society more vulnerable to influence operations.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Below-radar supporter.** Concerns about Russia, but given complicated historical relations and local context, has most of the time stayed away from being vocal about the Russian aggression.<sup>78</sup>

Croatia has been wary with the Russian Federation since it gained independence in 1991 because of its involvement in Serbia, while sustaining good relations on a business level. They lost a significant part of common ground after the occupation of Crimea began. Recently, Croatia started to express concerns about Russia's frequent joint military exercises with Serbia. The country has also been attempting to become an alternative supplier of gas for the Central, Eastern and Southern Europe instead to Russia.

Croatia has been generally supportive of the EU actions against the Russian Federation and condemned the violence in Ukraine. After the related sanctions were put into place, the Croatian Ambassador to Moscow declared that Croatia shares the EU principles and does not recognize the annexation of Crimea<sup>79</sup>. The political representation kept their stance on sanctions being strictly dependent on implementation of Minsk agreements. They kept the cooperation on other issues with Russia alive, for example dealing with the crisis in Syria.<sup>80</sup>

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Disinformation campaigns or influence operations originating in Russia or even in general have not been on the Croatian agenda for a long time. In November 2016, the current Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic said in an interview that Russian "hybrid warfare" together with Russian connections

<sup>78</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>79</sup> "Croatia". *EU-28 Watch*. October 2015. Available at: <http://eu-28watch.org/issues/issue-no-11/croatia/>

<sup>80</sup> "Croatia: An ally who has not become a friend". *Gazeta.zn.ua*. 20th October 2015. Available at: [http://gazeta.zn.ua/international/horvatiya-soyuznik-ne-stavshiy-drugom-\\_.html](http://gazeta.zn.ua/international/horvatiya-soyuznik-ne-stavshiy-drugom-_.html)

with Serbia in the form of “intelligence, information and disinformation campaign” represent a threat in Croatian immediate neighbourhood<sup>81</sup>, but there has been no concrete action of the state administration.

These threats have not even been acknowledged and described in any strategic documents. Croatian Foreign Minister's Strategic Plan (2016 – 2018)<sup>82</sup>, Foreign Policy Aims<sup>83</sup> and the Activity Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011)<sup>84</sup> focus almost exclusively on economic relations and cooperation in the energy sector, as well as the statements of Foreign Ministers Vesna Pusić and Miro Kovač In recent years<sup>85</sup>.

Publically, Croatia calls for greater action to combat Russian disinformation. Croatia was one of eight EU member states what signed a letter requesting that EU High Commissioner Mogherini fight Russian propaganda, especially in the Western Balkans.<sup>86</sup> According to the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The letter warns of ever greater sophistication and intensity in disinformation and spreading of propaganda by outside factors in general," said the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. "Attention is being directed toward attempts to influence the creation of distrust and dissatisfaction with the democratic order as well as efforts to discredit the EU and member states, the transatlantic community, and our partners."<sup>87</sup> Croatian leadership thus understands the threat posed by Russia, even if actions fall short of the required efforts.

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Croatia has been more active in the area of media literacy. The Agency for Electronic Media of the Republic of Croatia, the official Croatian regulatory authority, launched an internet website<sup>88</sup> aiming at educating teachers and parents about the media and how to pass the knowledge on to children within schools and at home. But the country has more challenges to deal with in the media landscape. Croatian journalists have been raising their concerns recently because of the obstacles they have to face while conducting their work and the decreasing level of media freedom in Croatia. Some state measures, for example the removal of dozens of employees from the public broadcasters or the abolition of funding for non-profit media, have been widely criticized.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Jen Judson: "Interview: President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic". *DefenseNews*. 29 November 2015. Available at: <http://www.defensenews.com/articles/interview-president-of-croatia-kolinda-grabar-kitarovic>

<sup>82</sup> "Strategic plan for the period 2016 – 2018." *Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Republic of Croatia*. April 20, 2015. Available at: <http://www.mvep.hr/files/file/dokumenti/150717-strateski-plan-mvep-2016-2018.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> "Foreign Policy Aims". *Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Republic of Croatia*. Available at: <http://www.mvep.hr/en/foreign-politics/foreign-policy-aims/>

<sup>84</sup> "Yearbook 2011". *Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Republic of Croatia*. Available at: [http://www.mvep.hr/\\_old/custompages/static/hrv/files/godisnjak2011/pdf/MFEA\\_Yearbook\\_2011.pdf](http://www.mvep.hr/_old/custompages/static/hrv/files/godisnjak2011/pdf/MFEA_Yearbook_2011.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> "Press Releases". *Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Republic of Croatia*. Available at: <http://www.mvep.hr/en/info-servis/press-releases/>

<sup>86</sup> "Mogherini Urged to Do More to Counter Russian Propaganda," *New Europe* (blog), October 30, 2017, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/mogherini-urged-counter-russian-propaganda-2/>.

<sup>87</sup> "Croatia Co-Signs Letter Seeking Stronger Fight against Russian Propaganda," *The Voice of Croatia*, accessed November 26, 2017, <http://glashrvatske.hrt.hr/en/news/politics/croatia-co-signs-letter-seeking-stronger-fight-against-russian-propaganda/>.

<sup>88</sup> "Croatian regulator launched Media Literacy Website." *Agency for Electronic Media*. June 27, 2016. Available at: <http://www.e-mediji.hr/en/news/croatian-regulator-launched-media-literacy-website/>

<sup>89</sup> "Croatia: Media Freedom in Turbulent Times." *South East European Network for Professionalization of Media*. 10 August 2016. Available at: <http://seenpm.org/croatia-media-freedom-turbulent-times/>

Croatian officials also took aim at Russian state investments, with ailing monopolist Agrokor's government caretaker refusing to recognize Sberbank's demands for loan repayment.<sup>90</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The Croatian Security-Intelligence Agency (SOA) does not mention Russian activities in any form in its Public Report for 2015<sup>91</sup>. It does however give space to information security, especially regarding the communication within state bodies. According to Rapid7, a security company from the United States which uses its Project Sonar<sup>92</sup> software to compare countries according to their vulnerability to hacking, Croatia is the 40<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable country overall and 9<sup>th</sup> amongst EU 28 states. In December 2016, the Croatian Foreign and European Affairs Ministry also disclosed that during the previous government's term, there has been a cyber-attack on their communication network. According to Croatian press, there has been a suspicion that the attack was launched by Russian hackers, but the culprits have never been revealed.<sup>93</sup> According to the Public Report, the SOA conducts dozens of anti-bugging checks each year in important facilities in the country and abroad in order to ensure the safety of communication, but enhancing of cyber-security and protection against hacking is not the main priority.

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

The non-governmental sector in Croatia has also been active on the field of media literacy. The project established by the Agency for Electronic Media mentioned above has been supported by UNICEF within its larger project aiming at emphasizing the importance of media literacy and education of adults and children.<sup>94</sup> Domestic partners also participate on the project, including professional organizations and the academia, namely the Croatian Audiovisual Centre, the Croatian Film Association and the Academy of Dramatic Arts and the Faculty of Political Science.<sup>95</sup> Economic ties between Croatia and Russia, however, remain strong. According to the Washington Post, "Sberbank is Agrokor's biggest creditor with 1.1 billion euros. Another Russian bank close to the Kremlin, VTB, contributed with rollover loans worth about 300 million euros."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Dusan Stojanovic | AP, "Behind the Croatian Bankruptcy That's Shaking the Balkans," *Washington Post*, November 26, 2017, sec. Business, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/behind-the-croatian-bankruptcy-thats-shaking-the-balkans/2017/11/26/a916c0e4-d2a2-11e7-9ad9-ca0619edfa05\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/behind-the-croatian-bankruptcy-thats-shaking-the-balkans/2017/11/26/a916c0e4-d2a2-11e7-9ad9-ca0619edfa05_story.html).

<sup>91</sup> "Public Report 2015". *Security-Intelligence Agency*. Available at: <https://www.soa.hr/UserFiles/File/pdf/Public-Report-2015.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> "Mapped: Countries most vulnerable to cyber-attacks". *The Telegraph*. 10 June 2016. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/06/10/mapped-the-countries-most-vulnerable-to-cyber-attacks/>

<sup>93</sup> "Croatian foreign ministry target of hacker attack, classified info not compromised." *EBLnews*. 3 December 2016. Available at: <https://eblnews.com/news/croatia/croatian-foreign-ministry-target-hacker-attack-classified-info-not-compromised-46844>

<sup>94</sup> New portal for media literacy. *European Audiovisual Observatory*. Available at: <http://merlin.obs.coe.int/iris/2016/8/article20.en.html>

<sup>95</sup> John Cappello: "Russian Information Operations in the Western Balkans." *RealClear Defense*. 2 February 2017. Available at: [http://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/02/02/russian\\_information\\_operations\\_in\\_the\\_western\\_balkans\\_110732.html](http://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/02/02/russian_information_operations_in_the_western_balkans_110732.html)

<sup>96</sup> Dusan Stojanovic | AP, "Behind the Croatian Bankruptcy That's Shaking the Balkans," *Washington Post*, November 26, 2017, sec. Business, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/behind-the-croatian-bankruptcy-thats-shaking-the-balkans/2017/11/26/a916c0e4-d2a2-11e7-9ad9-ca0619edfa05\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/behind-the-croatian-bankruptcy-thats-shaking-the-balkans/2017/11/26/a916c0e4-d2a2-11e7-9ad9-ca0619edfa05_story.html).

## V. Cyprus

Political acknowledgment	■	■	■	■	■
Government activities	■	■	■	■	■
Intelligence services approach	■	■	■	■	■

- **Cypriot government considers Russia an ally supporting the integrity of the country, even though there are doubts about Russian actual interests amongst some journalists.**
- **Cypriot media have been speculating about hypothetical hidden motives of Russia to meddle into internal affairs of Cyprus with an agenda which is different than publicly claimed.**
- **Political representation of Cyprus has not acknowledged these speculations in any way.**

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Kremlin friendly.** Does not feel threatened and is advocating for better relations with Russia, often regardless what atrocities Moscow is responsible for. Often supports Kremlin's foreign policy objectives, such as stopping further sanctions under arguments related to appeasement or alleged business ties.<sup>97</sup>

Cyprus belongs to the group of countries which do not perceive any threat coming from Russia and keep a close relationship with the regime. Russia has supported integrity of the island since the Soviet era, which makes Moscow a key foreign partner of Nicosia. Cyprus is also Russia's primary offshore banking haven, home to 40.000 Russians and a popular destination for Russian tourists. The government opposed sanctions against Russia, especially because of the economic ties, although the actual impact of them on the economy has been limited. However, there is a continuing Russian intelligence's activity in the country and the Cypriot side fears that Moscow is using social and mass media and its ties to fringe nationalist parties and the Greek Orthodox Church to undermine the settlement talks.<sup>98</sup> In 2011, Russia granted a €2.5bn (\$3.5bn) emergency loan<sup>99</sup> which the Cypriot government is still repaying – a potential factor for Cypriot silence on the disinformation threat.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

There has been no official indication of acknowledgement of Russian influence operations and disinformation campaigns in any policy document. However, there have been voices expressing concerns about Russian meddling into the peace settlement between the parts of the island. Still, the bilateral relations with Russia stay on a high level, even regardless of the events in Ukraine. Either no official activities exist or they are not publicly admitted for domestic political reasons. Cyprus consistently opposed EU sanctions on Russia, with foreign minister Ioannis Kasoulides, declaring in an interview to

<sup>97</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>98</sup> „Cyprus fears Russia could wreck unification.“ *Politico*. 17 February 2017. Available at: <http://www.politico.eu/article/cyprus-fears-russia-could-wreck-reunification/>

<sup>99</sup> "A New Party for Cyprus's Russian Exiles and Expats," *The Economist*, November 14, 2017, <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21731331-some-fear-undue-russian-influence-new-party-cyprus-russian-exiles-and-expats>.

Die Welt that Russia and Cyprus were so tightly economically intertwined that EU sanctions “will destroy”<sup>100</sup> Cyprus' economy.

Cyprus is not a NATO Member State and the cooperation between NATO and EU is not its high priority, quite the opposite, it often tries to decrease it. No shift has been noticeable even in the recent years. Cypriot officials are one of the most rigid supporters of the idea of Russia being the real and honest ally of Cyprus and would not take part in any international activities targeted against it unless it would be absolutely unavoidable.

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Several media outlets in Cyprus managed to breach a long-time taboo and started speculating recently about their concerns that Russia might actually want to block the settlement on the island, opposite to what it officially claims. These speculations arised after some suspicious activities of the Ambassador of Moscow in Cyprus, Mr. Osadchiy.<sup>101</sup> But these worries have not been reflected by the majority of the authorities. No measure to counter subversive influence have been taken. After Russian oligarchs holding Cypriot citizenship founded a party, “I the Citizen,” the government and major political parties did not respond.<sup>102</sup> Cyprus also appears willing to help Russia evade EU sanctions. 17 MEPs signed a letter for President Anastasiades claiming Cyprus was “neglecting its duties under the European directives to combat money laundering.”<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the OCCRP project found that relating to the Paradise Papers cases, Cypriot banks received \$871, 290,158<sup>104</sup> in Russian laundered funds between 2011 and 2014. Russian influence thus continues unimpeded.

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

There are no known intelligence activities in Cyprus attempting to counter Russian influence operation, especially because such a target has not been set in any strategic document and Russian channels are not perceived as a threat to the country. There are also no known initiatives concerning cyber-security.

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

There are no relevant non-governmental activities or organizations focusing on disinformation campaigns or influence operations. There are several projects in place aiming at enhancing media literacy and internet security.<sup>105</sup> CyberEthics Cyprus Safer Internet Center co-founded by the European Union established a Safer Internet Programme. The organization participates on international projects

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<sup>100</sup> “Cyprus,” European Values Think-Tank, accessed November 26, 2017, <http://www.europeanvalues.net/cyprus/>.

<sup>101</sup> “Cyprus Fears Russian Meddling in Its Settlement Talks.” *The New York Times*. 5 February 2017. Available at: [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/05/world/europe/cyprus-fears-russian-meddling-in-its-settlement-talks.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/05/world/europe/cyprus-fears-russian-meddling-in-its-settlement-talks.html?_r=0)

<sup>102</sup> “A New Party for Cyprus’s Russian Exiles and Expats,” *The Economist*, November 14, 2017, <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21731331-some-fear-undue-russian-influence-new-party-cypruss-russian-exiles-and-expats>.

<sup>103</sup> “MEPs Demand Cyprus Open up over Russia Money Laundering,” accessed November 26, 2017, <https://euobserver.com/justice/139690>.

<sup>104</sup> OCCRP, “The Russian Laundromat Exposed,” OCCRP, accessed November 26, 2017, <https://www.occrp.org/en/laundromat/the-russian-laundromat-exposed/>.
















<sup>105</sup> “Mapping of media lietaracy practices and actions in EU-28”. *European Audiovisual Observatory*. 2016. Available at: <http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/8587740/Media+literacy+mapping+report+-+EN+-+FINAL.pdf/c1b5cc13-b81e-4814-b7e3-cc64dd4de36c>



and regularly reports illegal content on the Internet. It also tries to engage with the government and civil society and contributes to eradication of cybercrime.

The topic of cybercrime has also been picked up by the Cyprus Cyber Crime Centre on Excellence for Training, Research and Education (3CE), which provides specialised training for people from the public and private sectors.

## VI. Czech Republic

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- The Czech Republic is one of the leading countries regarding countering Russian subversive influence; it understands the threat and actively reacts on the state level.
- Civil society in the Czech Republic is active and has succeeded in placing the topic on the public agenda.
- The position of the Czech Republic is undermined by its President Miloš, Zeman, who is considered one of Russia's most prominent allies in Europe.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**The awakened.** These countries have significantly updated their policies and concerns following Russian aggression against Ukraine.<sup>106</sup>

The stance of the Czech Republic towards Russia changed significantly following the crisis in Ukraine and Russia's subsequent annexation of Crimea. Despite the ambivalent positions of some individual politicians, as well as a high dependence on imports from Russia, the country is fully aware of the threats Russia poses. However, pro-Russian president Miloš Zeman plays a significant role in maintaining relations with the Kremlin, having denied the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine after the Crimean annexation, and repeatedly criticising the EU sanctions against Russia, Zeman also retained strong ties to Russian business.<sup>107</sup>

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Czech strategy documents are quite sophisticated in terms of their identification and description of Russian influence and disinformation operations. The Defence Strategy from 2017<sup>108</sup> clearly states that the Russian Federation uses a set of hybrid campaign tools against the member states of NATO and the EU, including targeted disinformation activities and cyber-attacks. The Security Strategy from

<sup>106</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at:

<http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>107</sup> „Vulnerability Index“. *GLOBSEC Policy Institute*. April 2017. Available at: <http://www.globsec.org/upload/documents/vulnerability-index/globsec-vulnerability-index.pdf>

<sup>108</sup> "Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic." *Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic*. 2017. Available at: [http://www.mocr.army.cz/images/id\\_40001\\_50000/46088/OS.pdf](http://www.mocr.army.cz/images/id_40001_50000/46088/OS.pdf)

2015<sup>109</sup> already mentioned the hypothetical threat of hybrid warfare and disinformation intelligence operations, although without specifically naming Russia as the perpetrator. In the Long Term Perspective for Defence 2030<sup>110</sup>, the Czech Ministry of Defence expressed expectations that the misuse of information, technologies and the media will play a significant role in the future and that the international misuse of the media for information warfare will grow.

However, the most fundamental document was the product of the National Security Audit, conducted by the government in 2016, with a chapter devoted to the influence of foreign powers. It includes a SWOT analysis summarizing the strong and weak aspects of the Czech Republic's vulnerability and presents specific recommendations for enhancing resilience, including the establishment of centres for the evaluation of disinformation campaigns within relevant authorities, the creation of a system of education for public officials to make them more resilient towards foreign influence, and active media strategies for important democratic institutions or measures concerning media law.

In the 2017 Czech legislative elections, the far-right party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) gained 22 seats in the 200-seat Chamber of Deputies. The party, led by Tomio Okamura, is very friendly towards the Kremlin, as illustrated by the fact that 5 of its MPs are members of a Facebook group called "We want out of the EU and NATO - Russia is our true friend".<sup>111</sup> One of them, Radek Koteň, was elected as the chairman of the Chamber Security Committee.<sup>112</sup> Many of the current Czech MPs travel to the occupied territories of Ukraine or to Russia and use the benefits of mutual legitimization with the Russian regime.<sup>113</sup>

In the government coalition negotiations, it also seems that the stance of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Slovakia, a traditional Russian ally, is going to be of significant importance. They operate as proxies of the President and often make attempts to block any meaningful responses. However, the first and second government of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš included cyber and hybrid threats areas into their program and thus formally these policies should continue.

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<sup>109</sup> "Security Strategy of the Czech Republic." *Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic*. 2015. Available at: [http://www.army.cz/images/id\\_8001\\_9000/8503/Security\\_Strategy\\_2015.pdf](http://www.army.cz/images/id_8001_9000/8503/Security_Strategy_2015.pdf)

<sup>110</sup> "The Long Term Perspective for Defence 2030." *Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic*. 2015. Available at: [http://www.army.cz/images/id\\_8001\\_9000/8503/THE\\_LONG\\_TERM\\_PERSPECTIVE\\_FOR\\_DEFENCE\\_2030.pdf](http://www.army.cz/images/id_8001_9000/8503/THE_LONG_TERM_PERSPECTIVE_FOR_DEFENCE_2030.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/chteji-z-eu-i-nato-a-fandi-putinovi-seznamte-se-s-okamurovym/r~e979ebb8bb2111e7811f002590604f2e/>

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/bezpecnostni-vybor-povede-koten-spd-porazil-lidovce-bartoska/1556588>

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.europeanvalues.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Legitimization-of-the-Russian-Federation-regime-by-the-members-of-parliament-of-the-Czech-Republic.pdf>



## **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Based on these recommendations, the Centre against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats was established in 2016 within the Czech Ministry of Interior and begun operating in January 2017. The Centre monitors threats related to the internal security of the Czech Republic, including disinformation campaigns.<sup>114</sup> It is also tasked with advising the government on threats in the information space and publicly debunking disinformation about domestic issues. It continues in its efforts despite the political backlash from President Zeman, who has accused the Centre of censorship.<sup>115</sup>

In addition, the Czech government has a seconded-national expert at the EEAS East STRATCOM team in Brussels as well as an expert at the NATO STRATCOM COE in Riga (since 2016). It has not joined as a sponsoring nation.

## **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The Czech intelligence services have been forced to acknowledge the existence of Russian threats due to the Kremlin's intensive espionage activities on Czech soil. Russian spies are thought to be some of the most active foreign agents operating in the Czech Republic. They also try to cooperate with the Russian community in the country. Some of these agents have had to be expelled from the Czech Republic, although the Czech Foreign Ministry has not escalated the conflict publicly thanks to possible reciprocations from Moscow.<sup>116</sup>

In its Annual report for 2015<sup>117</sup>, the Czech Security Information Service (BIS) warns against Russian activities, focusing on the information war regarding the Ukrainian and Syrian conflicts and on political, scientific, technical and economic espionage. According to the Report, these information operations aim to weaken the Czech media, influence perceptions, confuse the audience, promote tensions, disrupt NATO and EU alliances and isolate Ukraine. Together with China, Russia has been accused of being the gravest threat as far as state-led or state-sponsored cyber-espionage campaigns are concerned.

The Annual Report for 2016 maintains a similar perspective on Russian disinformation and hostile influence operations. The report claims that the BIS is continuing its investigation of cyber-attacks against two Czech state authorities and reiterates the ongoing hybrid campaign against Ukraine, NATO and the EU. The report states, "As in the previous period, Russia has its interest in influencing Czech social and political internal integrity and thus weakening the EU and NATO (counting Russian activities in recent years in cyberspace, propaganda, operations in Ukraine, Syria, abduction of Estonian intelligence officer from Estonia to Russia, Russian border operations in Europe, it is clear that the EU and NATO are facing a Russian hybrid campaign)".<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> "Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats." *Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic*. 2017. Available at: <http://www.mvcr.cz/cthh/clanek/centre-against-terrorism-and-hybrid-threats.aspx>

<sup>115</sup> "Czech 'hybrid threats' center under fire from country's own president". *Reuters*. 4 January 2017. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-czech-security-hybrid-idUSKBN14O227>

<sup>116</sup> "LN: Expelling of Russian spies is hard for Czechs". *Prague Daily Monitor*. 6 September 2016. Available at: <http://praguemonitor.com/2016/09/06/ln-expelling-russian-spies-hard-czechs>

<sup>117</sup> "Annual report of the Security Information Service for 2015." *Security Information Service (BIS)*. 2016. Available at: <https://www.bis.cz/vyrocní-zpráva890a.html?ArticleID=1104>

<sup>118</sup> <https://www.bis.cz/vyrocní-zpráva16e1.html?ArticleID=1136>

## Activities of the non-governmental sector

Since the annexation of Crimea, Czech civil society has been notably active in terms of tackling disinformation. However ad hoc and reactionary their responses, many non-governmental organizations are well-established and have proven especially successful in monitoring disinformation circulated in the media space and in debunking fake reports.

The biggest shortage of activities exists in the areas of security issues, journalism, and media literacy. Attempts to promote educational initiatives in schools are rather small and none are systematic. These projects and organizations also often fall short in their coordination.

The European Values think-tank established the Kremlin Watch programme in 2015, which regularly fact-checks news reports originating in pro-Kremlin media, produces bi-weekly reports on disinformation trends and narratives spread in the Czech Republic, and cooperates with the EEAS Stratcom East Team as well as with other foreign partners on various projects. It also focuses on policy development and endeavours to motivate the state administration into taking further steps towards tackling disinformation campaigns.

The Association for International Affairs launched a Czech version of the Ukrainian website StopFake.org in October 2016, dedicated to verifying disinformation about the conflict in Ukraine. The Prague Security Studies Institute launched an Initiative to raise awareness about pro-Russian disinformation in 2015: it publishes articles and reports on the topic and organizes events and debates for both experts and the public.<sup>119</sup> People in Need produced an education pamphlets for teachers on Russian disinformation.<sup>120</sup> Likewise, the Czech academic sphere has not remained behind. The Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Studies at the Masaryk University in Brno analyses manipulation techniques and emotions used by pro-Kremlin disinformation sources and provides media literacy training. It also launched a student project called zvoli.info, which focuses on raising media literacy amongst Czech and Slovak high school students. Similarly, the student project stuzak.cz is a hub for humanities' students presenting interactive workshops in secondary schools, that focus on various socio-scientific disciplines. The aim, closely linked to media literacy, is to raise interest in civic-related themes among youth and to improve their level of socio-scientific education.<sup>121</sup>
















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<sup>119</sup> "Russia's influence activities in CEE". *Prague Security Studies Institute*. Available at: <http://www.pssi.cz/russia-s-influence-activities-in-cee>

<sup>120</sup> "One World in Schools". *People in Need*. Available at: [https://www.jsns.cz/cz/article/111/What\\_is\\_jsns.html?id=243](https://www.jsns.cz/cz/article/111/What_is_jsns.html?id=243)

<sup>121</sup> <https://stuzak.cz/>

## VII. Denmark

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Denmark's free and competent press is perhaps one of the most important foundations of national defence against foreign subversion.
- The arrival of subversive warfare on the agenda in the past three years, and the rise in controversial hacking attacks, likely perpetrated by Russia or pro-Russian hackers, make cyber-security and anti-subversion measures an important aspect of the kingdom's government policy.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Principled defender.** Held concerned views of Russian foreign policy and now is at the forefront of the European response to its aggression.<sup>122</sup>

Relations between Russia and Denmark have been relatively cool ever since Putin's rise to power, spoiled either by the war in Chechnya, human rights concerns, or Russia's actions in Ukraine. Today, Denmark remains a firm supporter of the international sanctions against Russia after its aggressive action in Ukraine. As of this year, a number of Nordic countries including Denmark have addressed the threat of Russian disinformation and have taken measures to counter this assault. Nevertheless, Denmark is not an important direct target for Russia, and although disinformation is being addressed extensively in Denmark, it is primarily within the general threat of Russian influence campaigns against the West, rather than to Denmark specifically. Moreover, Denmark – as well as the Baltic countries, Sweden, and Finland – faces potential military threats from Russia if escalation occurs.<sup>123</sup> The country's geopolitical location with the Baltic Sea might become especially strategic if Russian aggression continues.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

The Danish Royal Defence College (Forsvarsakademiet) mentioned "hybrid threats" the country faces in its 2017 report on cyber-security<sup>124</sup>, and briefly in the 2016 report.<sup>125</sup> In April 2017, Minister of Defence Claus Hjort Frederiksen spoke about a "continuing war from the Russian side" in the field of cyber-attacks, which were, according to him, "connected to the intelligence agencies or key elements of the Russian government."<sup>126</sup>

Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist and Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen agreed on boosting defence cooperation against 'dangerous' fake news campaigns and cyber-attacks (both which create

<sup>122</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at:

<http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> <http://www.fak.dk/publikationer/Documents/Cyberforsvar.pdf>

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.fak.dk/publikationer/Documents/Forskningsrapport%202016.pdf>

<sup>126</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/europe/russia-denmark-hacking-cyberattack-defense-ministry.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/europe/russia-denmark-hacking-cyberattack-defense-ministry.html?_r=0)

uncertainty in each country). When speaking about the justification behind increasing their defence ties against Russian cyber-attacks, both ministers claimed that when countries “cannot clearly distinguish false news and disinformation from what is true, we become increasingly unsafe... We have both been exposed to forms [of this] and want to better defend our societies in this area.”<sup>127</sup>

This nordic cooperation stretches back to 2015, when Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, and the UK produced a paper which called for: 1) Raised EU awareness of the dangers of disinformation, including proper cooperation with NATO on strategic communications; 2) Increased honesty regarding deconstructing propaganda and clearer objectives when EU countries communicate in the “eastern neighborhood”; 3) Providing credible alternatives for audiences relying on Russia’s state-controlled media; and 4) Greater attention toward the violation of broadcasting rules and better cooperation between EU media regulators.<sup>128</sup>

### Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a seconded-national expert in the EEAS East Stratcom team in Brussels to further counter Russian disinformation operations.<sup>129</sup>

In its latest Foreign and Security Policy Strategy from 2017, Denmark acknowledges the Russian threat and voices concerns about Russian actions in the Baltic Sea Region. The document also specifies concerns about the threat of Russian influence campaigns, and vows to direct attention to the issue as well as developing stronger resilience against Russian influence campaigns. The strategy also calls for an inter-agency approach to building resilience.<sup>130</sup>

In 2017, this was actualised by the creation of an inter-ministerial task force to counter influence operations, including disinformation, by the Danish government.<sup>131</sup> When the establishment of the task force was announced, Denmark’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anders Samuelsen, made the following comment: “Our Western democratic processes and media have become more fragile vis-a-vis fake news, disinformation campaigns and other unconventional methods. We have seen, for example, Russia’s attempt to influence democratic elections in the United States and France. We need to take it seriously. And Denmark is not immune to these kinds of threats. This is why we strengthen our efforts from the Danish side, like several of our partners have also done, so that we are better prepared to resist attempts to interfere in our democracy.”<sup>132</sup> Denmark is also currently working on a new national strategy for cyber- and information security.<sup>133</sup>

In the Danish Parliament, efforts to counter Russian influence campaigns and cyber threats have gained solid support from left, centre and right, with the exception of one MP, Marie Krarup, who stands alone in expressing support of Russia’s annexation of Crimea.<sup>134</sup> She criticises Denmark’s firm stance on the threat from Russia<sup>135</sup> and demands that Denmark discontinue its support of EU’s East Stratcom Task

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/31/denmark-and-sweden-boost-defence-ties-to-fight-russian-cyber-attacks>

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-eu-31932005>

<sup>129</sup> “How do European democracies react to Russian aggression”. *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at:

<http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>130</sup> <http://um.dk/en/news/newsdisplaypage/?newsid=030b755e-643a-44db-989a-528847f6671b>

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.mm.dk/artikel/danmark-faar-ny-kommandocentral-mod-misinformation>

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> <http://www.fmn.dk/nyheder/Pages/Ny-national-strategi-for-cyber-og-informationssikkerhed.aspx>

<sup>134</sup> <https://www.b.dk/kommentarer/borgerkrigen-i-ukraine-har-heldigvis-vaekket-vestens-politikere>

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.information.dk/udland/2017/01/marie-krarup-kan-altjaa-faa-oeje-paa-nogen-russisk-trussel>

Force.<sup>136</sup> As Berlingske daily pointed out, the MP is, not surprisingly, the most quoted Danish politician in Russian media, with more references than even the country's Prime Minister.<sup>137</sup>

Before deployment in January 2018 of the 200 Danish soldiers to Estonia as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, training for combating pro-Kremlin disinformation became a "top priority", according to the EU vs Disinformation Campaign website.<sup>138</sup> Quoting Denmark's Defence Minister, Claus Hjorth Frederiksen: "We used to see a kind of propaganda where the aim was to create a positive view of the Soviet Union or Russia's actions. Now, it has been turned around so that the aim is to create distrust among ourselves."<sup>139</sup> This came partly as a reaction to the false report of a 15-year-old girl being raped by German NATO soldiers, which ended with NATO accusing Russia of producing the false report and causing distrust within the organization.<sup>140</sup>

Additionally, the Institute for Strategy (IFS) of the Royal Danish Defence College has also shown a particular interest in analyzing strategic implications in developments in Russia, China, as well as the Middle East, not least due to Russia's recent activities in the region.<sup>141</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

Denmark has had the Centre for Cyber-security operating since 2012 under the Danish Defence Intelligence Service, and among more recent initiatives is the Computer Network Operations capacity, which is tasked with both defensive and offensive operations against hostile cyber-infrastructure.<sup>142</sup> The Danish Defence Intelligence Service has assessed Russia as one of the states most heavily invested in hacking in its 2017 intelligence risk assessment, mentioning the cyber area (including cyber threats from Russia) first, followed by Russia as a general threat (military threats and hybrid threats, including disinformation) and terrorism as the third area.<sup>143</sup> According to the assessment's main conclusions, "Russia conducts influence campaigns in order to improve its ability to influence public opinion in Western countries in directions favourable to Russia's strategic interest. Consequently, Russia will continue to pose a significant security challenge to the West, including Denmark".<sup>144</sup>

Moreover, in 2015 Denmark became active in building up the Kingdom's offensive capacity in cyberspace<sup>145</sup>, showing a very high level of importance cyber-security has in the country's national defence capacity. This is not without a good reason, since Denmark's Defence Ministry has fallen victim to Russian hacking attacks in 2015 and 2016, resulting in hackers gaining access to the ministry's employees' e-mails and non-classified documents<sup>146</sup>, which may lead to employees' personal data being used against them by criminals.<sup>147</sup> The story about the e-mail hack came months after Danish Defence

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<sup>136</sup> <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/sOXVEKv3-aOZi67pz-3bd93>

<sup>137</sup> <https://www.b.dk/globalt/de-russiske-statsmedier-elsker-marie-krarup>

<sup>138</sup> <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/denmark-to-educate-soldiers-in-combatting-disinformation/>

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/denmark-to-train-nato-soldiers-to-combat-russian-misinformation-2017-7>

<sup>141</sup> <http://www.fak.dk/publikationer/Documents/Forskningsrapport%202016.pdf>

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.fak.dk/publikationer/Documents/Cyberforsvar.pdf>

<sup>143</sup> [https://feddis.dk/SiteCollectionDocuments/FE/EfterretningsmaessigeRisikovurderinger/Risikovurdering2017\\_EnglishVersion.pdf](https://feddis.dk/SiteCollectionDocuments/FE/EfterretningsmaessigeRisikovurderinger/Risikovurdering2017_EnglishVersion.pdf)

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p. 9

<sup>145</sup> <http://www.zdnet.com/article/denmark-throws-down-75m-to-build-up-offensive-cybersecurity-capabilities/>

<sup>146</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-denmark-security-russia-idUSKBN17P0NR>

<sup>147</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/europe/russia-denmark-hacking-cyberattack-defense-ministry.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/world/europe/russia-denmark-hacking-cyberattack-defense-ministry.html?_r=0)



Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen warned that Russia is prepared to engage in a cyber-offensive against the kingdom.<sup>148</sup>

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

The Danish non-governmental sector has been very active in engaging with the topic of disinformation, hybrid threats, and fake news, and several research institutes have addressed the topic.

The Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) has been involved in analysing the issue of foreign subversion and disinformation.<sup>149</sup> The Institute's senior researcher, Flemming Splidsboel Hansen, is one of the institute's most notable experts on issues surrounding Russia and the former Soviet Union, and is an author of several articles on Russia. In a 2016 Hansen analysed the question of Russo-Western relations in the light of ontological issues of Russian self-identity vis-à-vis the West, which (according to Hansen) fuels the threat Russia poses to the West.<sup>150</sup> In 2017, the Institute also published a report titled "Russian Hybrid Warfare: A Study in Disinformation", authored by Hansen.<sup>151</sup>

Danish newspapers have written extensively on Russian fake news in the West. In his blog at Berlingske Business' website, Sten Lock raised the issue of how the debate in Western democracies is being diluted by disagreement on what facts to accept, recommending an English-language website called Snopes.com for those wishing to ensure they are familiar with true facts and not fake "facts".<sup>152</sup> Djøfbladet's Regner Hansen wrote how fake news is hitting European states in the midst of electoral periods.<sup>153</sup> In Denmark several fact-checking initiatives have also been debunking various fake and false news. Among these is "Tjekdet," an initiative by MandgMorgen that aims to not simply debunk fake stories, but also at bringing nuance and complexity into the political debate.<sup>154</sup> The Danish TV program "Detektor" by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation have been broadcasting since 2011, with a similar agenda, aiming to check facts and investigate the factual basis of claims within the Danish political discourse.<sup>155</sup> A recent publication on the issue of fake news is former Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann's blog post on Berlingske.dk, where he provides an example of his friend being deceived by fake media spreading a myth that 3500 U.S. tanks were deployed at Russia's borders.<sup>156</sup> The online magazine Zetland.dk has written an article outlining how Russian disinformation spreads in Denmark, and the role certain local sources, like 24NYT, play as disseminators of disinformation.<sup>157</sup>

Senior Researcher at the Centre for Military Studies at the University of Copenhagen Dr. Gary Schaub Jr., who is responsible for conducting research-based consultancy work for the Danish Ministry of Defence, claims that Russian media sources have been having some difficulty reaching the Danish public. Although some of these Russian media sources are primarily targeting an internal Russian audience rather than a Danish audience. Dr. Schaub nevertheless states that this difficulty is due to a "Scandinavian culture of shaping consensus" and "societal resilience" which make outreach difficult for

<sup>148</sup> <https://www.thelocal.dk/20170113/defence-minister-russian-hackers-ready-to-attack-denmark>

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.diis.dk/en/event/disinformation-and-trolling>

<sup>150</sup> <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201314>

<sup>151</sup> [http://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/950041/DIIS\\_RP\\_2017\\_6\\_web.pdf](http://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/950041/DIIS_RP_2017_6_web.pdf)

<sup>152</sup> <http://techtjek.blogs.business.dk/2017/04/03/russisk-propaganda-paa-steroider-saadan-laver-du-fake-news/>

<sup>153</sup> <http://www.djoefbladet.dk/blad/2017/06/nu-rammer-fake-news-europa.aspx>

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.mm.dk/tjekdet/artikel/omtjekdet>
















<sup>155</sup> <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/detektor-tv/detektor-10/detektor-2018-03-22>

<sup>156</sup> <http://uffeellemann.blogs.berlingske.dk/2017/02/03/kampen-mod-falske-nyheder/>

<sup>157</sup> <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/pro-kremlin-disinformation-in-denmark/>; <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/sOXVEKv3-aOZj67pz-3bd93>

outlets like Sputnik and RT. Sputnik News started in Denmark in April 2015 but closed again in March 2016, showing that the audience for these alternative news sources are small.<sup>158</sup> When they do attempt to gain the attention of Danes, it is with reports showing bravado. One example is the article in a Danish newspaper from the Russian Ambassador to Denmark, who in 2015 stated that Denmark would become the target of Russian nuclear weapons if it were to participate in NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence program.<sup>159</sup>

## VIII. Estonia

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Estonia has shown a particular interest in defending against hybrid threats, not least due to its high Russian-speaking population.
- Estonian government is actively engaged with volunteers and the country's civil society in combatting hybrid threats and disinformation by Russia.
- Highly digitized Estonian government infrastructure has been a victim of Russian cyber-attacks, with some believing it to be the first target of a hybrid warfare tactic utilized by Russia, making cyber-defence and media fact-checking important aspects of Estonian national security.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Principled defender.** Held concerned views of Russian foreign policy and now is at the forefront of the European response to its aggression.<sup>160</sup>

Estonia has suffered from cyber-attacks by Russia in the past and it is often seen as one of the first victims of the "hybrid war" tactics. Its sizeable Russian minority and the Estonian government's naturalization policies are often brought up by Russian diplomats in order to paint Estonia as a human rights violator. Russia plays a significant role in shaping Estonian national security policy, and the events of 2014 in Ukraine only assured Estonia that its fears were justified.

Estonia and Russia still share "bad blood" due to the Soviet occupation of the Baltic countries, which ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The tension grew even thicker when Estonia allied with NATO in 2004.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>158</sup> [https://twitter.com/sputnik\\_dk?lang=da](https://twitter.com/sputnik_dk?lang=da)

<sup>159</sup> <https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/breve/ECE7573006/Danmark-og-missilforsvaret-Helliger-m%C3%A5let-midlet/>

<sup>160</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at:

<http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>161</sup> <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Passcode/2017/0324/Estonia-s-lessons-for-fighting-Russian-disinformation>

## Political acknowledgement of the threat

Former President Toomas Ilves expressed concern that Russia may use hybrid tactics against Estonia.<sup>162</sup> His concerns are shared by the current President Kersti Kaljulaid.<sup>163</sup> The Centre Party, its former leader Edgar Savisaar, and the current Prime Minister Ratas, however, have become subjects of scrutiny over their alleged ties to Putin's United Russia Party.<sup>164</sup> Still, Russia's actions in Ukraine have alarmed Estonian policymakers, and the dominant consensus is that Estonia must be prepared to defend against potential repetitions of the Ukrainian scenario in the Baltic.<sup>165</sup>

## Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

Estonian Prime Minister Rõivas has proposed establishing a permanent financing scheme for the EU Strategic Communication Task Force (EU Stratcom) in 2016.<sup>166</sup>

"Välisluureamet" – the official foreign news service of the Estonian government – publishes yearly analyses of threats and challenges Estonia faces. This work is compiled into a report called "International Security and Estonia". In the report, both Russian domestic and foreign policies are analysed, proving Russia's goal is to expand its influence on the former Soviet states.<sup>167</sup>

Estonian politicians and public administration officers refuse to be a part of the Russian media. Major Uku Arold – Stratcom Officer in the General Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces – told *The Christian Monitoring Service* that: "[They] never give interviews to Russian state-controlled broadcasting channels because it's not media. It's not journalism... there is no point to giving interviews because the story is already made before the interview is given."<sup>168</sup>

The Estonian government also launched a Russian-language public broadcasting channel in 2015.<sup>169</sup> This was created in an attempt to lessen tensions between Russian-speaking minorities and the rest of the population of Estonia; one of its primary goals is to discredit much of the pro-Kremlin broadcast stations which reach the country.<sup>170</sup>

Estonia sent its seconded expert to the EEAS East Stratcom team and it is one of the sponsoring nations of the NATO Stratcom COE in Riga.<sup>171</sup>

## The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference

KAPO (Kaitsepolitsei) or the Estonian Secret Police is actively involved in combatting foreign influence by Russia, particularly focusing on Estonia's Russian minority population since Russian espionage

<sup>162</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/03/30/russian-cyberattacks-fake-news-worry-former-estonia-president.html>

<sup>163</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/russia-is-a-threat-estonia-frets-about-its-neighbor/2017/03/24/011ad320-0f2b-11e7-9b0d-d27c98455440\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.6b875cfe3af4](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/russia-is-a-threat-estonia-frets-about-its-neighbor/2017/03/24/011ad320-0f2b-11e7-9b0d-d27c98455440_story.html?utm_term=.6b875cfe3af4)

<sup>164</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/world/europe/estonia-juri-ratas-center-party.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/world/europe/estonia-juri-ratas-center-party.html?_r=0); <http://www.politico.eu/article/russia-casts-shadow-over-estonias-presidential-vote/>

<sup>165</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/estonia-russia-nato-us-troops-volunteer-civilian-estonian-defense-league/>

<sup>166</sup> <http://news.err.ee/119464/estonia-calls-for-permanent-funding-for-task-force-countering-kremlin-propaganda>

<sup>167</sup> [https://www.teabeamet.ee/pdf/EIB\\_public\\_report\\_Feb\\_2017.pdf](https://www.teabeamet.ee/pdf/EIB_public_report_Feb_2017.pdf)

<sup>168</sup> <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Passcode/2017/0324/Estonia-s-lessons-for-fighting-Russian-disinformation>

<sup>169</sup> <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Passcode/2017/0324/Estonia-s-lessons-for-fighting-Russian-disinformation>; <https://news.err.ee/649815/kaljulaid-condemns-informing-of-estonian-people-via-russian-channel-pbk>

<sup>170</sup> For more information on minorities in Estonia, see Silviu Kondan and Mridvika Sahajpal, 2017. "Integration Policy and Outcomes for the Russian-Speaking Minority in Estonia." <http://scholarship.claremont.edu/urceu/vol2017/iss1/10/>

<sup>171</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>



tactics involve recruiting local Russian-speaking citizens.<sup>172</sup>

Identifying and apprehending Russian spies is an important part of Estonian counter-intelligence work. One of the most recent espionage-related arrests occurred in January 2017, whereas in 2016 two dual citizens of Russia and Estonia were apprehended and sentenced to jail for spying in Russia's favour.<sup>173</sup> The case of Uno Puusepp, a retired double-agent who eventually moved to Moscow, shows that Russian intelligence activities in Estonia date as far back as 1990s.<sup>174</sup>

Eston Kohver, an Estonian security official kidnapped by Russian security in 2015, has brought attention to Russian intelligence activity in Estonia. Though Kohver was sentenced to 15 years in jail by Russian court for espionage, he was released by Russia in exchange for releasing Aleksei and Victoria Dressen.<sup>175</sup> A Russian citizen was also taken into custody in 2017 for being a suspect of computer-related espionage crimes against the country.<sup>176</sup>

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

The Baltic Defence College, founded in 1998, organizes conferences about Russia, such as the Annual Baltic Defence College Conference on Russia. The February 2017 conference looked at non-linear warfare perpetrated by Russia, namely its cyber- and memetic dimensions among others.<sup>177</sup>

The International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS; RKK in Estonian) is a Tallinn-based think-tank working in cooperation with the Estonian government, tasked with analysing a wider range of issues relating to Estonian security and national defence planning.<sup>178</sup> Among events organized by the ICDS is the annual Lennart Meri Conference, which is to be held in June 2018; it will present major issues facing the EU and NATO this year.<sup>179</sup> ICDS is also responsible for organising courses in national defence which are held twice per year in Estonian and Russian for politicians, senior state officials, military officers, local government officials, top economic and opinion leaders, cultural and educational practitioners, journalists, and NGOs.

The Baltic Centre for Russian Studies (BCRS), founded in 1999 and directed by former Estonian Prime Minister's advisor Vladimir Yushkin<sup>180</sup>, raised concerns over potential hybrid warfare risks posed to Estonia by Russia.<sup>181</sup> However, the BCRS' activities remain elusive, and are visible only via the figure of Yushkin and his media appearances.

Propastop.org is an anti-propaganda blog operated by volunteers who are members of the Estonian voluntary Defence League (Kaitseliit)<sup>182</sup> which works under the Ministry of Defence.<sup>183</sup> The blog is tasked with countering disinformation targeting Estonia. It is currently publishing counter-propaganda material in Estonian, but it also contains an English-language page.

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<sup>172</sup> [https://www.kapo.ee/sites/default/files/public/content\\_page/Annual%20Review%202016.pdf](https://www.kapo.ee/sites/default/files/public/content_page/Annual%20Review%202016.pdf)

<sup>173</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-04-12/estonia-snags-first-spy-linked-to-russian-military-intelligence>

<sup>174</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/estonian-intelligence-charges-double-agent-treason-after-spying-russia-15-291960>

<sup>175</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34369853>

<sup>176</sup> <https://news.err.ee/641144/estonia-s-internal-security-service-arrests-suspected-fsb-agent-in-narva>

<sup>177</sup> <https://www.baltdefcol.org/?id=1178>

<sup>178</sup> <https://www.icds.ee/about/>

<sup>179</sup> <https://lmc.icds.ee/2017/introduction/>

<sup>180</sup> <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=2756>

<sup>181</sup> <http://news.err.ee/119554/russian-embassy-displeased-with-etv-newscast>

<sup>182</sup> <http://www.kaitseliit.ee/en/edl>

<sup>183</sup> <https://www.propastop.org/eng/>; <https://www.propastop.org/eng/2017/03/06/what-is-propastop/>

The National Centre for Defence & Security Awareness (NCDSA) established an Estonian non-governmental expert platform for strengthening national resilience by means of applied research, strategic communication and social interactions. NCDSA's long-term vision is a secure society that is psychologically resilient, socially cohesive and resistant to hostile influence. The NCDSA runs various programmes to inform Russian-speaking communities on Estonian national defence and security by initiating and organizing public events. It also strives to induce discussions to promote awareness of the Estonian, NATO and EU security and defence policies among Russian-speakers in Estonia. Additionally, the NCDSA monitors and analyses security and defence-related perceptions of Russian-speakers in Estonia.

## IX. Finland

Political acknowledgment



Government activities



Intelligence services approach



- Major security concerns in terms of subversive actions have to do with strategic and tactical defence risks rather than risks posed to the country by disinformation by foreign actors
- Finns have shown initiative in coming together with other EU member states, as well as with NATO, in order to counter subversive threats posed by Russia
- Finnish civil society is active in highlighting the Russian state's activities online and in combatting disinformation and fake news

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**The awakened:** Significantly shifted its policies and concerns after Russia's aggression against Ukraine.<sup>184</sup>

Finland is a country that is connected with Russia economically, politically, historically and geographically (Finland shares a 1340 km long border with Russia<sup>185</sup>). Due to Finland's dependence on Russian supplies of fossil fuels and very strong economic relations (despite sanctions, Russia is the fifth most important destination for Finnish exports<sup>186</sup>), the Finns are trying to maintain friendly relations with Russia. On the other hand, the Finns are well aware of the military threat that Russia poses, which is reflected by their growing ties to NATO.

<sup>184</sup> "How do European Democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>185</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40731415>

<sup>186</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/269a73e4-b70b-11e6-ba85-95d1533d9a62>

## Political acknowledgement of the threat

Since Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Finland has seen a notable increase in fake news stories and targeted propaganda stemming from Russia<sup>187</sup>. In October 2015, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö acknowledged that information warfare is real for Finland. Finnish officials claim they have documented twenty disinformation campaigns against their country that have originated from the Kremlin. Markku Mantila, the head of the Finnish government's communication department says that "there is a systematic lying campaign going on which is controlled from the centre."<sup>188</sup> He says Finland is facing intensifying media attacks led by the Kremlin. "We believe this aggressive influencing from Russia aims at creating distrust between leaders and citizens, and to have us make decisions harmful to ourselves. It also aims to make citizens suspicious about the European Union, and to warn Finland over not joining NATO."<sup>189</sup> Foreign Minister Timo Soini has also acknowledged propaganda, saying the government was countering false information with facts. In acknowledgement of the threat coming from Russia, the Finnish government decided to substantially raise the number of troops and increase its military spending by 55 million euro<sup>190</sup>.

## Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats is a Helsinki-based institution tasked with combatting subversive threats and working in close partnership with other EU member states (particularly the Baltics, Sweden, Poland, as well as non-EU partners, such as the United States).<sup>191</sup> In addition, Finland is also a partner country of the NATO STRATCOM COE in Riga.

In 2017, NATO and Finland stepped up their engagement with the signing of a Political Framework Arrangement on cyber defence cooperation. Finland is actively engaged with NATO on a number of cyber defence activities, including participation in NATO's annual flagship cyber defence exercise – Cyber Coalition – as well as NATO's Crisis Management Exercise.<sup>192</sup> Finland has also adopted a document titled The Implementation Programme for Finland's Cyber Security Strategy for 2017–2020, which addresses the development of cyber security within the service complex comprising the state, counties, municipalities and business sector. The business community provides most digital services and their cyber security through international service complexes and networks.<sup>193</sup>

Media literacy remains an important part of Finnish state policy, manifesting primarily in the country's education sphere, with numerous media literacy initiatives targeting schools all around the country.<sup>194</sup>

## The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference

The Finnish Security Intelligence Service (Suojelupoliisi or SuPo) is tasked with combatting threats posed by foreign intelligence and terrorist groups, and cyber-threats in particular. However, its primary

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<sup>187</sup> <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/01/why-is-finland-able-to-fend-off-putins-information-war/>

<sup>188</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-finland-russia-informationattacks/finland-sees-propaganda-attack-from-former-master-russia-idUSKCN12J197?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>

<sup>189</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-finland-russia-informationattacks/finland-sees-propaganda-attack-from-former-master-russia-idUSKCN12J197>

<sup>190</sup> [http://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07\\_2017\\_Governments\\_Defence\\_Report\\_Eng\\_PLM\\_160217.pdf](http://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07_2017_Governments_Defence_Report_Eng_PLM_160217.pdf)

<sup>191</sup> [http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset\\_publisher/10616/eurooppalainen-hybridituhkien-osaamiskeskus-perustettiin-helsinkiin](http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/10616/eurooppalainen-hybridituhkien-osaamiskeskus-perustettiin-helsinkiin)

<sup>192</sup> <https://www.cyberwiser.eu/finland-fi>

<sup>193</sup> <https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/index.php/en/component/k2/132-implementation-programme-for-finland-s-cyber-security-strategy-for-2017-2020>

<sup>194</sup> [https://kavi.fi/sites/default/files/documents/mil\\_in\\_finland.pdf](https://kavi.fi/sites/default/files/documents/mil_in_finland.pdf)

focus lies in the domain of counter-intelligence and anti-cyber-warfare measures. In 2016 SuPo published its yearbook, stating that Russia sees Finland as an interesting intelligence target<sup>195</sup>.

### Activities of the non-governmental sector

The Aleksanteri Institute at the University of Helsinki, has published several reports analysing Russia's subversion tactics and ways to counter them. One publication authorized by Bettina Renz and Hanna Smith highlights the issue of Russians' acquisition of critical infrastructure in the Turku archipelago is highlighted, as well as Russia's potential threat to communication satellite links in space<sup>196</sup>.

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) is an independent, publicly-funded institute that publishes papers analysing Russia's war in Ukraine<sup>197</sup> and Finland's preparedness to withstand foreign subversion, emphasizing the role of psychological readiness for a potential attack<sup>198</sup>. The institute has published a report calling Russia a greater threat to Finland and highlighting Russian intelligence attempts to influence Finnish energy policy<sup>199</sup>. FIIA has also launched a year-long research project entitled: *A Stronger North? – Developing Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy*. The project examines possibilities for deepening Nordic cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy. It is coordinated by FIIA and supervised by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>200</sup>.

Faktabaari is an open-source project tasked with spreading factual information and fighting disinformation online. It is the pilot project of a wider EU initiative to establish national-level fact-checking services on the eve of the 2019 EU Parliament elections<sup>201</sup>.

In 2016 the editors-in-chief of several leading Finnish media published a statement condemning fake or so-called "alternative" media that present a danger to Finnish society as well as other countries<sup>202</sup>. Meanwhile, The Finnish Society on Media Education (Mediakasvatusseura) is an organization focused in improving media literacy in Finland, operating both in Finnish and Swedish languages to this end<sup>203</sup>.

Dr. Saara Jantunen published a book detailing and debunking Russian disinformation and the tactics of harassment and false reporting used by pro-Russian trolls online. Jessikka Aro, an investigative journalist for Finnish public broadcaster Yle, also played an important part in uncovering a troll factory in Russia in 2014<sup>204</sup>. Aro also won the Bonnier Grand Journalist Prize in 2016 in the category: *Story of the year* for her work in exposing Russian trolls on social media. She has been extensively harassed by unknown individuals via phone calls, SMS messages, email and social media ever since<sup>205</sup>.

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<sup>195</sup> [http://www.supo.fi/instancedata/prime\\_product\\_julkaisu/intermin/embeds/supowwwstructure/72829\\_SUPO\\_2016\\_ENG.pdf?304c2d77276d488](http://www.supo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/intermin/embeds/supowwwstructure/72829_SUPO_2016_ENG.pdf?304c2d77276d488)

<sup>196</sup> [http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/presentations/papers/ap\\_1\\_2016.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/english/publications/presentations/papers/ap_1_2016.pdf)

<sup>197</sup> [http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/514/russia\\_s\\_hybrid\\_war\\_in\\_ukraine/](http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/514/russia_s_hybrid_war_in_ukraine/)

<sup>198</sup> [http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/488/preparing\\_finland\\_for\\_hybrid\\_warfare/](http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/488/preparing_finland_for_hybrid_warfare/)

<sup>199</sup> [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/report\\_russia\\_now\\_a\\_greater\\_threat\\_to\\_finland/9130673](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/report_russia_now_a_greater_threat_to_finland/9130673)

<sup>200</sup> [http://www.fiia.fi/en/project/38/a\\_stronger\\_north\\_developing\\_nordic\\_cooperation\\_on\\_foreign\\_and\\_security\\_policy/](http://www.fiia.fi/en/project/38/a_stronger_north_developing_nordic_cooperation_on_foreign_and_security_policy/)

<sup>201</sup> <https://faktabaari.fi/in-english/>
















<sup>202</sup> <https://ecpmf.eu/news/threats/archive/finnish-editors-speak-out-against-defamatory-fake-media>

<sup>203</sup> <http://www.mediaeducation.fi/finnish-society-on-media-education/>

<sup>204</sup> <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/01/why-is-finland-able-to-fend-off-putins-information-war/>

<sup>205</sup> [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/aro\\_and\\_kankkonen\\_win\\_bonnier\\_journalism\\_prizes/8748609](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/aro_and_kankkonen_win_bonnier_journalism_prizes/8748609)

## X. France

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- French government is concerned with disinformation and influence operations, mostly from the perspective of dangers posed by Islamic propaganda.
- The topic of Russian meddling, influence on political parties and disinformation in the media has been raised in connection to the presidential elections.
- The elections have been accompanied by a high level of activity of civil society, mostly in the areas of debunking disinformation.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Trying to stay away from the issues.** Historical, energy-related or economically special relations with Russia. Does not feel threatened and does not acknowledge the threat, outside of the conflict of Ukraine.<sup>206</sup> France has taken a harsher tone with Russia after Russian influence in the French Presidential election.

Though traditionally friendly towards Russia, France's stance grew chillier after the 2014 events in Ukraine. French politicians are not without allegations of financial or intelligence ties to Russia, even though the government's stance suffered through a radical U-turn on Russia following the annexation of Crimea. France was one of the key countries to initiate the EU sanctions against Russia, but also one of the main countries to participate in negotiations between Russia, Ukraine, and pro-Russian separatists.

In 2014, France decided to call off a deal with Russia regarding a sale of Mistral warships. Facing other issues than Russia, France's national security focus is less concerned with Russian threats to the EU bloc and more with terrorism. Meanwhile, eurosceptics and the far-right remain relatively popular, even with the alleged support by Russian intelligence.<sup>207</sup> The main far-left party in France, led by Jean-Luc Melenchon, is drawn towards Putin's anti-Americanism and considers sanctions against Russia to be "illegal."<sup>208</sup>

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Even though the awareness of the threat which Russian hostile interference poses is rising in France, especially in connection with the recent elections with Russia being alleged of meddling into them, the

<sup>206</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>207</sup> Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". *European Values Think-Tank*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.evropskehodnoty.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/How-do-European-democracies-react-to-Russian-aggression-1.pdf>

<sup>208</sup> <https://qz.com/961177/french-election-2017-marine-lepen-and-emmanuel-macron-lead-but-the-big-winner-in-the-french-election-will-be-vladimir-putin/>



country, which has recently suffered from several terrorist attacks, is more concerned with battling Islamic extremism and propaganda than with Russia. France is putting a lot of effort into fighting Islamic radicalism, it is in a state of emergency since the November 2015 Paris attacks and measures aimed at countering terrorism and radicalism are undertaken systematically.

The new French President Emmanuel Macron has taken a harsher stance against Russia than his predecessors. While Macron held a cautious view of Russia throughout the Presidential campaign, his view has hardened after the election. During a joint press conference with Putin, Macron called Sputnik and RT “organs of influence and propaganda.”<sup>209</sup>

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

The French government has its own website targeted against Jihadist propaganda,<sup>210</sup> its year-old Action Plan Against Radicalization and Terrorism mentions, among 79 other goals, that France should “continue to monitor, limit and obstruct all dissemination of extremist propaganda.”<sup>211</sup> The French National Digital Security Strategy consider spreading disinformation and propaganda to be “an attack on defence and national security which is sanctioned by law.”<sup>212</sup> Still, there are currently no publicly known measures aimed directly at countering Russian hostile activities.

Russian subversion may soon be dealt with more seriously in France with the newly elected president Emmanuel Macron, who experienced Russian meddling himself during his campaign, taking office. Macron’s official foreign policy adviser recently said: “We will have a doctrine of retaliation when it comes to Russian cyber attacks or any other kind of attacks. This means we are ready to retaliate against cyber attacks — not only in kind but also with any other conventional measure or security tool.”<sup>213</sup>

On 3 January 2018, President Macron proposed an anti-fake news election law, which would concern social media platforms, especially during election periods. In the case of fake news published during elections, an emergency legal action could allow French authorities to block the content or even the whole website. Moreover, websites would have to make their financing more transparent.<sup>214</sup>

France is participating in the Finnish COE on Countering Hybrid Threats and has joined the NATO STRATCOM COE. It does not have a seconded national expert in EEAS East STRATCOM team. The French military is also participating in NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltics.

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The 2013 French White Paper on Defence and National Security does mention several threats posed by Russia, however, disinformation and influence operations are not one of them.<sup>215</sup> Public documents of the intelligence committee and agencies (DGSE and DGSi) only mention Russia as a partner in

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<sup>209</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/france-macron-russia-putin-ukraine-syria-meeting/28515517.html>

<sup>210</sup> “Stop-Djihadisme”. <http://www.stop-djihadisme.gouv.fr/>

<sup>211</sup> “Press Kit for the Action Plan Against Radicalization and Terrorism”. *French Ministry of the Interior*.

<http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/content/download/97869/767472/file/action-plan-against-radicalisation-and-terrorism.pdf>

<sup>212</sup> “French National Digital Security Strategy”. *French Prime Minister*. 16 October 2015. Available at:

[https://www.enisa.europa.eu/topics/national-cyber-security-strategies/ncss-map/France\\_Cyber\\_Security\\_Strategy.pdf/view](https://www.enisa.europa.eu/topics/national-cyber-security-strategies/ncss-map/France_Cyber_Security_Strategy.pdf/view)

<sup>213</sup> <http://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macrons-foreign-policy-doctrines/>

<sup>214</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/macron-fake-news-law-elections-facebook-social-media-a8140721.html>

<sup>215</sup> Ben Judah: “Emmanuel Macron’s foreign policy doctrine(s)”. *Politico*. 8 May 2017. Available at:

<http://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/content/download/206186/2393586/file/White%20paper%20on%20defense%20202013.pdf>



fighting terrorism, since it is also a target of recruitment and disinformation by terrorist groups.<sup>216</sup> French intelligence agencies warned that Russia would try to sway the 2017 Presidential elections towards Marine Le Pen.<sup>217</sup> They also invited all political parties to be briefed on Russian cyberattacks.<sup>218</sup>

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

The topic of Russian activities in the cyber space is being dealt with by the French Institute of International Relations (Institut français des relations internationales, IFRI). Also, the EU Institute of Security Studies (EU ISS) resides in Paris and engage in issues such as Russian or Islamic propaganda and disinformation. One problem of the EU ISS is that it is not well known amongst EU member states and therefore it does not receive many tasks from them.

There are several important French experts on Russia – for example, the book of University of Rennes professor Cécile Vaissie “Russian network in France” received high praise. Regarding media, the topic of Russian propaganda and relations between the two countries is well covered in the liberal newspaper *Le Monde* or in the TV programme *C dans l’air* broadcasted on France5.

*Le Monde* has also launched a fake news checker called Decodex, which will allow users to check whether or not a website or Facebook page is reliable. It also comes in the form of a Firefox or Google Chrome extension.<sup>219</sup>

In order to fight fake news in France, Facebook and Google joined the fact-checking initiative CrossCheck, which allows users to submit questions and gathers information provided by 16 French media outlets. In addition to that, Facebook decided to test its own fact-checking initiative in France – the social network’s users can flag information they suspect to be false and partnered media outlets will verify it. If at least two media sources label the information as false, the post will appear on Facebook with a banner signalling that its content has been disputed.<sup>220</sup>

Media literacy and critical thinking in general are being taught in schools, and journalism departments at prestigious universities such as Sciences Po. or Sorbonne are engaging in this issue. However, a lot of absolvents of such prominent universities often start their career at, for example, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs impregnated with a positive stance on Russia, which is based on rich historical ties between the two countries.

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<sup>216</sup> “Rapport relatif à l'activité de la délégation parlementaire au renseignement pour l'année 2015”. *National Assembly*. 2016. Available at:

<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/rap-off/i3524.asp>
















<sup>217</sup> Emily Tamkin: “French Intelligence Agency Braces for Russian Bots to Back Le Pen”. *Foreign Policy*. 8 February 2017. Available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/08/french-intelligence-agency-braces-for-russian-bots-to-back-le-pen/>

<sup>218</sup> <http://infowar.cepa.org/EditorsNote/The-French-presidential-elections-High-tide-for-Russian-information-war>

<sup>219</sup> <http://www.lemonde.fr/verification/>

<sup>220</sup> Esther King: “Facebook partners with French media to fight fake news”. *Politico*. 6 February 2017. Available at: <http://www.politico.eu/article/facebook-partners-with-french-media-to-fight-fake-news/>

## XI. Germany

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Over the past few years, Germany has started to take the threat posed by Russia more seriously
- Germany actively tries to boost its cyber defence and promote cyber security internationally
- However, by downplaying the Russian threat on many fields, Berlin has a rather ambivalent stance towards Moscow
- The approval of Nord Stream two by German authorities illustrates that the Kremlin has successfully managed to co-opt the majority of Berlin's political establishment for its energy game

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Description: The awakened.** These countries have significantly shifted their policies and concerns following Russian aggression in Ukraine.<sup>221</sup>

Though traditionally more skeptical about the threat posed by Russia than its eastern neighbours, Germany was a proponent of tough EU measures against Russia in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea and its invasion of the Donbass. Germany has witnessed a significant deterioration in relations with Russia in recent years, intensified by Russian attempts to spread fake news, launch cyberattacks against the Bundestag's IT systems, and influence the country's internal political affairs (e.g., by backing populist parties, other pro-Russian groups through its network of contacts, and by founding own organisations). These hostile efforts are exemplified by the "Lisa case", in which a fake news story about the alleged raped of a 13-year-old Russian-German girl by migrants spread on Russian media websites in order to portray Germany and Angela Merkel as incapable of protecting its own (and Russian) citizens. According to latest public opinion polls, however, only 28% of German citizens trust Russia as a national partner, while 67% say that Russia cannot be trusted.<sup>222</sup>

Russia remains Germany's largest energy supplier, even though Germany was one of the first countries to advocate for better energy security during Russia's natural gas disputes with Ukraine over the last decade. However, this effort has ended after German authorities under the newly formed grand coalition have given their final approval for building the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.<sup>223</sup> These are worrisome developments that put

<sup>221</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>222</sup> See: <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/ard-deutschlandtrend/2017/dezember/>

<sup>223</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-germany-nordstream/germany-fully-approves-russia-built-nord-stream-2-gas-pipeline-idUSKBN1H31IF>

not only European energy security at risk, but also have the potential to drive a wedge between European countries on a political level.

### **Political acknowledgement of the threat**

Overall, following the “Lisa case” and Russian hacking of the German Parliament’s computer networks – stealing more than 16 gigabytes of data – the topic of Russia’s influence operations is gaining more attention both within the state administration and in the media. The 2016 White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr considers cyber risks to be a major security threat and recognises that “the cyber and information domain has become an area of international and strategic importance that has practically no limits.”<sup>224</sup> In November 2016, the federal government approved the State of IT Security in the Germany 2016 report created by the BSI. This document provides a detailed analysis of the current situation in Germany, serves as a framework for interdepartmental cooperation in the field of cybersecurity, and foresees 30 strategic goals and measures for improvement in this area.<sup>225</sup>

At the same time, German authorities play a rather ambivalent role. This is particularly true when looking at German-Russian bilateral energy relations. As journalists from the German newspaper Die Welt have found out, the German government (CDU/CSU and SPD) has been pushing for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project behind closed doors. According to the article, more than 60 gatherings took place between Angela Merkel’s government and the companies building Nord Stream 2.<sup>226</sup> Under the new formed grand coalition, Nord Stream 2 has been approved by German authorities.

Furthermore, the Kremlin takes influence on German youth associations under the pretext of dialogue. The DRJUG e.V., a German-Russian youth association which also include young Polish people and Ukrainians, was, among others, sponsored by Kremlin-foundations “Russkij Mir” and “Gortschakow” in cooperation with the German Federal Foreign Office. Although a German diplomat expressed reservations over the purpose of the forum as a platform for Russian propaganda during a speech in 2016 in Kiev, the Federal Foreign Office has been a project partner both in 2016 and 2017. The speech at the Trilateral Youth Forum “Germany, Russia, Ukraine: A Common Future?” was removed from the YouTube channel of the Ukraine Media Crisis Center after diplomatic pressure.<sup>227</sup>

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

In 2011, the Federal Ministry of the Interior published its Cyber Security Strategy for Germany, which, among other things, called for establishing the National Cyber Response Centre and the National Cyber Security Council. Both of these institutions started functioning the same year. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that their inception cannot be traced back to a perceived Russian threat. Only after a series of cyber-attacks on German critical infrastructure, as well as propaganda and disinformation efforts, have the camps begun to take the issue of Russian influence more serious. In 2017, the Bundeswehr (German military) launched the new Cyber and Information Space Command (CIR), which will have its own independent organisational structure, thus becoming the sixth branch of the German military. The Bundeswehr now sees itself “at the

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<sup>224</sup> “White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr”. *German Federal Government, Germany*. 2016.

Available at: <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/white-paper-german-security-policy-and-future-bundeswehr>

<sup>225</sup> “The State of IT Security in Germany”. *German Federal Office for Information Security*. 2016. Available at:

[https://www.bsi.bund.de/EN/Publications/SecuritySituation/SecuritySituation\\_node.html](https://www.bsi.bund.de/EN/Publications/SecuritySituation/SecuritySituation_node.html)

<sup>226</sup> Schweppe, C. & Arab, A. (2017) “Brisante Nähe”. *Die Welt*. 15 December 2017.

<https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article171601464/Brisante-Naehe.html>

<sup>227</sup> Röpcke, J. “AA-Mitarbeiter warnte schon 2016 vor ‚Propaganda‘”. *Bild*. 26 January 2018.

<http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/isis/drjug-auswaertiges-amt-54558620.bild.html>

international forefront” regarding cyber warfare and plans to bring 13,500 German soldiers and civilian contractors currently dealing with cyber defence from a number of different locations under the CIR’s roof.<sup>228</sup>

In September 2017, the German Interior Ministry opened a new cybersecurity agency in Munich. The new ‘central office for information technology in the security sphere’ (ZITiS) is to be financed with some 10 million euros (\$12 million) in the first year alone, with 120 positions created immediately. The German government has announced the expansion of that workforce to 400 employees by 2022. ZITiS is part of a centralised attempt to tackle cybercrime and digital espionage.<sup>229</sup>

At the end of June 2017, Germany passed a controversial law aimed to combat the spread of fake news and hate speech on the internet. Under the new legislation, which amounts to the boldest step yet by a major Western nation to control social media content, social networks like Facebook and Twitter have 24 hours to remove fake news that incites hate and other “criminal” content or face fines as high as 50 million euros.<sup>230</sup>

Germany is a sponsoring nation of NATO STRATCOM COE and participates in the Finnish COE on Countering Hybrid Threats; however, it does not have a seconded national expert in the EEAS East STRATCOM team. The country is aware of the need for international cooperation on this front, which it often emphasises in its policy documents, together with its responsibility to take an active role.

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

According to the 2015 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution by the German Ministry of the Interior, Germany sees Russia as one of the major players behind espionage activities and cyber-attacks directed against Germany.<sup>231</sup> However, a year-long investigation conducted by German intelligence, ordered by Angela Merkel in the aftermath of the “Lisa case”, failed to uncover Kremlin-backed meddling into German politics. The intelligence report nevertheless stressed that Russia has been on a ‘confrontational path’ against Germany since 2014, that its media is ‘hostile’, and that German intelligence authorities are well aware of the threat posed by Russia especially in connection with the 2017 federal elections.<sup>232</sup> “We have evidence that cyber-attacks are taking place that have no purpose other than to elicit political uncertainty. [...] We have indications that [the attacks] come from the Russian region,” said Bruno Kahl, president of the Federal Intelligence Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst). Hans-Georg Maaßen, president of the domestic BfV intelligence agency, said in an interview that cyberspace had become “a place of hybrid warfare” in which Russia was a key player.<sup>233</sup>

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

There are no known organisations or institutions in Germany devoting their activity solely to disinformation campaigns; however, many institutions engage in this topic within the broader scope of their activities. These

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<sup>228</sup> Nina Werkhäuser: “German army launches new cyber command”. *Deutsche Welle*. 1 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/german-army-launches-new-cyber-command/a-38246517>

<sup>229</sup> Knight, B. (2017). “Hacking for the government: Germany opens ZITiS cyber surveillance agency”. 14 September 2017. <http://www.dw.com/en/hacking-for-the-government-germany-opens-zitis-cyber-surveillance-agency/a-40511027>

<sup>230</sup> Carla Bleiker, Kate Brady: “Bundestag passes law to fine social media companies for not deleting hate speech”. *Deutsche Welle*. 30 June 2017. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/bundestag-passes-law-to-fine-social-media-companies-for-not-deleting-hate-speech/a-39486694>

<sup>231</sup> “2015 Annual report on the Protection of the Constitution”. *German Federal Ministry of the Interior*. 2016. Available at: <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2015-summary.pdf>

<sup>232</sup> Esther King: “German intelligence find no evidence of Russian meddling”. *Politico*. 7 February 2017. Available at: <http://www.politico.eu/article/german-intelligence-finds-no-evidence-of-russian-meddling/>

<sup>233</sup> Kate Connolly: “German spy chief says Russian hackers could disrupt elections”. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/29/german-spy-chief-russian-hackers-could-disrupt-elections-bruno-kahl-cyber-attacks>

include the German Council on Foreign Relations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Außenpolitik), whose main subject of interest is security policy and Russia; the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP), which focuses mostly on security and the region of Eastern Europe; and the Center for Applied Policy Research (Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung, CAP) at the University of Munich. All of these, however, lack particular focus on the issue of disinformation, propaganda, or cyber.

Education in Germany is directed individually by the federal states, but the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, BPB) serves as an umbrella authority. Also important are the Mediale Pfade – Agency for Media Education, which develops new paths of learning and participation using media and focuses on political education, and the Initiative D21, which main objective is accelerating the transformation of Germany into a digital information society.

There are also some media outlets in Germany that have started investigating the issue of fake news (e.g., Die Zeit, ARD main news, tagesschau.de which is responsible for the anti-fake news portal Faktenfinder) and some independent fact checkers as well: for example, Correctiv is a team of German fact-checkers who work for Facebook but do not accept money from it because they want to retain total editorial independence. Their work consists mostly of monitoring suspicious stories.<sup>234</sup>

To bring the United States and Germany (and by extension the European Union) closer together on cyber policy issues and to re-establish a common transatlantic framework for cyber policy, the German Think Tank Stiftung Neue Verantwortung (SNV) has established the Transatlantic Cyber Forum with the financial support of the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (\$229,000 in total). TCF is an intersectional network of experts from civil society, academia, the private sector and government working in various areas of transatlantic cybersecurity and cyber defence policy. Among other things, the forum aims to identify areas of common understanding and to focus on the full set of digital security/foreign policy issues and the identification of the nature of their relationships. Furthermore, the Stiftung Neue Verantwortung is running the project “Measuring Fake News” which is also supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (\$100,000).

More than 400 researchers in Darmstadt are working at the Center for Research in Security and Privacy (CRISP) on key research topics in cybersecurity. CRISP is comprised of several partner institutions, including the Technical University of Darmstadt, the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, and the Fraunhofer Institutes for Secure Information Technology. This partnership represents the largest alliance of research institutes in the area of cybersecurity within Europe. CRISP is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Hessian Ministry for Science and the Arts (HMWK).

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<sup>234</sup> Amol Rajan: “Germany leads fightback against fake news”. BBC. 16 February 2017. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-38991973>



## XII. Greece

Political acknowledgment	■	■	■	■	■
Government activities	■	■	■	■	■
Intelligence services approach	■	■	■	■	■

- While historically friendly with Russia, relations between Russia and Greece have warmed significantly with Syriza in power
- The current Greek government maintains exceptionally close ties with the Kremlin and other prominent Russian figures
- Greece does not acknowledge any threat pertaining to disinformation or subversive influence stemming from Russia

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Kremlin friendly.** Does not feel threatened and is advocating for better relations with Russia, often regardless what atrocities Moscow is responsible for. Often supports Kremlin's foreign policy objectives, such as stopping further sanctions under arguments related to appeasement or alleged business ties.<sup>235</sup>

Greece is one of the oldest NATO member states and the first Balkan state to join the EU. Greece's difficult history with Turkey has urged it to look to Russia for support, although this has changed with recent Turkish friendliness with Russia. Both Greece and Russia have taken an interest to each other throughout history. While the countries have been friendly in the past, this turned into outright support with the election of Syriza in 2015.<sup>236</sup> Consequently, Greece has typically expressed opposition to any EU measures that could alienate Russia. The current Greek government, caught in the middle of a severe economic and financial crisis, has courted Russia in hopes of receiving aid that Brussels has failed to provide (and thereby also gain negotiation leverage). Greece is thus best described as one of the EU's three 'Kremlin friendlies', together with Italy and Cyprus. For all this, Greece nonetheless remains committed to the EU and NATO, despite its extensive efforts to simultaneously maintain warm bilateral relations with Russia. According to the latest Eurobarometer, 66% of Greeks had a positive view of Russia. A poll from the University of Macedonia found that 67% of Greeks have positive opinions of Putin.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>235</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>236</sup> Markos Kounalakis and Antonis Klapsis. (2017) "Greece: Still the EU's Weak Link?" in *The Kremlin's Trojan Horses 2: Russian Influence in Greece, Italy, and Spain*. November 2017. [http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/The\\_Kremlins\\_Trojan\\_Horses\\_2\\_web\\_1121.pdf](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/The_Kremlins_Trojan_Horses_2_web_1121.pdf)

<sup>237</sup> Theo Ioannou. (2017) "Survey: Greeks Trust Russia and Putin over Merkel and Trump". *Greek Reporter*. 8 October 2017. <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/10/08/survey-greeks-trust-russia-and-putin-over-merkel-trump/>



## Political acknowledgement of the threat

In Greece, there is no political acknowledgement at all of any hostile Russian activity. On the contrary, the current government is very sympathetic to Russian interests and worldview, according to which the West is the aggressor and Russia is on the defensive. Indeed, rather than recognizing the threat of Russia's disinformation campaign and subversive efforts, Greek officials maintain close political ties with Russia. In 2016 before the NATO summit, Greece also signed an arms deal with Russia on the basis that it is necessary to maintain the Greek defence industry during the economic crisis.<sup>238</sup>

## Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

Following the absolute lack of political acknowledgement, there are predictably no state efforts whatsoever to counteract Russian disinformation or other hostile influence operations; indeed, these issues are officially treated as non-existent by the Greek government. Though Greece has historically maintained a friendly relationship with Russia, it has sought even closer ties with Moscow in light of the economic crisis and the stringent demands of its creditors. The current government has notably intimate ties with Russia: the radical left-wing Syriza party has never supported EU sanctions on Russia and has very close contacts with Vladimir Putin, Russian nationalist Aleksander Dugin, and Russian oligarchs.<sup>239</sup> Greece's sympathy towards Russia is so strong that Syriza has spoken frequently against sanctions on Russia.<sup>240</sup>

Accordingly, Greece can be labelled Russia's most important Trojan horse in Brussels. Within the EU, Greece serves as a frequent advocate for Russian interests and maintains a stance of passive resistance to any punitive measures aimed at counteracting Russian belligerence. Russian oligarchs have bought stakes in Greek media and Greek energy firms.<sup>241</sup> The Greek-Russian businessman Ivan Savvidis is one of the most prominent of these oligarchs; while openly proclaiming his support for Syriza, he has bought a football club, several historical newspapers and even management of the port of Thessaloniki.<sup>242</sup>

## The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference

Following the official government line, there do not appear to be any significant Greek counterintelligence activities vis-à-vis Russian disinformation or other hostile influence operations. There is no official acknowledgement of any such threat emanating from Russia.

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<sup>238</sup> Con Coughlin. (2017) "Nato's United Front under Threat after Greece Signs Arms Deal with Russia". *The Telegraph*. 8 July 2016. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/natos-united-front-under-threat-after-greece-signs-arms-deal-wit/>

<sup>239</sup> Dempsey (2015); Stanek, H. (2016). "Is Russia's Alliance with Greece a Threat to NATO?" *The National Interest*. 17 July 2016. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/russias-alliance-greece-threat-nato-16998>

<sup>240</sup> Ben Chu. (2015) "Greece Crisis: Alexis Tsipras Woos Vladimir Putin as Greeks Rush for their Savings". *The Independent*. 19 June 2015. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/greece-crisis-alexis-tsipras-woos-vladimir-putin-as-greeks-rush-for-their-savings-10333104.html>
















<sup>241</sup> Rick Noack. (2017) "The European parties accused of being influenced by Russia". *The Washington Post*. 17 November 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/11/17/the-european-parties-accused-of-being-influenced-by-russia/?utm\\_term=.4b17835bb4c0](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/11/17/the-european-parties-accused-of-being-influenced-by-russia/?utm_term=.4b17835bb4c0)

<sup>242</sup> "Greek-Russian tycoon intervenes in politics". *Kathimerini*. 2 May 2017. <http://www.ekathimerini.com/218081/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-russian-tycoon-intervenes-in-politics>

## Activities of the non-governmental sector

There are no non-governmental initiatives concerned with the threat of disinformation, hostile influence operations, or media literacy. On the contrary, public approval of Russia remains high, and the positions of various civic agents are in fact sympathetic to Russian narratives and disinformation about the West. Such sympathies are even more prominent considering Syriza's views on sanctions against Russia and Ukraine.

## XIII. Hungary

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Hungary is vulnerable to Russian influence mostly because of its own domestic problems with emerging authoritarianism and freedom of the press.
- Russia is not perceived as a threat. Concerning the information space and media, the Hungarian government and intelligence are focused more on the topic of migration.
- The civil society is being prevented from pursuing the goal of countering Russian influence.

## Relations with the Russian Federation

**Government using Russia-card for domestic reasons.** Negative historical experience with Russia, but the government uses relations with Moscow for domestic political or economic reasons, or as a tool against the EU establishment.<sup>243</sup>

The attitude of Hungarian public to Russia is generally hostile and the country remains dedicated to NATO, not least due to their troubled past marked with Russian occupation during the Communist era. However, the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán uses good relations with Russia as a leverage in Hungary's relations with Brussels and in order to support his own authoritarian policies. It is a pragmatic fit since the Kremlin is known to support Eurosceptic and autocratic elements of European politics. After the annexation of Crimea, the Prime Minister sought to weaken European sanctions against Russia. Also, the far-right Jobbik party inclines towards Moscow and promotes the Kremlin in the country, reportedly receiving Russian financial support.<sup>244</sup>

<sup>243</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>244</sup> „The Kremlin Playbook“. *Center for Strategic & International Studies*. October 2016. Available at: [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017\\_Conley\\_KremlinPlaybook\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017_Conley_KremlinPlaybook_Web.pdf)

## Political acknowledgement of the threat

Since the Russian Federation is an important economic, trade and energy partner for Hungary, the strategic and policy documents of the country do not reflect the threats originating there, conventional or unconventional ones. The National Security Strategy from 2012<sup>245</sup> focuses on cyber security, stating that Hungary will have to face increasingly pressing and intricate challenges in the physical and virtual space of information technologies and the potential malicious use of these technologies by state and non-state actors.

Paradoxically, some sectors of the Hungarian government acknowledge hybrid warfare and disinformation but avoid mentioning Russia. Deputy Parliament speaker Csaba Hende (Fidesz) said on November 24, 2017, "Cyberspace has become one of the most significant battlegrounds, which provides an opportunity for major attacks from disrupting the decision-making processes of certain countries to attacks against critical infrastructure."<sup>246</sup> Curiously, he avoided mentioning Russia, which is the source of many cyberattacks against the West. Such ambiguity works in Russia's favour and leaves the door open for further intelligence activities.

The government, in this case, goes against the pro-Western, pro-EU majority. The Warsaw Institute reports that "39% of Hungarians think that Hungary should exclusively be a part of the West, while only 5% supported the country's Eastern affiliation. 53% put Hungary between the East and the West in a geopolitical and cultural sense."<sup>247</sup>

## Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

State organization which might potentially deal with cases of disinformation campaigns and cyberattacks connected to internal security is the Counter Terrorism Centre (TEK) established by Prime Minister Orban's government in 2010 within the Ministry of Interior. This SWAT agency specializes in counter-terrorism or hostage crisis, but its role is also in protecting the government and citizens.

In some cases, the government is more inclined to enable the spread of Russian influence and conduct disinformation campaigns, for example because of limiting the freedom of the press.<sup>248</sup> Large portion of mainstream media in Hungary are under the control of the government, some of them using Russian quasi-media like Sputnik or RT as their sources.<sup>249</sup> In certain instances, known Russian disinformation centres are welcomed, such as when Orban's government allowed Debrecen University to establish a Russkiy Mir Center in April 2017, providing a EUR 50,000 grant.<sup>250</sup> The Russkiy Mir Center is patronized by President Vladimir Putin and funds anti-European, anti-NATO groups across Europe, such as Bulgaria's ATAKA party.<sup>251</sup> The activities of civil society are openly unwelcome by the government.

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<sup>245</sup>"Hungary's National Security Strategy". *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary*. 2012. Available at: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/hungary-national-security-strategy-2012.pdf>

<sup>246</sup> "The Euro-Atlantic Region Is Facing Numerous Threats," Government, accessed November 27, 2017, <http://www.kormany.hu/en/news/the-euro-atlantic-region-is-facing-numerous-threats>.

<sup>247</sup> "Russian Disinformation and Extremism in Hungary," *Warsaw Institute* (blog), October 16, 2017, <https://warsawinstitute.org/russian-disinformation-extremism-hungary/>.

<sup>248</sup> "Freedom of the Press 2017". *Freedom House*. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/hungary>

<sup>249</sup>"Vulnerability Index". *GLOBSEC Policy Institute*. April 2017. Available at: <http://www.globsec.org/upload/documents/vulnerability-index/globsec-vulnerability-index.pdf>

<sup>250</sup> "Hungary: A State Captured by Russia," Heinrich Böll Foundation, accessed November 8, 2017, <https://www.boell.de/en/2017/10/11/hungary-state-captured-russia>.

<sup>251</sup> Kerin Hope, "Bulgarians See Russian Hand in Anti-Shale Protests," *Financial Times*, November 30, 2014, <https://www.ft.com/content/e011d3f6-6507-11e4-ab2d-00144feabdc0>.

Indeed, the Warsaw Institute noted that following a similar Russian legislation, the Hungarian government passed a law on June 13, 2017 forcing all NGOs receiving “HUF 7.2 million (around EUR 23.000) from foreign entities, including funds received directly from the European Union’s institutions,” to register as foreign agents.<sup>252</sup>

On the international level, Hungary considers units like the EEAS East STRATCOM Task Force or the NATO Stratcom CoE important, but with a limited influence. The country has no experts sent to any of them.

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

There are two intelligence services relevant in the case of dealing with subversive influence in Hungary. One of them is the Constitution Protection Office, which is an internal intelligence agency, and the second is the Information office, the civilian intelligence agency, involved primarily in non-military intelligence gathering operations abroad. But the members of these agencies are sometimes suspected of influencing or even threatening local Hungarian journalists.<sup>253</sup> They are not known to be working in order to prevent the influence of foreign powers, with the exception of perhaps Islamic propaganda.

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**
















The Political Capital, an organization focusing on policy research, is the most visible non-governmental institution trying to analyse and counter disinformation operations in Hungary. It often cooperates with other organizations mostly from Central and Eastern Europe and also with the EEAS East STRATCOM unit. Already in 2009 this think-tank warned about the pro-Russian attitudes of Eastern European far-right parties and in 2014 published a study revealing that the interests of the Kremlin were being furthered and incorporated into policy by far-right parties in Europe. The relations between Europe and the Russian Federation represent a significant part of their work, including the Russian efforts to gain influence through political, cultural lobbying and disinformation campaigns.

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<sup>252</sup>“Russian Disinformation and Extremism in Hungary,” *Warsaw Institute* (blog), October 16, 2017, <https://warsawinstitute.org/russian-disinformation-extremism-hungary/>.

<sup>253</sup>“How Hungary’s intelligence agency tried to intimidate a journalist into becoming an informant”. *Hungarian Free Press*. 7 September 2016. Available at: <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/09/07/how-hungarys-intelligence-agency-tried-to-intimidate-a-journalist-into-becoming-an-informant/>

## XIV. Ireland

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Ireland has shown very little, if any, activity in terms of combatting threats posed by Russia.
- Its distance from Russia and little political weight in the EU arena makes it a less attractive target for Russian subversion than more prominent EU players.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**No relations with Russia.** Geographically distant from Russia and has almost no interest in any of the related issues.<sup>254</sup>

Ireland's position towards Russia is barely visible, but in most questions of international relations Irish politics tend to seek a common ground with the United Kingdom. The only interest Ireland has in Russia is primarily commercial, but when it comes to defense measures, Ireland tends to rely heavily on the UK's military, but so far Ireland remains uninterested in abandoning its neutrality policy.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Irish politicians have condemned Russian actions in international affairs. Fine Gael MP Brendan Griffin urged the government to expel Russian Ambassador Peshkov over the assault of Aleppo, Syria.<sup>255</sup> Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Kenny also called for tougher sanctions on Russia in response to the siege.<sup>256</sup> However, the issue of a potential Russian disinformation and subversion against Ireland have not been highlighted by the country's politicians, even though Russian military planes have come close to invading Irish airspace several times in the past.<sup>257</sup>

### Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

There are no visible activities in this sphere by the Irish government.

### The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference

Ireland's Directorate of Military Intelligence (G2) is the republic's secret service, tasked with upholding Ireland's national defense capacity, particularly in the field of counter-espionage. Little is known about

<sup>254</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at:

<http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>255</sup> <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/fine-gaels-brendan-griffin-urges-expulsion-of-russian-ambassador-to-ireland-423517.html>

<sup>256</sup> <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/taoiseach-demands-sanctions-on-russia-over-aleppo-devastation-426864.html>

<sup>257</sup> <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/passenger-planes-dodged-russian-bombers-315623.html>;

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/russian-bomber-in-irish-air-space-had-nuclear-weapon-312161.html>;

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/raf-scrambles-jets-after-russian-bombers-fly-close-to-ireland-and-the-uk-776372.html>
















G2 except that it is under Ireland's Defence Forces command.<sup>258</sup> Other important institutions are the Crime and Security Branch (CSB) of the national police force (the Gardai)<sup>259</sup>, however, it remains elusive from the public view.

The most prominent case of Russian spy activity in Ireland is from 2010 and it had to do with US-based Russian spies using Irish passports to travel between countries.<sup>260</sup> During the investigation of this incident, a Russian ambassador was expelled from the country.<sup>261</sup>

### Activities of the non-governmental sector

The Irish Medical Organisation's president Dr. Ann Hogan highlighted how "fake news" spread over social media have led to a decline of MMR vaccine uptake in the country.<sup>262</sup> The Dublin-based Institute of International and European Affairs has highlighted the danger of Russian disinformation and influence and calls Russia's actions "the sharpest challenge in regional order."<sup>263</sup>

## XV. Italy

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Countering Islamic propaganda is considered to be a much more relevant topic than countering propaganda spread by Russia.
- Good relations with Russia and the existence of pro-Russian politicians prevent Italy from acknowledging Russian disinformation campaigns.
- Civil society plays a crucial role in media literacy of Italian citizens.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Kremlin friendly.** Does not feel threatened and is advocating for better relations with Russia, often regardless what atrocities Moscow is responsible for. Often supports Kremlin's foreign policy objectives, such as stopping further sanctions under arguments related to appeasement or alleged business ties.<sup>264</sup>

Though traditionally a country with deep economic ties to Russia, Italy showed a strong support for a common EU and NATO stance on Russia. At the same time, Italy does not wish to completely alienate Russia, and it believes that a dialogue is possible. Still, Italy has shown disapproval towards Russian actions in Syria, but its national security is more concerned with the refugee flow over Mediterranean

<sup>258</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/recordings-of-irish-islamists-passed-to-cia-lzjhq3tw7w2>

<sup>259</sup> [http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/0/7/1/1/8/pages71181/p71181-3.php](http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/7/1/1/8/pages71181/p71181-3.php)

<sup>260</sup> <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/russian-spies-may-have-used-six-irish-passports-1.662374>

<sup>261</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/02/01/ireland.russia.spies/index.html>

<sup>262</sup> <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/health/fake-news-behind-declining-vaccine-uptake-in-ireland-imo-president-warns-35645039.html>

<sup>263</sup> <http://www.iea.com/ftp/Publications/2017/Trump-and-Brexit-Implications-for-Global-Security.pdf>

<sup>264</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>



than with any immediate threats which Russia may pose to Italy. Italian politics is full of pro-Russian elements and many politicians believe that the EU sanctions are harmful to Italy, and therefore they should be lifted.<sup>265</sup>

### **Political acknowledgement of the threat**

Overall, Italian authorities are not much interested in the topic of Russian subversion, partly because of the good relationship between the two countries and the frequent presence of pro-Russian attitude among Italian politicians. Countering Islamic propaganda is considered to be a much more relevant topic than countering propaganda spread by Russia.

The problem of disinformation started to resonate in Italy during and after the failed constitutional referendum in December 2016 with the former comedian Beppe Grillo and his populist party the Five Star Movement spreading fake news and pro-Russian propaganda. His party is currently in the governing coalition.

Equally concerning, Lega Nord, a far-right party present in the current government coalition, signed an agreement with Putin's United Russia. The Kremlin's fellow travellers in unrecognized Abkhazia and Transnistria have taken similar steps. The Lega Nord-dominated Veneto regional council also "voted in support of a resolution that urges the national government to condemn the European Union's Crimea policy and work toward lifting the sanctions against Russia,"<sup>266</sup> undermining the central government's foreign policy.

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Regarding cyber security, Italy is a little behind countries such as, for example, Germany or France. It is only in the past couple of years that the country has recognised cyber as a new domain of warfare.<sup>267</sup> As far as Russian disinformation and influence operations are concerned, the current National Strategic Framework for Cyberspace Security from 2013 does not provide any information about such threats.<sup>268</sup> According to the 2015 White Paper for International Security and Defence, "there is a high risk that in the future, even in conventional conflicts, enemy forces will use unconventional or asymmetric forms of fighting more frequently (hybrid threats)," which is almost everything the paper says about this issue.<sup>269</sup>

The Italian government is currently working on a new cyber security strategy, which should bring more effective prevention and reactions to cyber attacks. In early 2017, the Joint Command for Cyberspace Operations was established, however, it is not yet possible to evaluate how operational the unit is.

Italy is a sponsoring nation of NATO STRATCOM COE but does not actively engage in other joint activities at the EU level, including the EEAS East STRATCOM Task Force.

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<sup>265</sup> Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". European Values Think-Tank. 22 April 2017. Available at: Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". European Values Think-Tank. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/european-democracies-react-russian-aggression/>

<sup>266</sup> "Italy-Russia Relations," accessed November 27, 2017, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/it-forrel-ru.htm>.

<sup>267</sup> Tom Reeve: "Italy gets mixed review on cyber-security from CRI 2.0". *SC Magazine UK*. 22 November 2016. Available at: <https://www.scmagazineuk.com/italy-gets-mixed-review-on-cyber-security-from-cri-20/article/574854/>

<sup>268</sup> "National Strategic Framework for Cyberspace Security". *Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Italian Republic*. December 2013. Available at: <https://www.sicurezza.gov.it/sisr.nsf/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/italian-national-strategic-framework-for-cyberspace-security.pdf>

<sup>269</sup> [http://www.difesa.it/Primo\\_Piano/Documents/2015/07\\_Luglio/White%20book.pdf](http://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Documents/2015/07_Luglio/White%20book.pdf)

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## THE APPROACH OF INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES TO RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE

The Italian secret services are more concerned with the threat posed by Islamic extremism than with the one posed by Russia.<sup>270</sup> The vulnerability of Italian cyber defence was exposed this February when Italian authorities discovered a cyber attack on Italian foreign ministry, which lasted for more than four months. Russia is suspected to be behind the attack and, according to the Italians, no sensitive information was acquired by the attackers.<sup>271</sup>

### Activities of the non-governmental sector

There are a lot of institutions which, at least to a certain extent, deal with the topic of propaganda and disinformation campaigns (not only by the Russian Federation but also by ISIS). To name some, there is, for example, the Centre for International Studies (Centro Studi Internazionali, Ce.S.I.), the Luigi Sturzo Institute, the Italian Standing Group on International Relations (SGRI) of the Italian Society of Political Science (SIPS), the Istituto Affari Internazionali, and other mostly quality think-tanks.

The non-governmental actors also play a crucial role regarding media literacy. Since there are neither legal or institutional frames for media education nor well established policies to promote it at the state level, there has been a great amount of grass roots projects and initiatives for a long time.<sup>272</sup>
















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<sup>270</sup> Marco Ludovico: "Italian Intelligence Agency alerts the country to higher risks of Islamic terrorism". ItalyEurope24. 10 March 2017. Available at: <http://www.italy24.ilsole24ore.com/art/business-and-economy/2017-03-07/italian-intelligence-agency-alerts-the-country-to-higher-risks-of-islamic-terrorism-103624.php?uuid=AEvJBKj>

<sup>271</sup> Stephanie Kirchgaessner: "Russia suspected over hacking attack on Italian foreign ministry" *The Guardian*. 10 February 2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/10/russia-suspected-over-hacking-attack-on-italian-foreign-ministry>

<sup>272</sup> Piearmarco Aroldi, Maria Francesca Murru: "Media and Information Literacy Policies in Italy (2013)". OssCom, *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*. May 2014. Available at: [http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/ITALY\\_2014.pdf](http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/ITALY_2014.pdf)

## XVI. Latvia

Political acknowledgment	    
Government activities	    
Intelligence services approach	    

- **Latvian activities largely focus on restricting Russian media and trying to provide quality news reporting for the Russian minority in the country.**
- **Latvia has a sophisticated and coordinated network dedicated to cyber-security.**
- **The NATO Stratcom COE resides in the Latvian capital and the country is a major supporter of international activities.**

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Principled defender.** Held concerned views over Russian foreign policy and is now at the forefront of the European response to its aggression.<sup>273</sup>

Latvia was one of the first ex-Soviet states to join NATO in 2004 and remains a key NATO member state, sharing a border with Russia and Belarus. Latvia is the most Russified of the Baltic States. Like Estonia, it has a sizeable Russian minority (including non-citizens) living in the country. Due to its geographic location and problematic infrastructure, Latvia was traditionally dependent on Russian fossil fuels. Russian intelligence, fake news, and disinformation are all very prevalent in the area. Still, Latvia is highly active in NATO efforts to counter Russian threats and supports the sanctions against Russia for the annexation of Crimea.<sup>274</sup>

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Together with the other Baltic states, Latvia is on the forefront of countering Russian disinformation. Besides taking an active role in solving this problem internationally, it has noticeably stood up to the Russian threat at home as well. The Latvian government is well aware of the influence of Russia in their country and has developed measures aimed at countering it. Functioning democratic institutions and rule of law in Latvia – together with the healthy scepticism towards Russia of the vast majority of ethnic Latvians – have contributed to its resilience.<sup>275</sup>

The Latvian Ministry of Defence's 2015 National Security Concept laid out directions that Latvia should follow in order to prevent further threats to its information space. These priorities are: "development of

<sup>273</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>274</sup> Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". European Values Think-Tank. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/european-democracies-react-russian-aggression/>

<sup>275</sup> "Latvia" in Conley, Stefanov, Mina and Vladimirov: *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe*. October 2016. Available at: [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017\\_Conley\\_KremlinPlaybook\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017_Conley_KremlinPlaybook_Web.pdf)

the public media, reduction of influence of the information space of the Russian Federation, and development of the Media Literacy and Media Education.”<sup>276</sup>

Latvian Foreign Minister, Edgars Rinkēvičs, attended a new joint Nordic-Baltic-US forum in London and urged the US Congress to “press ahead with its inquiry” into the Russian interference that occurred in the 2016 US election, stating that “it is essential for all US allies to understand the mechanics of how you combine [cyberattacks] and then use [them] as [an] information weapon to influence people’s opinions.”<sup>277</sup>

The country has also warned troops deployed in the country as part of NATO missions to thwart Russian aggression. Foreign Minister Rinkēvičs claims that Canada’s presence in the country – beginning with the deployment of hundreds of Canadian troops into Latvia – will trigger disinformation campaigns against the troops in order to sow distrust among Latvians, as well as threatening Canada itself by “eroding support back home for the mission.”<sup>278</sup> This has proved to be true, as disinformation campaigns against these NATO troops have become a constant presence in Latvia since deployment.

### Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

Latvia has taken to fining and suspending channels that display “overt biases.” It fined PBK three times in 2014 and once in 2015; the radio station Autoradio Rezekne was also fined once.<sup>279</sup> The country suspended RTR Planeta in 2014 for “incitement to war”; it has also supported an independent news site called Meduza, “founded by journalists fired from Russian news site *Lenta.ru*.”<sup>280</sup> Latvian authorities and independent media try to offer the Russian minority population in Latvia their own programmes and sources of information which are not part of the Russian media machine (like Russian independent TV channel Dozhd and Ukraine’s Russian language TV channel Espresso.)<sup>281</sup>

The country has its own Cyber Security Strategy, which was published in 2014. The development of cyber security policy and planning and implementation of objectives and measures is coordinated by the National Information Technology Security Council, which also pushes for an exchange of information and cooperation between the public and private sector.<sup>282</sup> The National Computer Security Incident Response Team (CERT.LV) is responsible for the country’s IT security. It cooperates with more than 600 IT specialists from government institutions and local authorities. The country also has a Cyber Defence Unit, which consists of a team of IT specialists and students from the public and private sector, who are trained to help the national armed forces or CERT.LV if necessary.<sup>283</sup>

The government in Latvia has been working hard to build media literacy, especially within its population. School workshops that teach Latvian teachers and students how to differentiate fact from fiction have

<sup>276</sup>“The National Security Concept”. *Latvian Ministry of Defence*. 2015. Available at:

[http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/AM/Par\\_aizsardzibas\\_nozari/Plani.%20konceptijas/NDK/NDK\\_ENG\\_final.ashx](http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/AM/Par_aizsardzibas_nozari/Plani.%20konceptijas/NDK/NDK_ENG_final.ashx)

<sup>277</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/05/west-failing-to-tackle-russian-hacking-and-fake-news-says-latvia>

<sup>278</sup><https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/latvian-minister-warns-canadian-troops-to-expect-russian-smear-campaign/article34398851/>

<sup>279</sup> <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/07/fighting-disinformation-baltic-states/>

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup>Una Bergmane: “Latvia’s Debate About Russian Propaganda”. *Foreign Policy Research Institute*. 6 July 2016. Available at:

<http://www.fpri.org/article/2016/07/latvias-debate-russian-propaganda/>

<sup>282</sup><https://www.enisa.europa.eu/topics/national-cyber-security-strategies/ncss-map/lv-ncss>

<sup>283</sup><http://www.dw.com/en/latvia-launches-cyber-defence-unit-to-beef-up-online-security/a-17471936>

risen in recent years.<sup>284</sup> Unlike Estonia, policymakers have not agreed on creating a new Russian news channel. Latvia has, however, created “cyber units” in the National Guard and began training in 2016.<sup>285</sup>

The country has a seconded-national expert at the EEAS East Stratcom team in Brussels and is the “founding and hosting nation” of NATO Stratcom COE. It is also a member of the Finnish COE on Countering Hybrid Threats.<sup>286</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The Latvian Security Police (DP), according to its Annual Reports, is “one of three Latvian state security and intelligence services implementing state policy in the national security sphere and whose work is usually associated with high confidentiality.”<sup>287</sup> They have admitted that the biggest challenge to Latvian national security will be Russia’s foreign policy initiatives and propaganda. They believe that the threat of military invasion remains low at this time. Espionage, compatriot policies used to draw out ethnic Russians from the country, Russian TV channels available in the Latvian information space, and influence from online extremist groups are some of the other major issues Latvia has been facing recently. The Latvian Security Police believes that awareness, training the younger generations, and saturating the information space with Latvian news will all contribute to the country’s fight against Russian disinformation. The Security Police also call for a diversification of Latvia’s natural gas and transit markets.

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

Sandra Veinberg, a Latvian journalist working in Sweden who focuses on disinformation in the media. The Baltic Centre for Media Excellence (BCME) – a Latvia-registered non-profit organization founded in 2015 – also plays a significant role in battling fake news and propaganda with consultancy and workshops.<sup>288</sup> The work of blogger Jānis Polis – who conducted thorough research on Russian disinformation campaigns, and whose activities even received praise from the Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs – is also worth mentioning.

Regarding media literacy in Latvia, Turība University in Riga offers programmes focused on this issue. Websites have a significant role in media literacy as well. *MansMedijs* is run by the Latvian Mediju institūts and the European Journalism observatory. Its main goal is to promote more education in media literacy for teachers in order to properly teach it in general education.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/04/05/if-you-want-to-see-russian-information-warfare-at-its-worst-visit-these-countries/?utm\\_term=.f16cefb79ba](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/04/05/if-you-want-to-see-russian-information-warfare-at-its-worst-visit-these-countries/?utm_term=.f16cefb79ba)

<sup>285</sup> <http://liia.lv/en/publications/latvian-foreign-and-security-policy-yearbook-2017-577>
















<sup>286</sup> “How do European democracies react to Russian aggression”. *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>287</sup> <http://www.dp.gov.lv/en/useful/annual-reports/>

<sup>288</sup> <https://baltic.media/about>

<sup>289</sup> <http://mansmedijs.lv>

## XVII. Lithuania

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Within the EU, Lithuania is at the forefront of efforts to counter Russian disinformation and other forms of aggression and hostile influence
- Given its strategic location bordering both Russia and Belarus, Lithuania has been a frequent target of Russian military intimidation
- Lithuania supports a stronger EU/NATO response to Russian aggression as well as increased aid to Ukraine

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Principled defender.** Held concerned views of Russian foreign policy and now is at the forefront of the European response to its aggression.<sup>290</sup>

Like its two Baltic neighbours, Lithuania was one of the few ex-Soviet states to join the EU and NATO in 2004. Lithuania's strategic location between the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and the Republic of Belarus contributes to its acute awareness of threats posed by the Russian military. Moreover, Russian spy networks remain heavily active in Lithuania, although its Russian minority (at only 6%) is considerably smaller than that of Latvia or Estonia. Lithuania stands in the avant-garde of EU and NATO states in raising awareness about the Russian threat, while also rapidly implementing measures to lower national dependence on Russian energy supplies.

Lithuania has been one of the chief advocates for an EU treaty with Ukraine, and the annexation of Crimea only intensified its concern and preparation for a potential hybrid attack by Russia. Lithuania is highly supportive of the EU sanctions regime and eager to aid Ukraine. Overall, Lithuania shares frosty political relations with Russia, and maintains a strong internal political and social consensus on mitigating Russian aggression and on related security issues. Within the EU, Lithuania is one of six 'principled defenders' at the helm of the European response to Russian aggression, together with its Baltic neighbours, Poland, Denmark, and the United Kingdom.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Within the EU, Lithuania is one of the states at the forefront of the fight to counter Russian disinformation and other hostile influence operations. Given its geographic proximity to Russia and strategic location between Kaliningrad and Belarus, Lithuania has acute security concerns about a Russian military offensive, similar to that in Ukraine. Indeed, recent years have witnessed a number of military incidents in the region (primarily violations of Lithuanian airspace and threatening narratives). Even prior to the

<sup>290</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>



onset of the war in Ukraine, Lithuania has sought to raise awareness of the Russian threat with both NATO and the EU, together with its Baltic neighbours. Now, it is a European leader in terms of education and strategy development to counter Russian aggression.

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Russia's disinformation campaign has also led to Lithuania's prioritization of information and cyber security issues. The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry has established a Strategic Communication Group that publishes a regular newsletter (Lithuanian Diplomatic Playbook, Weekly News from Lithuania) and maintains an active social media presence.<sup>291</sup> Indeed, concerns about Russian aggression, disinformation, and other hostile influence feature prominently at every level of society, including politics, academia, and the public sphere. The Ministry of National Defence has even published several manuals on resisting Russian invasion.<sup>292</sup> On one occasion, the Lithuanian radio and television commission suspended the Russian state-owned broadcaster VGTRK after strong anti-U.S. comments. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, a member of the Russian Duma, stated that if U.S. troops move near Russia's borders, "they will burn down with the crew." Lithuanian regulators considered this statement to be "an incitement to war, discord and hatred" and suspended VGTRK for three months.<sup>293</sup>

Furthermore, Lithuania has requested an increased NATO presence (receiving a German-led battle group of 1000 troops) and increased its military spending by 50%.<sup>294</sup> The German presence in Lithuania in February 2017 became the target of a Russian fake news campaign involving rape allegations. False emails claiming that German troops had raped an underage Lithuanian girl were sent to Lithuanian politicians and media outlets aimed at targeting NATO's mission in the Baltics.<sup>295</sup>

Significant security assistance also comes from the permanent presence of the United States and its sophisticated surveillance technology. Lithuania has also announced a plan to invest millions in missile defence systems that would fill a defence gap on the border with Russia.<sup>296</sup>

Lithuania is a sponsoring nation of the NATO STRATCOM COE and has a seconded-national expert working on the EEAS East STRATCOM Team. It is also a participant in the Finnish COE on Countering Hybrid Threats. In sum, Lithuania is at the forefront of European efforts to counter Russia's disinformation campaign and other forms of subversive influence.

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<sup>291</sup> See [https://twitter.com/LT\\_MFA\\_Stratcom?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/LT_MFA_Stratcom?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor)

<sup>292</sup> What We Know About the Resistance of Active Guidelines for Action (2015). *Ministry of National Defence, Lithuania*. <http://kam.lt/download/55077/2016%20aktyviu%20veiksmu%20gaies%20internetui.pdf>

<sup>293</sup> "Lithuania Suspends Russian TV After Anti-U.S. Comments". *RFE/RL*. 17 November 2016. <http://www.rferl.org/a/lithuania-suspends-russian-tv-anti-american-comments/28124570.html>

<sup>294</sup> Sytas, A. & Shalal, A. (2017). "NATO Troops Deploy in Lithuania, Underscoring Commitment to Defense". *Reuters*. 7 February 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lithuania-nato-germany-idUSKBN15M2BZ>

<sup>295</sup> "NATO: Russia targeted German army with fake news campaign". *Deutsche Welle*. 16 February 2017. <http://www.dw.com/en/nato-russia-targeted-german-army-with-fake-news-campaign/a-37591978>

<sup>296</sup> Samuels, G. (2016). "Lithuania to Invest Millions in Missile Defence Systems as Fears of Russian Attack Grow". *The Independent*. 28 September 2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-lithuania-defence-missile-system-investment-invasion-fears-a7335561.html>

## **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

Russian spies are thought to be the most active foreign agents operating in Lithuania. In 2014, Lithuania expelled three Russian intelligence officers operating under diplomatic cover and several diplomats had to leave their office before the expiration of their accreditation. Ten Russian intelligence officers operating under an unofficial cover were exchanged for individuals accused of collaboration with Western security services in Russia.<sup>297</sup> Russia has also been accused of bugging the phone calls of Lithuanian diplomats. On multiple occasions since 2015, Russian spyware has been discovered on government computers, followed by attempts to hack and infect devices with malware.<sup>298</sup> In addition, a NATO air base and intelligence sharing hub in the city of Siauliai was infiltrated by an alleged Russian spy ring.<sup>299</sup> The Lithuanian State Security Department has launched a television, radio, Facebook advertisement urging the public to be wary of strangers and to call a new 'spyline' to check that they have not unintentionally being lured into espionage.<sup>300</sup>

## **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

A number of NGOs, foundations, and think tanks are involved in strengthening Lithuanian and regional civil society through promoting Western values and developing new defence strategies. Some of the more prominent include: the Eastern European Studies Centre (EESC), the National Defence Foundation, and the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (IIRPS). Lithuania also has concerns about the impact of Russian state propaganda on its Russian minority.<sup>301</sup> Consequently, Lithuanian elites and NGOs have jointly launched projects to promote more accurate information for this minority.

A growing resistance movement in Lithuania is a group of over 5000 volunteers, which call themselves the "Lithuanian Elves", fighting against pro-Russian trolls online. Some of their activities include exposing pro-Russian trolls, fake online accounts, propaganda and disinformation, and they help journalists fact-check their sources. The movement first started in 2014, after Russia's annexation of Crimea, as a way to protect Lithuania from becoming a future victim to Russian aggression.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> The State Security Department: Annual Review (2014). *State Security Department, Republic of Lithuania*.

<http://www.vsd.lt/Files/Documents/635718603371696250.pdf>

<sup>298</sup> Sytas, A. (2016). "Lithuania Said Found Russian Spyware on Its Government Computers". *Reuters*. 22 December 2016.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lithuania-cyber-idUSKBN14B1PC>

<sup>299</sup> Ernst, D. (2015). "Alleged Russian Spy Ring Busted at NATO Air Base in Lithuania". *The Washington Times*. 2 January 2015.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jan/2/russian-spy-ring-busted-at-nato-air-base-in-lithua/>
















<sup>300</sup> Sytas, A. (2016). "Met a Friendly Stranger? Call Us, Say Lithuania's Spy Hunters". *Reuters*. 30 November 2016.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lithuania-spies-idUSKBN13P26U>

<sup>301</sup> "Lithuania Suspends Russian TV After Anti-U.S. Comments". *RFE/RL*. 17 November 2016. <http://www.rferl.org/a/lithuania-suspends-russian-tv-anti-american-comments/28124570.html>

<sup>302</sup> <http://www.euronews.com/2017/09/28/lithuania-has-a-volunteer-army-fighting-a-war-on-the-internet>

## XVIII. Luxembourg

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Luxembourg has close economic and financial ties to Russia, and is therefore reluctant to alienate Russia with punitive measures
- Luxembourg does not consider Russian disinformation or hostile influence operations to be a security threat
- No relevant initiatives addressing the disinformation threat exist at either the state, counterintelligence, or non-governmental level

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Trying to stay away from the issues.** Historical, energy-related or economically special relations with Russia. Neither feels threatened and nor acknowledges the threat, outside the conflict in Ukraine.<sup>303</sup>

Luxembourg is one of the founding nations of NATO and the EU nations, and one of the three Benelux states. Reputed primarily as a tax haven and banking hub, Luxembourg is a small and militarily insignificant country whose primary source of economic prosperity derives from its financial services. Due to high levels of investment from Russia (and vice versa), Luxembourg is reluctant to implement EU measures aimed at restricting shady financials from Russia. However, although Luxembourg relies considerably on Russian financing, it supports common EU policies designed to penalize Russia for violating international law. Luxembourgian officials have also expressed hope that peace in Ukraine is attainable, and that Russia and Ukraine will reach compromise over their disagreements. Within the EU, Luxembourg's relationship with Russia is best summarized as 'trying to stay away from the issues'. According to the latest Eurobarometer, 21% of the public in Luxembourg had a positive view of Russia.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Luxembourg has thus far been slow in addressing the threat of Russian disinformation and other hostile influence efforts in Europe. Luxembourg continues to see Russia as an important strategic partner and therefore takes a softer approach to the question of punitive measures. Although Russia's violations of international law and the annexation of Crimea were strongly condemned by Luxembourg, there is growing opposition to economic sanctions on the grounds that they have proven inefficient in achieving their intended goals.

<sup>303</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

Luxembourgian Prime Minister Xavier Bettel indirectly admitted the threat of Russian disinformation after his meeting with Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi in 2015. Russian state media reported that Bettel and Putin agreed to create a joint investment fund and called it a Luxembourg-domiciled “financial platform for operations in [Russian] roubles”. Bettel’s spokesman denied it by saying that “it was not an issue in the talks “. Putin also portrayed the visit as a type of EU-Russia meeting because, at the time, Luxembourg held the EU Council presidency. However, Bettel’s office also denied this claim saying: “This was a bilateral visit. We had no EU mandate to go to Sochi”<sup>304</sup>. However, this incident was handled more as a case of misinterpretation rather than intentional disinformation.

Also, in 2015, Foreign Affairs Minister Jean Asselborn declared in a parliamentary statement that lasting international isolation of Russia would be counterproductive and that sanctions cannot be a solution to the Ukrainian conflict. “We must create a new basis of cooperation with Russia to keep peace and a certain level of normality,” he said.<sup>305</sup> This placatory attitude towards Russia has persisted. For example, while on a visit to Moscow in October 2017, Prime Minister Bettel said that “bilateral relations between our countries are good, the basis of our relationship is solid and anchored in our common history”.<sup>306</sup>

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Given the lack of political acknowledgement of the threat, it is unsurprising that no concerted state action has been undertaken to raise awareness of or counter Russian disinformation or other hostile influence operations. Although Luxembourg remains aligned with EU and NATO policy, the Duchy would like to see normalization of relations with Russia. It does not consider Russian disinformation and hostile influence to be a serious threat, and is currently not pursuing any state-level strategy to mitigate it.

However, on the governmental level, there is a growing effort to teach media literacy. The Ministry of Education, Children and Youth has launched the National Strategy Digital Education<sup>307</sup>. The strategy aims to enable students to develop the skills necessary for appropriate and responsible use of ICTs and to promote innovative pedagogical projects using digital technology in schools. Luxembourg is also the only country in Europe that has established mandatory training on safer Internet use within the education system.

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

There are no relevant counterintelligence activities or documents detailing an official position on the matter of Russian disinformation or subversive influence. However, given the prominence and value of its financial sector, Luxembourg is particularly concerned with cybersecurity, and has a detailed national cybersecurity strategy.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> <https://euobserver.com/foreign/130589>

<sup>305</sup> Majerus, J. (2015). “EU-28 Watch: Luxembourg”. *EU-28 Watch*. October 2015. <http://eu-28watch.org/issues/issue-no-11/luxembourg/>

<sup>306</sup> <https://www.wort.lu/en/politics/russia-bettel-says-luxembourg-relations-with-russia-are-good-and-founded-on-solid-basis-59e7542c56202b51b13c56e9>
















<sup>307</sup> <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/68-media-literacy-and-safe-use-new-media-luxembourg>

<sup>308</sup> National Strategy for Cyber Security (2011). *The Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*. <http://www.gouvernement.lu/3966881/2011-strategie-cybersecurite.pdf>

## Activities of the non-governmental sector

There are no relevant non-governmental initiatives concerned with disinformation. There is, however, a non-governmental national initiative concerning media literacy called BEE SECURE that specifically addresses media literacy and the safe use of new media by young people in Luxembourg. Introduced in 2010, it aims to promote information security and the safe use of networked devices among the general public in Luxembourg, with a special focus on children, youth, parents, teachers, educators and senior citizens. As a national centre of competence and excellence in information safety, BEE SECURE supports the implementation of the country's strategy for information safety and security.<sup>309</sup>

## XIX. Malta

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Malta showed that it takes cyber security seriously when it published its Cyber Security Strategy in 2016
- Neither the government nor the civil society pursues any specific policies aimed at countering disinformation campaigns.

## Relations with the Russian Federation

**No relations with Russia.** Geographically distant from Russia and has almost no interest in any of the related issues.<sup>310</sup>

Malta is a small country dependent on oil imports, of which Russia takes the biggest share. Malta's relations with Russia are insignificant. The Maltese government emphasizes the EU's mediating role in the Ukraine crisis.<sup>311</sup>

## Political acknowledgement of the threat

Being a state without significant relations nor problems with Russia, the issue is not high on Maltese agenda.

Malta has refused to allow Russian warships en-route to Syria to refuel in Maltese ports. Maltese intelligence has warned about possible cyberattacks and election interference as retaliation.<sup>312</sup>

<sup>309</sup> <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/68-media-literacy-and-safe-use-new-media-luxembourg>

<sup>310</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>311</sup> Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". European Values Think-Tank. 22 April 2017. Available at: Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". European Values Think-Tank. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/european-democracies-react-russian-aggression/>

<sup>312</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/27/russia-behind-cyber-attacks-says-malta-jseph-muscat>

## **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Malta does not actively engage in dealing with this issue both at home and on the international scene. Nevertheless, the topic of cyber security is taken seriously on Malta, with its Cyber Security Strategy being published by the Ministry for Competitiveness and Digital, Maritime and Services Economy in 2016.<sup>313</sup>

## **Counter-intelligence activities**

There are no known non-governmental organisations or institutions which noticeably engage in the topic of Russian disinformation and influence operations. Nevertheless, there are several projects on Malta aiming at improving media literacy. The Centre for Literacy is involved in policy advice, consultancies and training for different educational and professional bodies. The eSkills Malta Foundation is a coalition of various representatives from the government, industry and education who are working towards a digitally enabled knowledge economy on Malta. The Be Smart Online! project focuses on education in order to ensure a safer online experience for children.<sup>314</sup>
















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<sup>313</sup> "Malta Cyber Security Strategy 2016". *Ministry for Competitiveness and Digital, Maritime and Services Economy*. 2016. Available at: <https://mita.gov.mt/en/maltacybersecuritystrategy/Pages/Malta-Cyber-Security-Strategy-2016.aspx>

<sup>314</sup> "Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28". *European Audiovisual Observatory*. 2016. Available at: <http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/8587740/Media+literacy+mapping+report+-+EN+-+FINAL.pdf/c1b5cc13-b81e-4814-b7e3-cc64dd4de36c>



## XX. The Netherlands

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- The issue of Russian subversion does not generally concern the Netherlands.
- The Netherlands show some examples of counter-disinformation measures. More politicians have been speaking out about Russian disinformation recently. Home Affairs Minister Kajsa Ollongren has had the biggest reaction to the spread of fake news in the Netherlands. Dutch politician Sybrand van Haersma Buma has also reacted.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**The awoken.** Significantly shifted its policies and concerns after the Russian aggression against Ukraine.<sup>315</sup>

The Netherlands are generally too distant from Russia to concern themselves with the issue of immediate Russian threats. So far, the major dimension of Russo-Dutch relations has been economic. However, the downing of MH17 and Russian behavior in its investigation worsened the two countries' relations. Though it is one of the more Euroskeptic Western European nations, the Netherlands did raise concern that Russia's behavior threatens international order and the integrity of the EU. This has pushed the Dutch to become more aware of and more concerned by Russian threats. Furthermore, the Netherlands are hesitant but generally supportive of the common EU stance on Russia, even though the Dutch still believe that political reforms and democratic transformations in Russia are possible in the future.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

The Netherlands held a referendum on the approval of the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement on 6 April 2016. The question was: "Are you for or against the Approval Act of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine?"<sup>316</sup> 61 per cent of the eligible voters voted against the agreement.

Director of the Transitions Forum at the Legatum Institute, Anne Applebaum, wrote the following in April 2016: "Until last week's Dutch referendum, we hadn't seen a good example of how Russian influence actually works in a Western European election... On Wednesday, Dutch citizens were asked to express their feelings about a European trade agreement with Ukraine... 32 percent of the Dutch population turned out, just above the percentage needed to make the referendum legal, and two-thirds of them voted against the treaty. How many of them were moved by Russian disinformation? It's hard to say, though certainly there has been a lot of it in the Netherlands in recent years, and it accelerated in recent

<sup>315</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>316</sup> <https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/referendum-eu-verdrag-met-oukrai-ne-is-6-april~a4173657/>

months. Much of it served to create extra uncertainty and fears about non-existent Ukrainian threats.”<sup>317</sup> Despite the seriousness of this Russian meddling, very little has been done to match the severity.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte called on Russia to stop spreading unsubstantiated rumours and disinformation about the MH17 flight (downed by pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine in 2014) also highlighting Russia's refusal to co-operate in the investigation.<sup>318</sup> The kingdom's Foreign Minister at the time, Bert Koenders, claimed that the Dutch government was aware of the threats posed by Russia. Koenders was one of the politicians who warned about Russian meddling in the 2017 Dutch elections.<sup>319</sup> Furthermore, Koenders voiced his criticism of Russia's refusal to accept the MH17 report's conclusions after Russia's foreign ministry called them “biased” and “politically motivated”.<sup>320</sup> Dutch MP Kees Verhoeven (from the Democrats 66 party) commented that the failure of the EU-Ukraine association referendum in the Netherlands may have been influenced by Russia.<sup>321</sup>

Home Affairs Minister Kajsa Ollongren has had the biggest reaction to the spread of fake news in the Netherlands. She stated that “the Netherlands is being monitored by the Russian security services among others... We know what Russia is up to, but we should not assume Russia is the only one.”<sup>322</sup> However, Ollongren continues to push that Russia is still a very dangerous presence in her country, even if it isn't acting alone. She states that she will deal with fake news by approaching companies such as Facebook, Google and Twitter; she also hopes that 95 million euros can be budgeted to “bolster cybersecurity and cyberdefense.”<sup>323</sup> Despite this phenomenon being around for a long time, she argues that the spread of fake news is getting more rapid and widespread.

### Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

Prior to the parliamentary elections in March 2017, the Dutch government ordered that votes should be counted by hand, and not by software as it was done previously, stating fears of Russian hackers' manipulation of the elections' outcome as a primary reason.<sup>324</sup>

After the referendum, there was a government task-force installed at the MFA. Its main function was to aid the government in understanding Russian disinformation, but they were often criticized by the public and could not change public perception.

The Dutch government is involved in funding the International Visegrad Fund (IVF)<sup>325</sup> whose tasks, among other things, involve combatting Russian disinformation in Europe. It is also a sponsoring nation of the NATO STRATCOM COE in Riga.<sup>326</sup>

In early 2018, three Dutch media outlets filed a lawsuit which claimed that the EU watchdog “EU vs Disinfo”, which is part of the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force and aims to debunk false information online, incorrectly denounced their articles on the EUvsDisinfo website. Whilst the articles have been

<sup>317</sup> <http://www.li.com/media/commentary/the-dutch-just-showed-the-world-how-russia-influences-western-europe-elections>

<sup>318</sup> <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2016/10/rutte-calls-on-russia-to-stop-spreading-nonsense-about-mh17/>

<sup>319</sup> <http://nltimes.nl/2017/01/12/upcoming-dutch-elections-risk-russian-hacking-propaganda-foreign-min>

<sup>320</sup> <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2016/09/koenders-talks-to-russian-ambassador-after-criticism-of-mh17-report/>

<sup>321</sup> <http://www.politico.eu/article/dutch-election-news-russian-hackers-netherlands/>

<sup>322</sup> <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/11/russia-is-trying-to-influence-dutch-public-opinion-with-fake-news-minister/>

<sup>323</sup> <https://nltimes.nl/2017/11/14/russian-fake-news-threat-netherlands-interior-minister>

<sup>324</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/dutch-to-hand-count-ballots-in-march-vote-due-to-hacking-fears/a-37375137>

<sup>325</sup> <http://visegradfund.org/about/>

<sup>326</sup> “How do European democracies react to Russian aggression”. *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

taken down, the Dutch media outlets are calling for a formal rectification.<sup>327</sup> A majority of Dutch MPs also backed a motion in parliament urging the government to lobby for the abolition of “EUvsDisinfo”.<sup>328</sup> It has been claimed that “EUvsDisinfo” “misses its target” and “meddles with the free press in the Netherlands”.<sup>329</sup>

### The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference

The General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) is the Dutch secret service. In its 2016 annual report it mentioned Russia using Cold War-era tactics to exert its influence on democratic Western societies.<sup>330</sup> The kingdom’s cyber-security lies in the domain of the National Cyber Security Centre under the Ministry of Security and Justice.<sup>331</sup> Moreover, prior to the elections, Russian hackers have tried to hack the government employees’ e-mail accounts, including one belonging to the head of the AIVD, Rob Bertholee<sup>332</sup>.

### Activities of the non-governmental sector

The Netherlands Atlantic Association (Atlantische Komissie) is one of the oldest Dutch NGOs and it is tasked with analyzing key issues surrounding NATO and trans-Atlantic relations.<sup>333</sup> In particular, it publishes a subscription-funded journal called “Atlantisch Perspectief” in Dutch and English, and covers topics related – among other things – to the problem of Russian state’s activities in the EU and NATO, and along their borders.<sup>334</sup>

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) is an organization providing analysis and data on important issues relating to security issues in Europe and around the world.<sup>335</sup> In March 2017 the centre published a paper on the impact of Russian disinformation efforts in Europe so far, which were relevant in the wake of the French presidential elections.<sup>336</sup>

DROG is an experiment created by Dutch entrepreneur Ruurd Oosterwoud to test media literacy and combat disinformation and fake news online.<sup>337</sup> It is supported by the public SVDJ fund and tasked with aiding journalists in the kingdom.<sup>338</sup>

Two public broadcasters – VPRO and HUMAN – created a documentary in 2015 about Russia Today, which was the first time much of the Dutch public was exposed to RT. Both broadcasters work on projects around Russian disinformation now in the Netherlands.

Robert van der Noordaa, a writer for Dutch newspaper “De Volkskrant”, writes on Russian influence and suspicious events around MH17. He is responsible for exposing Russian influence in the

<sup>327</sup> <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2018/02/dutch-media-outlets-take-eu-to-court-over-disinformation-claims/>

<sup>328</sup> <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2018/03/cabinet-to-lobby-brussels-to-abolish-fake-news-watchdog/>

<sup>329</sup> <https://nl.times.nl/2018/03/06/dutch-politicians-want-eu-anti-fake-news-watchdog-scrapped>

<sup>330</sup> <https://english.aivd.nl/binaries/aivd-en/documents/annual-report/2017/04/04/annual-report-2016/AIVD+Annual+Report+2016.pdf>

<sup>331</sup> <https://www.ncsc.nl/english/organisation>

<sup>332</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/russian-hackers-use-dutch-polls-as-practice/a-37850898>

<sup>333</sup> <https://www.atlcom.nl/english/organisation/>

<sup>334</sup> <https://www.atlcom.nl/media/atlantisch-perspectief/15297/>; <https://www.atlcom.nl/english/atlantischperspectief1/>

<sup>335</sup> <https://www.thehaguesecuritydelta.com/critical-infrastructure/partners/partner/32-the-hague-centre-for-strategic-studies-hcss>

<sup>336</sup> <http://www.hcss.nl/report/hoer-beschermen-wij-ons-tegen-russische-desinformatie>
















<sup>337</sup> <http://wijzijndrog.nl>

<sup>338</sup> <https://www.svdj.nl/over-ons/>

Referendum. His ties with Ukraine come from his beginning years as a journalist where he worked as an engineer in the country.<sup>339</sup>

During the Dutch parliamentary elections campaign, several experts in cyber-security warned the kingdom's political parties that they are vulnerable to hacking. Hacker Sijmen Ruwhof told some of the parties that their websites did not have sufficient security measures installed for over a year.<sup>340</sup> Individual citizens and IT security experts have been raising alarm over the Dutch political sector's vulnerability in the cyber-security angle for at least 11 years now.<sup>341</sup>

## XXI. Poland

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Poland considers the cooperation between NATO and the EU its priority, actively engaging in activities of both organizations and seeking their assistance, including in the area of subversive influence of foreign actors.
- The country has two STRATCOM units within relevant departments, but its policy to counter influence operations lacks conceptualization.
- Polish intelligence services are well aware of Russian attempts to spread its influence.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Principled defender.** Held concerned views of Russian foreign policy and now is at the forefront of the European response to its aggression.<sup>342</sup>

Even though Poland was a part of the Eastern bloc for a long time, it does not hold a lot of sympathies towards Russia. The Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939 and the Katyn Massacre in 1940 left deep scars in the modern history of the two countries. The chilly relations with the Kremlin have been later underlined by the death of former Polish president Lech Kaczynski and other Polish high officials in a plane crash in Smolensk in 2010 and even more after the annexation of Crimea.<sup>343</sup> The government showed full support for sanctions against Russia. The wariness of the Eastern power is intensive also because of the Polish borders with the Kaliningrad Oblast. Because of the security concerns caused by being at the frontier, Poland requested for increased presence of NATO in the country and increased its military spending from 1.6 % GDP in 2013 to 2 % today with even more increases in defence spending in the

<sup>339</sup> <https://www.stopfake.org/en/kremlin-disinformation-and-the-dutch-referendum/>

<sup>340</sup> <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/01/31/partijwebsites-kwetsbaar-voor-hackers-6494344-a1543889>

<sup>341</sup> <http://www.politico.eu/article/dutch-election-news-russian-hackers-netherlands/>

<sup>342</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>343</sup> "Russian soft power in Poland". *Political Capital*. April 2017. Available at: [http://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_PL\\_20170428.pdf](http://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_PL_20170428.pdf)

years to come.<sup>344</sup> Hence, the US forces are deployed in the country as a deterrence, which is perceived by the Kremlin as an aggression and a threat.

### **Political acknowledgement of the threat**

Unlike some EU countries, condemnation of Russian influence is seen on a bipartisan scale, drawing criticism from the right, left, and center. According to the Annual address on foreign policy goals from 2016<sup>345</sup>, Poland acknowledges that Russia seeks to expand its sphere of influence and inhibit the democratic transition of Eastern Europe with the means of hybrid activities, including propaganda. Through the Address, Poland also calls for enhancement of NATO-EU cooperation on the field of countering disinformation and influence operations and increasing cybersecurity.

While the Polish political establishment is highly concerned about Russian influence, certain fringe groups on the far-right have advocated for closer relations with Russia. Most infamously MEP Janusz Korwin-Mikke one of the most pro-Russian politicians in Poland has declared Ukraine to be Poland's enemy, not Russia.<sup>346</sup>

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

The threats have not yet been described in any specific conceptual document or translated into a sophisticated counter-policy. However, there are two STRATCOM departments – at the Ministry of National Defence and at the Ministry of Interior.

Poland is a sponsoring nation of the NATO Stratcom COE and also participates on the Finnish COE on Countering Hybrid Threats. It is also one of the funding nations of the European Endowment for Democracy, a donor organization supporting democratization and resilience of societies in European neighbourhood, including the area of counter-disinformation efforts.<sup>347</sup>

Anna Fotyga from the Law and Justice Party, a Polish MEP and a former minister of foreign affairs, was a rapporteur for the Report on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties in October 2016, but otherwise Poland is not very active in the projects aimed at countering disinformation on the EU level. Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz has also called for a cyber army against Russian cyber-attacks following a successful deflection of a major cyber-attack earlier in October.<sup>348</sup> In addition, Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło has announced the creation of a department of cybersecurity within the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, but she did not say if the department was created in response to the recent Russian cyber-attacks.<sup>349</sup>

Poland also recognizes that Russia would seek to influence the country using energy dependency on Russian gas. Polish leadership across the political spectrum opposes the Nord Stream pipeline, with the

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<sup>344</sup> <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/304138,Poland-to-increase-defence-spending>

<sup>345</sup> "Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish foreign policy tasks in 2017." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland*. Available at: [http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/foreign\\_policy/goals\\_of\\_foreign\\_policy/annual\\_address\\_2011/](http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/foreign_policy/goals_of_foreign_policy/annual_address_2011/)

<sup>346</sup> <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/korwin-mikke-w-tvn24-ukraina-jest-naszym-wrogiem-nie-rosja,585383.html>

<sup>347</sup> "About EED". *European Endowment for Democracy*. Available at: <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/about-eed/>

<sup>348</sup> <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/329648,New-%E2%80%98cyber-army%E2%80%99-for-Poland>

<sup>349</sup> <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/329562,Polish-PM-to-set-up-new-cybersecurity-department>



Secretary of State for European Affairs calling Nord Stream 2 “a Trojan horse”.<sup>350</sup> In 2014, Poland opened the Świnoujście LNG terminal on the Baltic to wean itself off Russian gas.<sup>351</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The Internal Security Agency issued an Activity report for the year 2014<sup>352</sup> where it re-confirmed a high level of activity of Russian intelligence services in Poland. The Russian spy network in Poland is quite extensive, including spies under diplomatic cover, which is why several Russian diplomats were expelled on suspicion of spying in recent years. For example, former Russian military attaché in Poland Eduard Shishmakov was expelled for espionage and he is also currently accused of participating in the plot in Montenegro.<sup>353</sup> Earlier this year, a Russian scientist was arrested and deported from Poland on suspicion of espionage. The expelled Russian used his network of contacts in Poland to spread pro-Kremlin propaganda.<sup>354</sup>

According to the ISA Report, the aim of Russian influence operations was to discredit the position of Poland and other NATO member states in the Ukraine crisis, to bring the attention to the complex history of relations between Poland and Ukraine to cause antagonism between their societies, and to create and highlight divisions among the EU and NATO members. For the implementation of such strategies, the Kremlin used media, but also citizens representing pro-Russian stance, who were in some cases paid by the institutions of the Russian Federation.<sup>355</sup> Sputnik maintains a Polish edition.

The ISA Report summarizes the activities of the Russian intelligence service in Poland as actively gathering information about political, economic, as well as scientific and technical character. The activities included lobbying for Russian entities operating on the Polish market as well.<sup>356</sup>

The information war conducted by the Russian Federation is described in the ISA Report as an attempt to spread pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian views among the Polish public through internet blogs, portals and news services. The documents describe the activities of paid internet trolls, but also the so called “useful idiots”.

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

There are two main non-governmental organizations which are focusing on the relations with Russia and its policies. The Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) is one of the most prominent think-tanks in Central and Eastern Europe. It conducts research and publishes studies and reports on the topic of socio-political process in Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, but also on Russian influence in the region.

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<sup>350</sup> [http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/news/they\\_wrote\\_about\\_us/konrad\\_szymanski\\_for\\_the\\_financial\\_times\\_nord\\_stream\\_2\\_is\\_a\\_test\\_of\\_european\\_unity;jsessionid=B53224F5D9C380E3F16ADD059398CA3C.cmsap1p](http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/news/they_wrote_about_us/konrad_szymanski_for_the_financial_times_nord_stream_2_is_a_test_of_european_unity;jsessionid=B53224F5D9C380E3F16ADD059398CA3C.cmsap1p)

<sup>351</sup> <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/gazoport-w-swinoujsciu-pierwsza-dostawa-lng-z-kataru,601993.html>

<sup>352</sup> “Activity Report for 2014”. Internal Security Agency. 2015. Available at: [https://bs.net.pl/sites/default/files/media/rozne/raport\\_2015\\_int.pdf](https://bs.net.pl/sites/default/files/media/rozne/raport_2015_int.pdf)

<sup>353</sup> “Montenegro Coup Suspect ‘Was Russian Spy in Poland’”. *Balkan Insight*. 21 February 2017. Available at: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/montenegro-coup-suspect-was-russian-spy-in-poland--02-21-2017>

<sup>354</sup> <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/330272,Russian-suspected-of-hostile-activities-expelled-from-Poland-official>

<sup>355</sup> [http://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_PL\\_20170428.pdf](http://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_PL_20170428.pdf)

<sup>356</sup> “Activity Report for 2014”. Internal Security Agency. 2015. Available at: [https://bs.net.pl/sites/default/files/media/rozne/raport\\_2015\\_int.pdf](https://bs.net.pl/sites/default/files/media/rozne/raport_2015_int.pdf)



The Foundation for Joint Europe established in 2010 is a project of young experts from Eastern Europe. It is behind the Eastbook.eu portal, a website informing daily about the situation in Eastern European countries in cooperation with local politicians, journalists and activists. The authors support the freedom of speech and highlight the necessity of accurate information about the events happening in the Eastern neighbourhood.<sup>357</sup>

Another notable activity is the Infoops project. Established in 2015 (from 2017 as part of the [Cyber Security Foundation](#)) by Kamil Basaj, this research project analyses the manipulation of the Polish information sphere: disinformation, propaganda, social engineering and cyber activity and serves as an information hub regarding disinformation activities in Poland. It is known and active on Twitter as @Disinfo\_Digest.<sup>358</sup>

Last but not least - a Facebook page called "Russian fifth column in Poland" ran by a journalist Marcin Rey. He uses this platform for publishing materials on the activities of Polish nationalists, activists and politicians with Russian connections.<sup>359</sup> Also, the New Eastern Europe magazine focusing on the affairs of the countries formerly under the influence of the Soviet Union resides in Kraków.

Media literacy is mostly promoted by the academic sphere. There is also a Media Education programme in place, supporting media education classes at schools from kindergarten to secondary levels, community centres and libraries, including providing lesson plans, exercises and teaching materials.

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<sup>357</sup> <http://www.eastbook.eu/>

<sup>358</sup> <https://www.cybsecurity.org/pl/infoops-projekt-badan-nad-zjawiskiem-manipulowania-polskim-srodowiskiem-informacyjnym/>

<sup>359</sup> Yuriy Lapayev: "The invisible weapons". *The Ukrainian Week*. January 2017. Available at:

[http://i.tyzhden.ua/content/photoalbum/2017/01\\_2017/23/12/book1.pdf](http://i.tyzhden.ua/content/photoalbum/2017/01_2017/23/12/book1.pdf)

## XXII. Portugal

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Portugal is generally unconcerned with Russia, and it remains outside of immediate Russian interests.
- The government has developed a few media education policies, but these suffer from a lack of consistency and resources.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**No relations with Russia.** Geographically distant from Russia and has almost no interest in any of the related issues.<sup>360</sup>

Portugal is one of the founding NATO member states and one of the westernmost EU member states. The country's distance from Russia makes it generally less aware of the issues at the Union's eastern borders. It is generally independent from Russian fossil fuels. Portugal is generally unconcerned with Russia, and it remains outside of immediate Russian interests as well.<sup>361</sup>

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Russian subversion operations do not pose a visible threat to Portugal, therefore, this topic is not of much relevance for the Portuguese.

### Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

Besides cooperation at the EU and NATO level, the government currently does not show any activity regarding this issue.

The state is more active as far as media literacy is concerned and it has developed a few media education policies, however, these policies have suffered from a lack of consistency and a lack of resources to put them into practice.<sup>362</sup>

Given the disinterestedness of Portugal in the topic of Russian disinformation and influence operations, neither excessive activity nor obstructions are to be expected from the country. As for media literacy, the

<sup>360</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>361</sup> Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". European Values Think-Tank. 22 April 2017. Available at: Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". European Values Think-Tank. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/european-democracies-react-russian-aggression/>

<sup>362</sup> Conceição Costa, Ana Jorge and Luís Pereira: "Media and Information Literacy Policies in Portugal (2013)". *Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Teconologis, Universidade do Minho, Universidade Nova de Lisboa*. May 2014. Available at: [http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/PORTUGAL\\_2014.pdf](http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/PORTUGAL_2014.pdf)

academia and associations of civic society have played a very important role in promoting media education in Portugal and calling the topic to public agenda.<sup>363</sup>
















### The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference

It is not known that the Portuguese intelligence agencies would occupy themselves extensively with the issue of Russia, however, a Portuguese spy was once caught selling secret NATO documents to a Russian handler.<sup>364</sup>

### Activities of the non-governmental sector

There are currently no known initiatives in Portugal focusing on the issue of Russian disinformation campaigns.

## XXIII. Romania

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- **Romania has long had tense relations with Russia, which have deteriorated further since the start of the Ukraine crisis**
- **Romania explicitly identifies Russia as a threat to its national security in the realms of information warfare, cyberattacks, and other hybrid tactics**
- **Despite this acknowledgement, Romania's strategic capabilities with respect to these threats are still relatively underdeveloped**

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Below-radar supporter.** Concerns about Russia, but given complicated historical relations and local context, has most of the time stayed away from being vocal about the Russian aggression.<sup>365</sup>

Romania has been an EU and NATO member state since 2004. The country's high domestic fossil fuel reserves make the question of energy secondary in Romania's relations with Russia. Romania's primary concern is with its immediate neighbourhood. It was supportive of pro-EU and pro-NATO measures in Georgia, and with forming a common Black Sea partnership within Europe. Moldova, Transnistria, and EU expansion are the defining issues of Romania's foreign policy.

As Chisinau's foremost advocate in Europe, Romania's interests in Moldova's accession to the EU have clashed with Russia's desire to maintain the frozen conflict in Transnistria. Romania remains dedicated

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> John R. Schindler: "NATO's Big New Russian Spy Scandal". *Observer*. 25 May 2016. Available at: <http://observer.com/2016/05/natos-big-new-russian-spy-scandal/>

<sup>365</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

to deeper ties with the US and NATO, as well as with its Black Sea partners, such as Georgia and Ukraine. Within the EU context, Romania's relationship with Russia is best described as 'below-radar supporter', where concerns are tempered by historical relations and local context.

According to Eurobarometer, 53% of Romanians have a positive view of Russia, while 41% have a negative view.<sup>366</sup> Recently, however, nationalist tendencies have once again acquired mainstream acceptance, through social media channels and the voices of some opinion leaders. Some of these outlets have no overt pro-Kremlin inclination but "create a particularly fertile ground for pro-Kremlin media and serve as multipliers for narratives that promote the Kremlin's goal of weakening Romania's pro-Western sentiment."<sup>367</sup>

### **Political acknowledgement of the threat**

Romania's complicated history with Russia, particularly concerning Moldova and Transnistria, has long fuelled Romanian suspicion of Russia. The onset of the crisis in Ukraine in 2013 only exacerbated these concerns. Today, Romania openly acknowledges the threat of Russian disinformation and subversive efforts both to its own national security as well as to Europe at large – a stance that is increasingly reflected in government documents and official statements.

For example, the Romanian National Defence Strategy for 2015-2019 explicitly identifies Russia as a threat to Romanian and European security; *inter alia*, it recognizes the danger of "hostile informational actions, which trigger the development of some support points on national territory, especially with an influential purpose".<sup>368</sup> In an implicit reference to Russian destabilization efforts, the strategy report also names "cyber threats initiated by hostile entities, state or non-state" and the "perpetuation of the frozen conflicts in the Black Sea Region and instability in the Western Balkans" as crucial security issues for Romania.

Likewise, the 2016 Military Strategy of Romania names hybrid warfare, intelligence operations, and cyberattacks in its list of potential military risks and threats.<sup>369</sup> According to the Centre for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), the new Romanian National Defence Strategy "makes quite clear that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Russian actions in the Black Sea region deeply affect the regional security environment", which "is an important and novel element" of Romania's defence orientation.<sup>370</sup> While Romania's 2010 strategy "mentioned the Georgian-Russian conflict as a destabilizing factor [...] it saw the main security challenges as coming from military conflicts outside the European continent, terrorism and weapons proliferation.

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<sup>366</sup> Special Eurobarometer 451: Future of Europe. *The European Commission*. October 2016.

[https://ec.europa.eu/finland/sites/finland/files/ebs\\_451\\_anx\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/finland/sites/finland/files/ebs_451_anx_en.pdf)

<sup>367</sup> Rebegea, C. (2017). "Russian propaganda meets Romanian nationalism". *Center for European Policy Analysis*. 5 June 2017.

<http://infowar.cepa.org/Briefs/Ro/Russian-propaganda-meets-Romanian-nationalism>

<sup>368</sup> National Defense Strategy 2015-2019. *The Presidential Administration of Romania*.

<http://old.presidency.ro/static/National%20%20Defense%20Strategy%202015%20-%202019.pdf>

<sup>369</sup> The Military Strategy of Romania (2016). *Ministry of National Defense, Romania*. [https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/Defence-Procurement-Gateway/ro\\_milstrategy.pdf](https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/Defence-Procurement-Gateway/ro_milstrategy.pdf)

<sup>370</sup> Rebegea, C. (2015). "A Strong Romania in Europe and in the World". *Center for European Policy Analysis*. 26 June 2015. <http://cepa.org/index/?id=fe39765e51d6dad4eddba0dfe604086>

Now [...] the identified threats to Romania's security derive from the changed security environment both inside and outside its borders: frozen conflicts and destabilizing actions (by Russia) in Romania's immediate vicinity, cyber threats and informational hostilities."<sup>371</sup>

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Despite overt political acknowledgement of the Russian threat, Romania's response strategy is still nascent and relatively underdeveloped by comparison to other EU states like the Baltics and the Czech Republic. So far, these concerns have entered official government strategy documents, but have not been effectively put into practice.

The Kremlin sees Romania as a NATO outpost and "a clear threat" due to it hosting elements of a US anti-missile shield. Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko, a senior Russian foreign ministry official has said "all these decisions ... are in the first instance aimed against Russia," accusing Romanian authorities of revelling in anti-Russian rhetoric. Moreover, as of 2016, Romania had the second-highest defence budget in Eastern Europe. To reaffirm its commitment to NATO, Romania will spend 2 percent of its GDP on defence. Romania hosts a U.S. ballistic missile defence station and has contributed troops to U.S.-led and NATO campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Moscow says the real purpose of the shield is to erode Russia's nuclear deterrent by reducing its chances of a successful retaliation in the event of being attacked by another country's nuclear missiles. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Moscow views the missile shield in eastern Europe as a "great danger" and Moscow will be forced to respond by enhancing its own missile strike capability.

In October 2017, Romanian authorities once again proved to take the threat of Russian disinformation policy seriously: due to concerns over fake news and propaganda, the Romanian National Council on Television and Radio turned down the request for license renewal by the Russian RTR TV channel.<sup>372</sup>

The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also committed to the mission of the EEAS East STRATCOM Task Force and NATO STRATCOM COE. With regard to the EEAS East STRATCOM Task Force, Romanian MEP Siegfried Mureşan (European People's Party) proposed that the EU should invest €3 million in 2018 for a project involving the training of specialised staff in the European Commission's representations in the Eastern Neighbourhood to monitor social networks and the media in order to combat disinformation.<sup>373</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

Romania's National Defence Strategy for 2015-2019 outlines intelligence and counterintelligence priorities. With respect to Russian disinformation and aggression, these include: "ensuring mechanisms to prevent and counteract cyber attacks [...]; identifying and counteracting asymmetric and hybrid actions; [...] knowing, preventing and eliminating risks and threats generated by hostile intelligence actions [...]"<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Rebegea (2015).

<sup>372</sup> See: <https://www.unian.info/world/2183771-romania-denies-license-renewal-to-russian-tv-channel-over-propaganda.html>
















<sup>373</sup> See <http://www.europeanvalues.net/kremlin-watch-monitor-may-18-2017/>

<sup>374</sup> National Defense Strategy 2015-2019. *The Presidential Administration of Romania*.  
<http://old.presidency.ro/static/National%20%20Defense%20Strategy%202015%20-%20202019.pdf>

## Activities of the non-governmental sector

Currently, there is still a limited number of non-governmental initiatives in Romania concerned with addressing the impact of Russian disinformation and other hostile influence operations. Three stand out in particular: the Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning,<sup>375</sup> an NGO focused on research in conflict analysis and crisis decision-making in the post-Soviet space; the Global Focus Think Tank which runs a project on building resilience and response against “propaganda, disinformation, and illicit influence”<sup>376</sup>; and the Eurisc Foundation, an NGO dedicated to the study of issues related to risk, security, and communication, “focusing on nonmilitary risks, security culture in relation to Romania’s European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes (EU and NATO), and civil-military relations”.<sup>377</sup> Furthermore, the Euro Atlantic Diplomacy Society (E.A.D.) hosted a forum focused on the mechanisms of disinformation and the question of how to fight back against propaganda.<sup>378</sup>

## XXIV. Slovakia

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Slovak political representation at the highest level is in a state of denial concerning Russian disinformation and influence operations, with the exception of President Andrej Kiska.
- Slovak civil society is very active, trying to raise public awareness and enhance education and media literacy amongst the youth.
- The activities targeting the spread of Russian influence are interconnected with preventing radicalization.

## Relations with the Russian Federation

**Government using Russia-card for domestic reasons.** While these countries have predominantly negative historical experience with Russia, the government uses relations with Moscow for domestic political and/or economic reasons, or as a tool against the EU establishment.<sup>379</sup>

Slovakia belongs to the group of countries that were formerly part of the Eastern bloc and had negative historical experience with the Russian Federation. It is a firm supporter of the counter measures against Russia taken by the EU and NATO following the annexation of Crimea. However, energy dependence and economic ties with Russia lead to occasional capitulation on the Slovak side, for example in the case of the deployment of the US missile shield. Hence, Slovakia remains one of the most pro-Russian

<sup>375</sup> See <http://cpc-ew.ro/>

<sup>376</sup> See <http://www.global-focus.eu/about-us/>

<sup>377</sup> See <http://www.nira.or.jp/past/ice/nwdtt/2005/DAT/1265.html>

<sup>378</sup> See <http://www.eadsociety.com/ddee-topics/>

<sup>379</sup> “How do European democracies react to Russian aggression”. *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>



countries in the EU.<sup>380</sup> There are pro-Russian fringe elements present in Slovak politics, such as ex-Communist politicians who continue to harbour sympathies for Russia.<sup>381</sup>

### **Political acknowledgement of the threat**

In September 2017, the Slovak Government adopted new strategy documents, namely: the new Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic and the new Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic. Considering that Slovakia's strategy documents were last updated in 2005, major changes were made to the country's security and defence policies.<sup>382</sup> While the Slovak government generally highlights the necessity of maintaining pragmatic relations with Russia; one of Slovakia's foreign policy goals<sup>383</sup> is the support of a comprehensive approach and wider cooperation between the European Union and NATO with respect to countering disinformation and cyber-defence.

Accordingly, the Security Strategy contains an acknowledgement of Russia's annexation of Crimea as a violation of international law. The document emphasizes that relations between the Russian Federation and the EU and NATO have deteriorated, but also holds that dialogue with Russia on security issues should continue. One of the biggest challenges, according to the Security Strategy, is decline in public trust towards national institutions as well as the EU and NATO. To this point, the document states: "This problem is significantly impacted by the propaganda and disinformation effect of external and internal actors." There is also an emphasis on political extremism, which is becoming a growing problem in Slovakia. "An important part of this development is the spread of anti-Western propaganda. It is especially effective and easy to promote by means of electric forms of communication, especially social networks."<sup>384</sup>

Similarly, the Defence Strategy also mentions the issue of propaganda and disinformation in connection with social polarization in Slovakia, the disruption of the political system and the weakening of public trust in the democratic process and rule of law. These developments are not, however, mentioned in context of Russian influence efforts.<sup>385</sup>

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

In June 2016, the Slovak Ministry of the Interior admitted for the first time that Slovakia had become the target of Russian propaganda. The Ministry issued a statement declaring that "like other Central and Eastern European countries, Slovakia has become the target of information influence of the Russian Federation structures."<sup>386</sup>

Slovak President Andrej Kiska is one of the few political leaders who acknowledges the threat. On 17 March 2017, he publicly proclaimed that "Slovakia is a target of information war and propaganda and

<sup>380</sup> Dariusz Kalan and Ágnes Vass: "Big Gestures, Small Actions: Paradoxes of Slovakia's Policy towards Russia". *The Polish Institute of International Affairs*, 43 (775). 27 April 2015. Available at: [http://www.pism.pl/files/?id\\_plik=19695](http://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=19695)

<sup>381</sup> "Kremlin Playbook" *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. October 2016. Available at: [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017\\_Conley\\_KremlinPlaybook\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/1601017_Conley_KremlinPlaybook_Web.pdf)

<sup>382</sup> <http://mepoforum.sk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/N%C3%A1vrh-Bezpe%C4%8Dnostnej-strat%C3%A9gie-SR.pdf>

<sup>383</sup> "Focus of the foreign and European policy of the Slovak Republic for 2016". *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. Available at: <https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/2198827/2016+-+Zameranie+zahrani%C4%8Dnej+a+eur%C3%B3pskej+politiky+Slovenskej+republiky>

<sup>384</sup> <http://mepoforum.sk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/N%C3%A1vrh-Bezpe%C4%8Dnostnej-strat%C3%A9gie-SR.pdf>

<sup>385</sup> <http://mepoforum.sk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/N%C3%A1vrh-Obrannej-strat%C3%A9gie-SR.pdf>

<sup>386</sup> <https://dennikn.sk/481082/stat-prvykrat-priznal-ze-ruska-propaganda-utoci-prozapadne-smerovanie-slovenska/>  
<https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/344132/kalinakov-rezort-priznava-slovensko-je-predmetom-posobenja-ruskeho-vplyvu/>

Slovak security services are doing next to nothing to counter it". Kiska has also recently said that "through different types of channels, the Russians are trying to divide our EU".<sup>387</sup> Nonetheless, there are no activities on the state level dedicated to strategic communication or any type of countermeasures against disinformation campaigns and influence operations.<sup>388</sup> Notably, Interior Minister Robert Kaliňák has stated that there are no plans to establish a unit at the governmental level to fight disinformation and propaganda.<sup>389</sup>

Slovakia does not actively participate in efforts to counter disinformation at the international level. The Slovak President warned against the danger of spreading disinformation in 2015 during a meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. However, the Prime Minister and the rest of the political leadership do not consider the threat of Russian influence a priority.

Slovakia became one of the pilot countries for the global campaign "We Are NATO", which aims to explain to the general public the advantages of being a NATO member and NATO's role in preserving global peace. A Slovak official noted that "the campaign is set to stress Slovakia's pro-European and pro-NATO orientation and fight against fake and misleading news concerning these institutions".<sup>390</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The Slovak Intelligence Service (SIS) published an annual report for 2016, in which it dedicates one section to the topic of subversive foreign influence: "In the foreign policy area, the SIS has watched the Russian Federation activities aimed at keeping neighbouring states in their sphere of influence, confirming their great power and building a multipolar world order. In the post-Soviet space, the Russian Federation seeks to promote its interests through some integration clusters, ongoing ties to the political and economic elite of post-Soviet states, and propaganda."<sup>391</sup>

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

Slovak civil society is, unlike the political representation, a strong player in countering disinformation campaigns. There is a significant number of individuals and organizations trying to tackle the challenges of manipulative and disinforming media, radicalisation and extremism (especially among the youth) and media literacy and education. Most of these groups and individuals are informally associated with a platform for stakeholders including journalists, NGOs and government specialists called the Slovak Forum against Propaganda.

One of the most successful civic projects, Konspiratori.sk, was launched by the company Net Success. They created a database of dubious websites with false, conspiratorial or propaganda content. The sources in the database are evaluated by an independent committee. They cooperate with over 1,400 Slovak companies that take down their advertisements from the outlets in the database and therefore refuse to support the authors of these websites financially.

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<sup>387</sup> <https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/kiska-diskutoval-v-slovinsku-o-ekonomike-aj-zahranicnej-politike/>

<sup>388</sup> "Vulnerability Index." *GLOBEC Policy Institute*. April 2017. Available at:

[http://www.cepolicy.org/sites/cepolicy.org/files/attachments/globsec\\_vulnerability\\_index.pdf](http://www.cepolicy.org/sites/cepolicy.org/files/attachments/globsec_vulnerability_index.pdf)

<sup>389</sup> <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/419656/vali-sa-na-nas-ruska-propaganda-kalinak-prisiel-o-experta/>

<sup>390</sup> <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20708269/slovakia-launches-campaign-pointing-to-the-benefits-of-slovakias-membership-in-nato-and-the-eu.html>

<sup>391</sup> <http://www.sis.gov.sk/pre-vas/sprava-o-cinnosti.html#zahranicnopoliticka-oblast>

Another strong actor on the non-governmental front is the Globsec Policy Institute, organizer of the yearly GLOBSEC Bratislava Global Security Forum, which conducts analyses and studies of disinformation campaigns and Russian influence operations. They also authorized a project of two young youtubers who published misleading videos about each other which caused a lot of hate among their fans. Afterwards, they made another videos in which they explained how easy it is to become misinformed<sup>392</sup>. The Slovak Security Policy Institute focuses on research and analysis of security challenges and has established an internet portal dedicated to cyber-security (CyberSec.sk). It also runs the page Antipropaganda.sk where it debunks myths about foreign and security policy. It also organizes numerous discussions with high-school students all around Slovakia to counter the myths related to the Slovak foreign policy.

The Slovak Foreign Policy Association, established in 1993 serves as an open non-partisan discussion forum for international and foreign policy issues and also focuses on the topic of disinformation. There are also numerous individuals who try to raise public awareness and point out disinformation attempts. Their commentaries are often published in a special online section of the Slovak daily Denník N called "Disinformation Hoaxes Propaganda".
















There are also initiatives to enhance media literacy, such as creating education materials for students and teaching them how to distinguish disinformation from serious news. The Media Literacy Centre, established in 2010 by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, includes several research activities and its main output is the information interface medialnavychova.sk. The Faculty also provides accredited bachelor and masters study programs in applied media studies, which focus on the preparing specialists for the field of developing media literacy, new media and media platforms and programs used in education.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=RJdwJzM89jo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=RJdwJzM89jo)

<sup>393</sup> "Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28." *European Audiovisual Observatory*. 2016. Available at: <http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/8587740/Media+literacy+mapping+report+-+EN+-+FINAL.pdf/c1b5cc13-b81e-4814-b7e3-cc64dd4de36c>

## XXV. Slovenia

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Slovenia acknowledges the existence of hypothetical disinformation campaigns and influence operations in general, but does not attribute them to any specific actor, nor does it consider them a threat.
- Civil society does not dedicate its resources to these issues either, except for projects targeting media literacy.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Trying to stay away from the issues.** Historical, energy-related or economically special relations with Russia. Does not feel threatened and does not acknowledge the threat outside of the conflict of Ukraine.<sup>394</sup>

Even after the annexation of Crimea, Slovenia maintained pragmatic energy-focused economic ties with Russia despite claiming that it fully supports Ukrainian integrity and the Minsk agreements. It also supports lifting the sanctions against the Russian Federation. Slovenes lack the negative historical experiences with Russian occupation; on the contrary, they have a certain sense of shared Slavic identity and appreciation for the contribution of the Red Army in liberating part of Slovenia. Therefore, Slovenian politicians stress “mutual respect for different opinions” in relations with Russia. The Presidents or Prime Ministers of the two countries meet regularly.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

In its strategic documents, Slovenia states that encouragement of the EU-Russia cooperation is one of its priorities, especially on an economical level. Any kind of Russian influence is not perceived or acknowledged as a threat to the country. In the National Security Strategy from 2010<sup>395</sup>, Slovenia mentions hybrid warfare, including criminal and other irregular forms of warfare, information technologies and various economic resources as one of the new forms of security threats of the future. However, these threats are mentioned regarding mostly non-state or transnational forms of actors and as a danger connected to participation on international operations and missions.

<sup>394</sup> “How do European democracies react to Russian aggression”. *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at:

<http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>395</sup> “Slovenia: Safe, successful, globally respected. The Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia.” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Slovenia*. 2015. Available at:

[http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zakonodaja\\_in\\_dokumenti/Strateski\\_dokument\\_slovenske\\_zunanje\\_politike\\_ang.pdf](http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zakonodaja_in_dokumenti/Strateski_dokument_slovenske_zunanje_politike_ang.pdf)

## **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

The Defence Committee of the Slovenian Parliament established in November 2016 that Slovenia is under no form of security threat, although an increase was noted when it came to “hybrid warfare threats from Russia”.<sup>396</sup> Internationally, Slovenia follows how responses to hybrid threats are developing.<sup>397</sup> No measures on state or international level have not been taken.

## **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

There are no known statements or proclamations of the Slovenian intelligence services which would suggest that they are aware of the issue of subversive influence, consider it a threat, or have been conducting any activities to counter it.

## **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

The non-governmental sector in Slovenia is not dedicated to analysing or countering disinformation operations either. Slovenian universities are active in the field of media literacy. They organize courses for students of primary and secondary schools and for the wider public. The Infrastructural Programme of the Faculty for Media-Collecting, Managing and Archiving Data on Media Literacy – initiated in 2014 and funded by the Slovenian Research Agency – aims at analysing trends and indicators about media literacy in Slovenia. The project launched a web portal listing activities and resources concerning media literacy in Slovenia and in the EU. It also organizes events, workshops, and training sessions.

The European Institute for Communication and Culture, a non-profit organization registered under Slovene law, conducts research in the area of mass communication and media studies and it is particularly concerned with the relationship of the mass media to issues around democracy and democratisation.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>396</sup>“Defence Committee sees no direct threat to Slovenia, notes hybrid warfare”. *STA.si*. 8 November 2016. Available at:

<https://english.sta.si/2322200/defence-committee-sees-no-direct-threat-to-slovenia-notes-hybrid-warfare>
















<sup>397</sup> “Priorities of the Republic of Slovenia for the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia*. Available at:

[http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zunanja\\_politika/OZN/Prioritete\\_RS\\_na\\_71.\\_zasedanju\\_GS\\_OZN\\_-\\_english.pdf](http://www.mzz.gov.si/fileadmin/pageuploads/Zunanja_politika/OZN/Prioritete_RS_na_71._zasedanju_GS_OZN_-_english.pdf)

<sup>398</sup> “Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28.” European Audiovisual Observatory. 2016. Available at:

<http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/8587740/Media+literacy+mapping+report+-+EN+-+FINAL.pdf/c1b5cc13-b81e-4814-b7e3-cc64dd4de36c>

## XXVI. Spain

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- Spain is actively engaging in countering the Islamic state propaganda. The Russian Federation is higher on the Spanish security agenda due to Russian involvement in the Catalan independence referendum. There is evidence Russian bots and propagandists helped back Catalan separatism.
- It is possible to observe a slight shift in the statements of the Spanish government's representatives regarding Russia, but no specific measures have been taken.
- The country has a Strategic Communication Plan, but its content is classified.

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Trying to stay away from the issues.** Historical, energy-related or economically special relations with Russia. Does not feel threatened and does not acknowledge the threat, outside of the conflict of Ukraine.<sup>399</sup>

Spain is an EU and NATO member state located in the westernmost part of Europe. Being located far away from Russia and not affected by the same fears as the easternmost EU member states, Spain remains focused on engaging in dialogue with Russia. This, however, does not negate Spain's concern with Russian military build-up and Russia's actions in Ukraine. At the same time, Spain remains sceptical over possible European expansion, and Russia's status as a strategic partner in the fight against terrorism has left a mark on Spain's attitude of hesitance in making strong moves to counter Russian threat. However, this is more of a sign of the lack of any serious ties with Russia, rather than Spanish attempts to oppose other EU member states who have real concerns over Russian threats. Economy-wise, Russia does not play a significant role in Spanish energy imports, but Russian tourism plays a big role in the Spanish economy. Thus, Spain was one of the several countries to voice criticism against anti-Russian sanctions, but so far, Spain joined other EU nations in supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity.<sup>400</sup>

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

Spain has become more aware of the Russian threat after the Spanish Army participated in 2015 NATO exercise in the Baltics, where it experienced the spread of Russian disinformation targeted against the Spanish Army and efforts to directly influence Spanish journalists.

<sup>399</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>400</sup> Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi, Krejčí and Fišer: "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression?". European Values Think-Tank. 22 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/european-democracies-react-russian-aggression/>



It is possible to observe a slight shift in the statements of the Spanish government's representatives regarding Russia. The current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alfonso Dastis, said that Spain needs to be aware of threats coming from Russia (such as cyber-attacks or Russian propaganda in European countries), but Russia is still a key player and a partner of Spain, therefore, there are no concrete steps or measures to be undertaken or planned so far.

In the 2017 Strategy Panorama issued by the ministry of Defense, it is stated: "There is evidence of a Russian strategy of meddling with European internal politics. The activities and instruments the Russians are using as part of this strategy include taking part in online debates and newspapers' comment sections, subsidising Eurosceptic and right-wing parties (for example UKIP in Britain and the National Front in France), and subsidising seminars and academic lectures and cyberattacks."<sup>401</sup>

The Spanish political mainstream appears aligned with the West. Only one major Spanish political party, Podemos, openly opposes sanctions on Russia.<sup>402</sup>

Spanish awareness of Russian disinformation and tactics increased after it appeared that Russia-based bots posted in support of the region's separatist government, which attempted to declare independence in October 2017. Defence minister Maria Dolores de Cospedal stated "many of the actions come from Russian territory."<sup>403</sup> Spain's foreign minister Alfonso Dastis added<sup>404</sup> that Julian Assange, WikiLeaks' founder, met with an unnamed Catalan independence figure. Assange tends to avoid leaking Russian documents, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between WikiLeaks and the Kremlin.

Representatives of the Ministry of Defence / the Defence Staff considers Russian propaganda to be a threat, even though not a significant one, which is to be dealt with by implementing measures in strategic communication.

### **Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation**

Spain has a Strategic Communication Plan, although it is classified. It is expected that the Department for strategic communication under the MoD will be boosted, in connection with the presence of Spanish troops in Eastern Europe within the engagement of NATO. Spain also has its own Cyber Security Strategy.<sup>405</sup>

The Spanish government fully supports activities at the EU and NATO level regarding the threat posed by Russia, although it does not actively engage in countering it. As stated previously, Spain is a lot more concerned with the threat of Islamic extremism and terrorism, therefore, it is more interested in international cooperation in connection with that issue. Concerning Spain's military involvement, the country is providing forces for a NATO unit in Latvia.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> "IEEE - Strategic Panorama 2017," accessed November 27, 2017, <http://www.ieee.es/en/publicaciones-new/panorama-estrategico/2017/PANEST-2017.html>.

<sup>402</sup> Council, Atlantic. "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses 2.0." Atlantic Council. Accessed February 7, 2018. <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/the-kremlin-s-trojan-horses-2-0>.

<sup>403</sup> Vasco Cotovio and Emanuella Grinberg CNN, "Spain: 'Misinformation' on Catalonia Vote Came from Russia," CNN, accessed November 27, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/13/europe/catalonia-russia-connection-referendum/index.html>.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> „National Cyber Security Strategy". *Gobierno de España*. 2013. Available at: [https://www.enisa.europa.eu/topics/national-cyber-security-strategies/ncss-map/NCSS\\_ESen.pdf](https://www.enisa.europa.eu/topics/national-cyber-security-strategies/ncss-map/NCSS_ESen.pdf)

<sup>406</sup> John R. Deni: "Enhancing NATO's Forward Presence". *Carnegie Europe*. 27 April 2017. Available at: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/68792>

Foreign minister Dastis added "We wish to strengthen and develop our cooperation with the strategic communication structures of other member states and of the European Union itself." However, it did not sign on to the 2017 letter urging Federica Mogherini to take action against disinformation, which NATO allies Britain, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, among others, signed.

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

A few alleged Russian hackers were arrested on Spanish soil, based on US warrants.<sup>407</sup> Nevertheless, Russian secret services are active on Spanish soil and even managed to get one Spanish counter-intelligence agent to spy for Russia.<sup>408</sup> In general, the focus of Spanish intelligence is heavily oriented at countering terrorism.

### **Activities of the non-governmental sector**

Spanish non-governmental sector is not much concerned with the issue of Russia, however, some individuals do engage in it, for example Nicloás De Pedro from the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs. Strengthening media literacy is not a part of Spanish public debate. There are several fact-checking websites active in Spain, however, they mostly focus only on internal political issues.

Spanish academics have done excellent research on Russian disinformation against their country. George Washington University visiting professor Javier Lesaca analysed<sup>409</sup> 5,029,877 messages, finding that almost 50% of the fake news came from Russia while another 30% came from Venezuelan or Chavista-linked accounts. Additionally, "Half of the news stories shared by RT in the days immediately prior and after the October 1 referendum in Catalonia were about the police violence during the day."<sup>410</sup> Further corroborating evidence of bot activity, the study noted that "in some cases, these accounts were detected to be publishing the same content at the same time, reinforcing the hypothesis of the use of robots."<sup>411</sup> Mainstream media has been effective in rejecting Russian propaganda. Lasheras and de Pedro report that media editorials on Russia often take a harder stance on Russia than the government.<sup>412</sup> Spanish civil society, though new to combating disinformation, has abundant resources at hand and is beginning to implement them.

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<sup>407</sup> Graham Keeley: "Spain arrests Russian 'hacker' in Barcelona". *The Times*. 19 January 2017. Available at:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/spain-arrests-russian-hacker-in-madrid-hj8xm5gcc>

"Russian arrested in Spain 'over mass hacking'". *BBC*. 10 April 2017. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-39553250>

<sup>408</sup> "El ex agente del CNI Flórez, primer condenado por traición en democracia". *El Mundo*. 11 February 2010. Available at:

<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2010/02/11/espana/1265892033.html>

<sup>409</sup> David Alandete, "Russian Network Used Venezuelan Accounts to Deepen Catalan Crisis," *EL PAÍS*, November 11, 2017, [https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/11/11/inenglish/1510395422\\_468026.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/11/11/inenglish/1510395422_468026.html).
















<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Council, Atlantic. "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses 2.0." Atlantic Council. Accessed February 7, 2018.

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/the-kremlin-s-trojan-horses-2-0>.

## XXVII. Sweden

Political acknowledgment	    
Government activities	    
Intelligence services approach	    

- Sweden's free and independent press is one of the country's most important assets in combatting fake news
- Swedish academia is perhaps the most visible player in analysing and combatting Russian subversive tactics
- The main focus of the government so far is on building and maintaining efficient cyber defence and counter-espionage measures

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**The awakened.** These countries have significantly updated their policies and concerns following Russian aggression in Ukraine.<sup>413</sup>

Following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Sweden condemned Russia's violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and began rethinking its own defence policy, examining the country's strategic vulnerability after a series of Russian military probes entered Swedish waters and airspace. Sweden's interest in Russia is primarily concerned with human rights, the economy, and energy, though the latter plays a far less significant role since Sweden's energy imports are very diverse.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

The Prime Minister's office publishes the annual national security strategy, with the latest one emphasising the necessity of identifying and neutralising propaganda campaigns.<sup>414</sup> Prime Minister Stefan Löfven warned that Russia may try to undermine the upcoming Swedish elections, citing the role that Russian hackers had in the US presidential elections.<sup>415</sup> Löfven reiterated this point in a speech at the annual *Folk och Försvar* conference in 2018 by warning those considering interfering in the September 2018 elections to 'Stay away'.<sup>416</sup>

### Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) is the national civil defence agency under the Ministry of Defence.<sup>417</sup> Amongst its primary civil defence measures, MSB has a subdivision called the National

<sup>413</sup> Janda, J. et al (2017). "How Do European Democracies React to Russian Aggression?". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. <http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>414</sup> National Security Strategy (2017). *State Council of Preparation, Sweden*. <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>

<sup>415</sup> "Swedish PM 'Can't Rule Out' Russian Interference in Swedish Elections". *TheLocal.se*. 9 January 2017. <https://www.thelocal.se/20170109/sweden-pm-cant-rule-out-russian-interference-in-swedish-elections>

<sup>416</sup> Regeringskansliet (2018) 'Sveriges Säkerhet I en ny värld' The Swedish government <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2018/01/sveriges-sakerhet-i-en-ny-varld/>

<sup>417</sup> See <https://www.msb.se/en/About-MSB/>

Board of Psychological Defence (SPF), tasked with educating the public about being more critical towards news, among other things.<sup>418</sup> In the build up to the 2018 election, MSB is, for the first time, educating election officials to be prepared for election meddling or influence operations targeting the election.<sup>419</sup>

The Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven also announced the creation of a new government agency tasked with creating a 'psychological defence'. This agency will identify and counter influence operations, ensure a robust societal defence against psychological operations, as well as offer a source of factual information in a potential crisis situation.<sup>420</sup>

The Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) is a government research institute tasked with analysing and researching issues of relevance to national defence. It highlighted the threat emanating from Russia's militarisation.<sup>421</sup> Amongst the publications of the institute, there is one about developing a system to analyse and counter disinformation on Twitter.<sup>422</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The Swedish Security Service (Säpo) has warned about Russian spy activity targeting key Swedish infrastructure objects, which raised suspicion that Russian spies may have been behind a 2016 sabotage of telecommunications masts used by Swedish intelligence.<sup>423</sup>

Säpo identified Russian intelligence and espionage activities as posing the largest intelligence threat to Sweden, and Russian activity has been increasing over the last couple of years.<sup>424</sup> Säpo is also actively working to counter influence operations targeting the Swedish elections through various means,<sup>425</sup> including educating political parties on ensuring their cybersecurity.<sup>426</sup>

The head of the Military Intelligence and Security Service (Must). Mj. Gen. Gunnar Karlson has stated that there was a clear intent to undermine Swedish democracy in cyberattacks that allegedly came from Russia and that included elements aimed at spreading disinformation in Sweden.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> See <https://www.msb.se/sv/Insats--beredskap/Psykologiskt-forsvar/>

<sup>419</sup> "MSB ska skydda valet" SVT.se <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/msb-ska-skydda-valet>

<sup>420</sup> Regeringskansliet (2018) 'Sveriges Säkerhet I en ny värld' The Swedish government <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2018/01/sveriges-sakerhet-i-en-ny-varld/>; "Sweden to create new authority tasked with countering disinformation" *TheLocal.se*, <https://www.thelocal.se/20180115/sweden-to-create-new-authority-tasked-with-countering-disinformation>

<sup>421</sup> Russian Military Capability Is Strengthened and Increasing". *FOI – Swedish Defence Research Agency*. 12 August 2016. <https://www.foi.se/en/pressroom/news/news-archive/2016-12-08-russian-military-capability-is-strengthened-and-increasing.html>

<sup>422</sup> Franke, U. & Rosell, M. (2014). "Prospects for Detecting Deception on Twitter". *FOI – Swedish Defence Research Agency*. <https://www.foi.se/download/18.3bca00611589ae798781f6/1480076524013/FOI-S--4908--SE.pdf>

<sup>423</sup> "Russia Under Suspicion After Sabotage of Swedish Telecom Mast". *The Guardian*. 18 May 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/18/russia-under-suspicion-after-sabotage-of-swedish-telecom-mast>

<sup>424</sup> "Säkerhetsskyddet i fokus" Säkerhetspolisen <http://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/ovrigt/pressrum/aktuellt/aktuellt/2018-02-22-sakerhetsskyddet-i-fokus.html>

<sup>425</sup> "Brett arbete för att skydda valet" Säkerhetspolisen <http://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/ovrigt/pressrum/aktuellt/aktuellt/2018-02-22-brett-arbete-for-att-skydda-valet.html>

<sup>426</sup> "Säpo IT-Utbildar partier – för att undvika hackerattacker" SVT.se, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/utrikes/sapo-it-utbildar-partier-for-att-undvika-hackerattacker>

<sup>427</sup> "Russia Biggest Source of Cyberattacks on Sweden: Intelligence Head". *TheLocal.se*. 12 December 2016. <https://www.thelocal.se/20161212/russia-biggest-source-of-cyberattacks-on-sweden-intelligence-head>

## Activities of the non-governmental sector

The Swedish Defence University focuses on military and war studies, including the concepts of 'hybrid warfare'. In 2014, it held a symposium on Russia's 'hybrid war' in Ukraine.<sup>428</sup> Among courses the university provides is Military Science (Krigsvetenskap), which focuses on the concept of 'hybrid warfare' (as of January 2017).<sup>429</sup>

The Utrikespolitiska institutet (UI), or the Swedish Institute for International Affairs, is a publicly-funded institute engaged in analysing and researching topics relevant to Swedish foreign policy. Its recent events include a 'Gymnasium day' lecture on disinformation (in Swedish).<sup>430</sup> Other important resources are its UI Brief publications on recent important events and trends in the EU and other areas. One of the first UI Briefs looked into international supporters of Putin's regime and the reasons why some actors in the West become Putin's advocates.<sup>431</sup> The institute has been involved in highlighting Russian disinformation against Sweden, identifying 26 fake news pieces emerging on suspicious websites, among which was a fake email that claimed to show talks between the Kingdom's defence minister and BAE Systems Bofors.<sup>432</sup>

Among the UI's prominent researchers are Martin Kragh, one of the authors of a study on Russian attempts to influence Sweden via fake news,<sup>433</sup> and Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, who publishes papers on EU-Russia relations, including a paper outlining a potential scenario of a full-scale Russian assault on Sweden.<sup>434</sup>

The Internet Foundation in Sweden (IIS) has published a guide on how to be more critical about online news.<sup>435</sup>

Stockholm Free World Forum is a think tank that publishes on issues relating to Baltic Sea security, threats to liberal democracy and global business. They have also organised conferences and events on Russian influence operations, information war and election meddling.<sup>436</sup>

In early 2018 it was announced that four leading Swedish news organisations would cooperate in creating a fact-checking initiative to dispel fake news leading up to the September election,<sup>437</sup> and recently the initiative faktiskt.se was launched.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> See <http://www.fhs.se/sv/medarbetarwebben/nyheter/allmanna/2014/symposium-moscows-hybrid-war-in-ukraine/>

<sup>429</sup> See <http://www.fhs.se/sv/utbildning/uppdraagsutbildningar/militara-uppdraagsutbildningar/krigsvetenskap-hogre-operativ-chefskurs/>

<sup>430</sup> 314 See <https://www.ui.se/evenemang/tidigare/2017/februari/gymnasiedag-desinformation-och-digitala-spar/>

<sup>431</sup> Simons, G. (2014). "Putin's International Supporters". *Swedish Institute of International Affairs*, UI Brief No. 3.

<https://www.ui.se/globalassets/butiken/ui-brief/2014/putins-international-supporters.pdf>

<sup>432</sup> Henley, J. (2017). "Russia Waging Information War Against Sweden, Study Finds". *The Guardian*. 11 January 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/11/russia-waging-information-war-in-sweden-study-finds>

<sup>433</sup> "New Study: Russian Spread of Fake News in Sweden Is Increasing". *Dagens Nyheter*. 7 January 2017.

<http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/ny-studie-rysk-spridning-av-falska-nyheter-i-sverige-okar/>

<sup>434</sup> Felzmann-Schmidt, A. (2016). "Sweden Under Attack! Lessons from Past Incidents for Coping with a Comprehensive Synchronized Attack on Critical Energy and Information Infrastructure". *NATO Science for Peace and Security Series*, Vol. 46.

<http://ebooks.iospress.nl/volumearticle/45361> ; see <https://www.ui.se/om-ui/personal/anke-schmidt-felzmann/>

<sup>435</sup> "Source Criticism on the Internet". *Internet Foundation in Sweden*. <https://www.iis.se/lar-dig-mer/guider/kallkritik-pa-internet/>
















<sup>436</sup> <https://frivarld.se/conferences/information-warfare-weaponization-democracy/>; <https://frivarld.se/video/>

<sup>437</sup> "Medier startar samarbete mot falska nyheter" SVT.se <https://www.svt.se/kultur/medier/svenska-nyhetsmedier-startar-samarbete-for-fakta-granskning-under-valet>

<sup>438</sup> <https://www.faktiskt.se/om-oss/>



## XXVIII. The United Kingdom

Political acknowledgment					
Government activities					
Intelligence services approach					

- **British civil society appears resilient enough to withstand the threats, even though the Brexit referendum has shown that the influence of Eurosceptics and even pro-Russian sentiments in some English tabloids remains strong.**
- **The UK government appears to be more concerned with diplomatic and international aspects of Russian influence.**

### Relations with the Russian Federation

**Principled defender.** Held concerned views of Russian foreign policy and now is at the forefront of the European response to its aggression.<sup>439</sup>

The UK was quick to condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine, as well as in Syria, and its firm stance remains unchanged even after the political reshuffle following the 2016 'Brexit' referendum. Russia does not play the key role in British security or international policy, but Britain is aware of threats posed by Russia in Europe and the Middle East, and it is an active member of NATO efforts to counter these threats.

### Political acknowledgement of the threat

In the UK's 2015 National Security Strategy, presented by the Prime Minister to the UK Parliament, Russia's subversive tactics involving media disinformation were highlighted, condemning such actions as going against international norms.<sup>440</sup>

The UK's EU referendum, known as Brexit, has been the target of much attention and scrutiny regarding possible Russian interference in the historic vote. The UK Electoral Commission has launched several investigations, in cooperation with Facebook and Twitter, to determine possible suspicious sources of disinformation.<sup>441</sup> The commission is also examining the funding and spending practices of the Vote Leave campaign.<sup>442</sup>

Prior to the June 2017 General Election, British politicians expressed concerns that fake news may be used to undermine the public's vote, with Conservative MP Damian Collins highlighting the issue of fake

<sup>439</sup> "How do European democracies react to Russian aggression". *European Values*. 22 April 2017. Available at:

<http://www.europeanvalues.net/russia/>

<sup>440</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/478933/52309\\_Cm\\_9161\\_NSS\\_SD\\_Review\\_web\\_only.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf)

<sup>441</sup> "U.K. Probes Russian Social Media Influence in Brexit Vote" <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-02/u-k-probes-russian-social-media-influence-in-brexit-vote>

<sup>442</sup> "Brexit: Electoral Commission reopens probe into Vote Leave" <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-42055523>



news being far more read and shared on Facebook than factual news and urging the social media website to put more effort in combatting disinformation.<sup>443</sup>

Foreign Minister Boris Johnson warned that Russia has capacity to undermine political status quo in the country through hacking<sup>444</sup>, also stating that Russia's actions in meddling in other countries' internal affairs are unacceptable.<sup>445</sup>

### Government activities against Russian influence & disinformation

The United Kingdom has a set of strategic communication projects focused on Central Eastern Europe and Ukraine. Among them is the so-called "fake news" unit, a national security communications unit established this year. The unit is meant to act as a deterrent against harmful disinformation campaigns in the country.<sup>446</sup> The government also approved increased spending on cyber-defence with the budget for 2016 – 2010 rising to 1.9 billion pounds.<sup>447</sup> The UK has its seconded-national expert in the EEAS East STRATCOM team in Brussels. It is one of the sponsoring nations of the NATO STRATCOM COE in Riga and also participates in the Finnish COE.

In February 2017, the UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson announced the creation of the Empowerment Fund which allocated 700 million pounds from the foreign aid budget to aid countries that are victims of Russian information aggression, including Ukraine and the Baltic states.<sup>448</sup> The fund itself was rejected after a capability review, but its goals were recognized as a top priority and incorporated into the operational framework of two other government funds, the Prosperity Fund (PF) and the Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund (CSSF). A new Joint Funds Unit was launched in April 2018.<sup>449</sup>

In November 2017, the Electoral Commission in the UK opened two probes to investigate Russia's influence in the Brexit referendum campaign and May 2017 general elections. The probes looked for "any receipt of impermissible donations by registered campaigners or political parties campaigning at the EU referendum, either from the UK or overseas."<sup>450</sup> Initial efforts to trace Russian influence via Facebook proved fruitless, but the investigation process is ongoing in 2018 and continuously seeks cooperation from social media entities, among others.<sup>451</sup>

Meanwhile, the Electoral Commission has been sued by the Good Law Project, a pro-bono group of British lawyers, for failing to fulfil its duties as a watchdog after the EU referendum.<sup>452</sup> The suit will

<sup>443</sup> <https://www.engadget.com/2017/04/26/uk-mp-facebook-fake-news-general-election/>

<sup>444</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/mar/12/british-democracy-at-risk-from-russian-hackers-says-gchq>

<sup>445</sup> <http://www.politico.eu/article/boris-johnson-russia-up-to-all-sorts-of-no-good/>

<sup>446</sup> "Britain to set up unit to tackle 'fake news': May's spokesman" <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-politics-fakenews/britain-to-set-up-unit-to-tackle-fake-news-mays-spokesman-idUSKBN1FC2AL>

<sup>447</sup> [http://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-cyber-idUSKBN12W39K?il=0&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=kremlin\\_watch\\_monitor&utm\\_term=2017-05-10](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-cyber-idUSKBN12W39K?il=0&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=kremlin_watch_monitor&utm_term=2017-05-10)

<sup>448</sup> "Boris Johnson to set up £700m 'empowerment fund' for British allies facing 'Russian aggression'"

<http://www.itv.com/news/2017-02-13/boris-johnson-to-set-up-700-million-empowerment-fund-for-british-allies-facing-russian-aggression/>

<sup>449</sup> "The Publication of the Cross-Government Funds Review" <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-03-28/HCWS600/>

<sup>450</sup> "U.K. Probes Russian Social Media Influence in Brexit Vote" <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-02/u-k-probes-russian-social-media-influence-in-brexit-vote>

<sup>451</sup> "Facebook is launching another probe to see if Russia pushed Brexit propaganda"

<https://www.theverge.com/2018/1/17/16901412/facebook-uk-parliament-new-investigation-brexit-russia>

<sup>452</sup> "Election expenses under scrutiny" [https://www.newLawjournal.co.uk/content/election-expenses-under-scrutiny](https://www.newlawjournal.co.uk/content/election-expenses-under-scrutiny)

examine the Vote Leave campaign's spending and whether it committed crimes relating to campaign funding during the EU referendum that should have been discovered by the Electoral Commission.<sup>453</sup>

In March of 2018, former Russian double-agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter were poisoned after being exposed to a highly toxic nerve agent in the city of Salisbury. The British government traced the agent's origins to Russia and took immediate punitive action by expelling 23 diplomats from their embassy in London, many of whom were active intelligence officers. The British government also called on its allies to do the same, which resulted in the most significant and coordinated expulsion of Russian intelligence officers since the Cold War.<sup>454</sup>

### **The approach of intelligence agencies to Russian interference**

The Current PM May voiced concern over fake news, calling for newspapers' responsibility in delivering factual news and combatting disinformation.<sup>455</sup> The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is a government body tasked with combatting cyber-threats. In one of its reports, NCSC highlighted, citing the United States' FBI, how some of the hackers behind the Yahoo email hack were members of Russia's FSB.<sup>456</sup> Apprehension of the said hackers was done with the participation of Mi5 (the UK's national counter-intelligence agency) agents.<sup>457</sup> NCSC also warned British political parties of potential hacking by Russia.<sup>458</sup>

Mi5 chief Andrew Parker warned that Russia's threat to the UK is growing, and stated that Russia's spy activity in the UK is extensive, as is its subversion campaign in Europe in general.<sup>459</sup> Mi6 (Secret Intelligence Service, the national foreign intelligence agency) chief Alex Younger highlighted the issue of subversion and disinformation campaign waged by Russia.<sup>460</sup> It were the British intelligence services that alerted the US over the Democratic National Committee hacks and Trump-Russia connection in 2015.<sup>461</sup>

While there has not been any public release from intelligence services, Members of Parliament have called upon British intelligence to research further into Russia's role in Brexit. Both Labour and Conservative MPs have called for the Parliamentary group to investigate Russia.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> "Electoral Commission Sued in High Court over EU Referendum" <https://waitingfortax.com/2017/10/30/electoral-commission-sued-in-high-court-over-eu-referendum/>

<sup>454</sup> „Western allies expel scores of Russian diplomats over Skripal attack“, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/26/four-eu-states-set-to-expel-russian-diplomats-over-skripal-attack>

<sup>455</sup> <http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/15269098>. We need to be wary of fake news warns Prime Minister/; <http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/politics/theresa-may-gets-behind-news-backed-campaign-to-fight-fake-news-1-7947531>

<sup>456</sup> <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/report/weekly-threat-report-24th-march-2017>

<sup>457</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4319252/Mi5-helped-catch-two-Russian-spies-Yahoo-email-hack.html>

<sup>458</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-cybercrime-idUSKBN16J0OE>

<sup>459</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/31/andrew-parker-increasingly-aggressive-russia-a-growing-threat-to-uk-says-mi5-head>

<sup>460</sup> [https://www.buzzfeed.com/jimwaterson/mi6-chief-says-fake-news-and-online-propaganda-is-a-threat-t?utm\\_term=.cdP2xrJnK#.tcOGAgOoB](https://www.buzzfeed.com/jimwaterson/mi6-chief-says-fake-news-and-online-propaganda-is-a-threat-t?utm_term=.cdP2xrJnK#.tcOGAgOoB)

<sup>461</sup> <http://www.france24.com/en/20170108-british-intelligence-among-first-sound-alarm-russia-usa-election-hacks-DNC>;

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/apr/13/british-spies-first-to-spot-trump-team-links-russia>

<sup>462</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/15/intelligence-watchdog-urged-to-look-at-russian-influence-on-brexit-vote>

## Activities of the non-governmental sector

The British non-governmental sector is quite robust regarding Russian disinformation.

The European Council on Foreign Relations maintains offices across Europe, including one in London. The ECFR has published both research articles and opinion pieces warning that current European actions against Russian disinformation are not enough.

The Henry Jackson Society is a London-based think tank that focuses on analyzing issues surrounding foreign policy in the Western world.<sup>463</sup> In one of its early 2016 articles, Russia's role in spreading disinformation via Facebook was highlighted, as the social media and disinformation spread there were often overlooked by traditional media in the past.<sup>464</sup>

The Institute for Statecraft launched its Integrity Initiative to combat disinformation that may undermine democracy in the West, particularly through the use and spread of fake materials via social media.<sup>465</sup>

Facebook has warned that the June 2017 British General Election may become a subject of attack by fake news and other disinformation online, which urged Facebook staff to develop new ways in identifying and suspending suspicious accounts that may spread disinformation.<sup>466</sup>

The Daily Telegraph published a fact check paper on the arguments that resulted in the Brexit vote in the 2016 referendum, showing that the primary arguments that may have cost Britain its future in the EU were based overwhelmingly on false premises.<sup>467</sup> The London Economic (TLE) website has shown how Britain First and similar Facebook groups may have deliberately spread Russian-made propaganda via social media.<sup>468</sup> Carole Cadwalladr has published an investigation of Cambridge Analytica, a company characterized as “a psychological warfare firm” by its former employee, and its role in the Brexit referendum, as well as its alleged ties with Russia.<sup>469</sup>

UK-based analyst Ben Nimmo has published several works outlining Russian subversion techniques used against Europe, and ways to counter them.<sup>470</sup> He also wrote on Russian disinformation surrounding the MH17 investigation<sup>471</sup> and its meddling with the US elections.<sup>472</sup>

LSE has published a report raising alarm over weak British electoral laws, which can allow foreign meddling to undermine British democracy by allowing an in-flow of funds from unknown or suspicious sources to fund political campaigns.<sup>473</sup> Peter Pomerantsev, who is a visiting fellow at the LSE Institute

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<sup>463</sup> <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/about-the-society/statement-of-principles/>

<sup>464</sup> <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/2016/01/05/what-is-the-russian-for-facebook/>

<sup>465</sup> <http://www.integrityinitiative.net/about>

<sup>466</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-election-facebook-idUSKBN1840U9>

<sup>467</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/eu-referendum-claims-won-brexit-fact-checked/>

<sup>468</sup> <http://www.thelondoneconomic.com/news/brexit-voters-brainwashed-russia/15/03/>

<sup>469</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexit-robbery-hijacked-democracy>

<sup>470</sup> <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/anatomy-info-war-how-russias-propaganda-machine-works-and-how-counter-it>

<sup>471</sup> <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/vilify-and-amplify-how-the-kremlin-s-disinformation-machine-is-attacking-the-mh17-probe>

<sup>472</sup> <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/ben-nimmo-russia-trying-rig-us-election.html>;

<https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/ben-nimmo-russian-propaganda-isnt-pro-donald-trump-its-anti-us-establishment-421429.html>;

<sup>473</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/01/dark-money-threat-to-uk-elections-integrity>

of Global Affairs<sup>474</sup>, has written books and articles examining the nature of Russian disinformation campaigns.<sup>475</sup>

Researchers from the University of Edinburgh were behind the study that discovered hundreds of Twitter bots linked to the Russian Internet Research Agency attempting to influence British politics after the Brexit referendum.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> <http://www.lse.ac.uk/IGA/People/Visiting-Fellows/Peter-Pomerantsev.aspx>

<sup>475</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/dec/15/peter-pomerantsev-paperback-writer-russia-nothing-is-true-everything-is-possible>; <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-putin-revolutionizing-information-warfare/379880/>

<sup>476</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/14/how-400-russia-run-fake-accounts-posted-bogus-brexit-tweets>

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