

The Prague Manual

How to Tailor National Strategy Using Lessons Learned from Countering Kremlin's Hostile Subversive Operations in Central and Eastern Europe



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

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Executive summary

Goal of the report

- The threat of Russian hostile subversion is more and more relevant for all European countries. Some of countries are starting to realize the gravity of the threat, but other governments still doubt whether any threat exists or even contribute to its spread. It is necessary for European liberal democracies to take action and to learn from the Central and Eastern European countries, which have direct experience with facing this challenge.
- Many initiatives and activities in the Central and Eastern European region, governmental and non-governmental, have attempted to identify, analyse, expose and counter Russian subversion. Some of them have proved highly efficient, and others have been inadequate or found out that their approach is not fitting for the local environment. The West has a unique opportunity to identify the lessons learned from these countries and use their best practices, as well as avoid their mistakes.

Lessons learned for European governments

- One over-arching lesson is the need for very thorough preparation and planning before launching any initiative. This especially applies to any governmental activities, which can intensively interfere with the cultural habits of a country, along with its political and media culture. Any new public institutions or legislative measures should be proportionate, designed to fill in gaps in the domestic system after a thorough threat and policy assessment. Quick and easy solutions in any area can cause a political backlash and end up being counter-productive, mostly because the topic of hostile subversive operations is very sensitive.
- When it comes to the strategic communication activities of the government, it proves more efficient to establish permanent bodies with clearly stated competences and goals. Ad hoc activities responding to single issues tend to be badly coordinated, chaotic and often add to the uncertainty of the situation. Stable strategic communication units with experience can do long-term, systematic activities like training of public officials, monitoring or communicating state policies, while also responding more quickly and readily to crisis.
- No matter what solution the government decides to implement, most steps should be widely consulted with local civil society. Involvement of non-governmental organizations, experts in the community, and the private sector in the preparation of counter-measures can help avoid some of the most obvious mistakes and make the initiative more acceptable to the public. Generally, cultivating long-term relationships with NGOs working on countering Russian subversion in any way can be very advantageous for both sides. Governmental support to civil society might enable more projects to be launched. This gives NGOs more expertise and specialty in the areas the government needs. As a result, these organizations can help the government in times of crisis with their knowledge and skills (for example in the area of cyber-security) or communicate with the public in more detail about issues which the government cannot and should not address itself.
- In an ideal case, all the included actors – government officials, political parties, NGOs, journalists, and academia – should be able to occasionally meet, network and coordinate their activities. Discord, the lack of support to each other and doubling the work is a common trait of the efforts

in many countries, but that can be very easily avoided. The cooperation can be highly informal and does not have to go much further than exchange of information in the beginning, but it can go a long way for the participants.

Lessons learned for the non-governmental sector

- All the countries under review still have significant gaps in research. In some of them, there have been attempts to map the pro-Kremlin actors in the country, which is highly needed in every region. Showing and analysing different actors willingly or unknowingly helping the Kremlin to reach its goals and examining the links between them in a comprehensive way is important for being able to expose the scope of the threat. The goal is for the interested community to understand the problem and to be able to show it in a coherent way to the public and policy-makers.
- Secondly, there is no systematic and regular polling aimed at the level of public susceptibility to the messages of disinformation campaigns and the disinformation outlets. There have been individual attempts to get more data in that area, but none of them have been repeated with the same set of questions. This is one of the most troubling issues when it comes to showing clear evidence of the impact of disinformation campaigns. The same applies to Russian minority groups, which have not been the subject of almost any sociological research concerning their media consumption and political behaviour. Such data, if it existed, could significantly contribute to designing and implementing more efficient strategies to counter the narratives of disinformation websites, providing quality media content to the minorities and eventually increase the public's trust in mainstream media and democratic institutions.
- Finally, the results of any research, fact-checking activity or any other data and skills gained by civil society should be used for further expansion of public awareness and teaching. Fact-checking can never reach enough of an audience, but it can expand its outreach by being presented on TV, during public events or in any other interactive way. Research conclusions should be used for follow-up work, for example for comparative analysis with other countries. Fact-checkers should try their best to teach representatives of civil society, the wider public or even journalists how to fact-check by themselves.

How to understand the report

- It is important to realize that none of the categories of initiatives are sufficient solutions by themselves. Some of the non-governmental initiatives, like fact-checking and research, are a necessary start for good understanding and exposure to the problem. Further cooperation between civil society, the government and the following outputs of the government initiatives are crucial for dealing with the threat effectively. Spreading media literacy and civic education is necessary for long-term resilience building and prevention. None of these steps should be skipped, they all complete each other and together represent a years-long effort to prepare and implement a comprehensive strategy to eliminate the Kremlin subversion from the country.

Introduction

The Prague Manual is a comprehensive report attempting to explain how the European liberal democratic countries should respond to the Kremlin's ongoing subversive operations. More than four years after the annexation of Crimea, following several investigations conducted to understand the scope of the Kremlin's influence in Western countries and after a number of attempts to meddle in national elections, the European debate should finally move from questioning whether a threat exists to taking steps to effectively counter it. There have been numerous efforts to step up governmental and non-governmental activities focused on building resilience, analysing or countering the Kremlin's disinformation campaigns and influence operations, with each of them differing in impact and number of successes. This report is trying to use the existing experiences to provide a list of specific steps which should be taken in different political environments to be as efficient as possible.

In the first part of the report, you can find a brief overview of the Kremlin's tools of subversion, as we see them being used beyond Central and Eastern Europe. Different methods have different meanings and impacts in various countries, but they are commonly used in tandem with each other and the best possible strategy should tackle at least the ones which pose the biggest threat to internal security. That is why it is necessary to understand the *modus operandi* of the Kremlin's subversion as well as to systematically measure the impact of it.

The second chapter of the Prague Manual has been prepared in cooperation with partner organizations from Central and Eastern Europe. It has been based on policy assessment of different governmental and non-governmental activities and initiatives in this region, which has the most direct experience with Russian subversion. After analysing the successes, challenges, and also the mistakes made by these initiatives, the authors of this report identified the most important lessons learned from them. This chapter is especially important in terms of technical details and differences which need to be taken into consideration in different environments.

The third and final part of the report provides a list of main goals, priorities and actions for governments, civil society organizations, intelligence services and donors, who wish to do their best to counter the Kremlin's hostile subversion in their countries. These steps differ for various groups of countries distinguished by the level of political acknowledgment of the threat of the Kremlin's subversion operations, the scope of governmental activities to counter them which are already underway, and the activities of intelligence services which are publicly known.

The authors of the Prague Manual sincerely hope that this step-by-step guide will make work easier for policy-makers in Western liberal democratic countries, suggesting specific activities to fulfil clearly defined goals. They do not wish to make unthoughtful generalizations but attempt to adjust the most necessary priorities for countries with different levels of existing and relevant strategic response. The ambition of the authors is to make the political debate about countering the threat of the Kremlin's hostile subversion more practical, moving from discussing the existence of the threat to implementing relevant counter-measures and slowly ousting the Kremlin's hostile influence from Europe.

Veronika Víchová and Jakub Janda

Part 1: The threat of Russian subversion

For years now, The Russian Federation has been conducting hostile subversive operations against Western liberal democracies. No mistake should be made, it is not only Eastern and Central Europe that are the targets of these efforts. However, this region has the most direct experience with them, together with the Baltic countries. In the rest of the study, the toolkit of these hostile activities is going to be addressed as “the Kremlin’s hostile subversion”. The Kremlin uses these vehicles as part of its hybrid warfare, to achieve its strategic objective to disrupt the internal cohesion of NATO and the EU and break their willingness to react to the aggressive policies of the Russian Federation. Based on empirical experience and previous research, we divided the tools of the Kremlin’s hostile subversion into the following groups:

Intelligence and influence operations

Intelligence and espionage tools used on the territory of foreign countries are not a new phenomenon, it was especially common during the Cold War. It would be a misconception, however, to believe that they are not being used today. In fact, they are used perhaps to the same and in some cases an even bigger extent. In Central Eastern Europe, the spy networks are still alive and they are actively being used by specific agencies (i.e. FSB, SVR, GRU) and other entities acting in the Kremlin’s interest. The Russian Federation uses espionage to gather information about the weaknesses of the target state and its political leaders and use them to influence key state figures in their decision-making. In many countries, Russian agents are being covered by local Russian embassies, often in unprecedented numbers. Due to their quantity, it is often difficult for national counter-intelligence to monitor them and their activities. One of the solutions to this problem is to decrease the number of Russian intelligence officers at the embassies, however most of the European countries avoid more extensive action in that area out of fear of reciprocity from Moscow.

Disinformation efforts

The Kremlin spreads disinformation and manipulation abroad through their own official channels, i.e. RT² or Sputnik, which are operational in several Central and Eastern European languages. In some countries, like Armenia, there are regions where no alternative to Russian TV channels exists. But there are also other entities and individuals, who are participating in disinformation operations because of their own motivations – financial or ideological. Some websites and quasi-media outlets even use the spread of disinformation as a successful business model. The narratives of these disinformation outlets are correspondent to the goals of the Russian Federation in Europe – they aim at sowing distrust into democratic institutions and mainstream media and disruption of international organizations and alliances. They are however not the same in every country, the communication strategies are usually being tailored specifically for the domestic audience. It is obvious that the disinformation has a significant impact, as was shown by the results of the survey conducted by the European Values Think-Tank and

² Read more information about RT’s editorial policies here: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/rt-a-low-grade-platform-for-useful-idiot>

the STEM agency in 2016.³ In several countries, disinformation messages are further amplified on social networks, not only by real-life users, but also by automated bots and trolls.

Relevant political allies

The Kremlin likes to cultivate relationships with political actors in high-level positions. These key figures can be supported financially, ideologically or in the media, in exchange for future decision-making which is favourable to Kremlin's goals. One of the examples of such practice in Central and Eastern Europe is the case of the Czech president Miloš Zeman, who is surrounded by advisors with close connections to not only Russia, but also China. He also supports the Kremlin's aggressive foreign policies in the long-term and lobbies for its interests during important events. Another example would be the Moldovan president Igor Dodon, who won the latest elections with the support of disinformation spread by pro-Kremlin media outlets about other candidates. The most common candidates for Kremlin support are politicians who share a negative view of international organizations like the EU or NATO, are inclined to authoritarianism or simply seek help, financial or media, for their own personal benefit. The cultivation of such crucial figures in European political systems not only leads to advocacy of the Kremlin's interests on the international level, but it also serves as legitimization of Russia's corrupt and aggressive regime in Europe and for the audience inside Russia.

NGO allies and GONGOs

The interests of the Russian Federation are often being promoted by allegedly non-governmental organizations or GONGOs (government-organized non-governmental organizations). These subjects play the role of influential entities, which use legitimate means of democratic discussion to legitimize the Russian regime and policies abroad. In the European context, we know of organizations like the Dialogue of Civilizations, a think-tank in Berlin led by Vladimir Yakunin, a close associate of Russian president Vladimir Putin. This organization is used to cultivate former politicians and influential figures, including the former Czech President Václav Klaus or former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. There is also a group of compatriot organizations, i.e. the Russkiy Mir Foundation, which are reaching out to Russian minorities in European countries. The activities of these NGOs are complemented by the structures of the Orthodox Church, which is canonically subordinated to the Russian Patriarchy. During the Moldovan general elections, it strongly supported pro-Kremlin parties and candidates.

Support of European radical and extremist groups

Especially, but not exclusively, in European countries where the Kremlin did not manage to ensure a friendly mainstream politician in a high-level position, the plan B tends to be support for radical and extremist forces by various means. Their political leaning to the left or to the right is irrelevant, but the anti-systemic factor is crucial. Through these groups and movements, the Kremlin ignites attacks on democratic institutions.

The support can be ideological, but it can also manifest itself through material means. Representatives of these extremist groups are often invited to the Russian Federation or to the occupied territories in

³ <http://www.europeanvalues.net/vyzkum/disinformation-operations-in-the-czech-republic/>

Ukraine. The Kremlin can also help them by giving them more media attention. In many countries, extremist groups and disinformation websites live in a mutually beneficial symbiosis. The legitimization then goes both ways, the radicals are justifying the activities of the Kremlin and for that they are treated as solid and highly supported politicians.

In the worst-case scenarios, the extremists may also join anti-system and paramilitary groups, which train and equip themselves with the motivation to fight against, most commonly, the migrants. Sometimes they even travel to Ukraine to fight on the side of the Kremlin-backed separatists.

Ethnic minority in targeted state

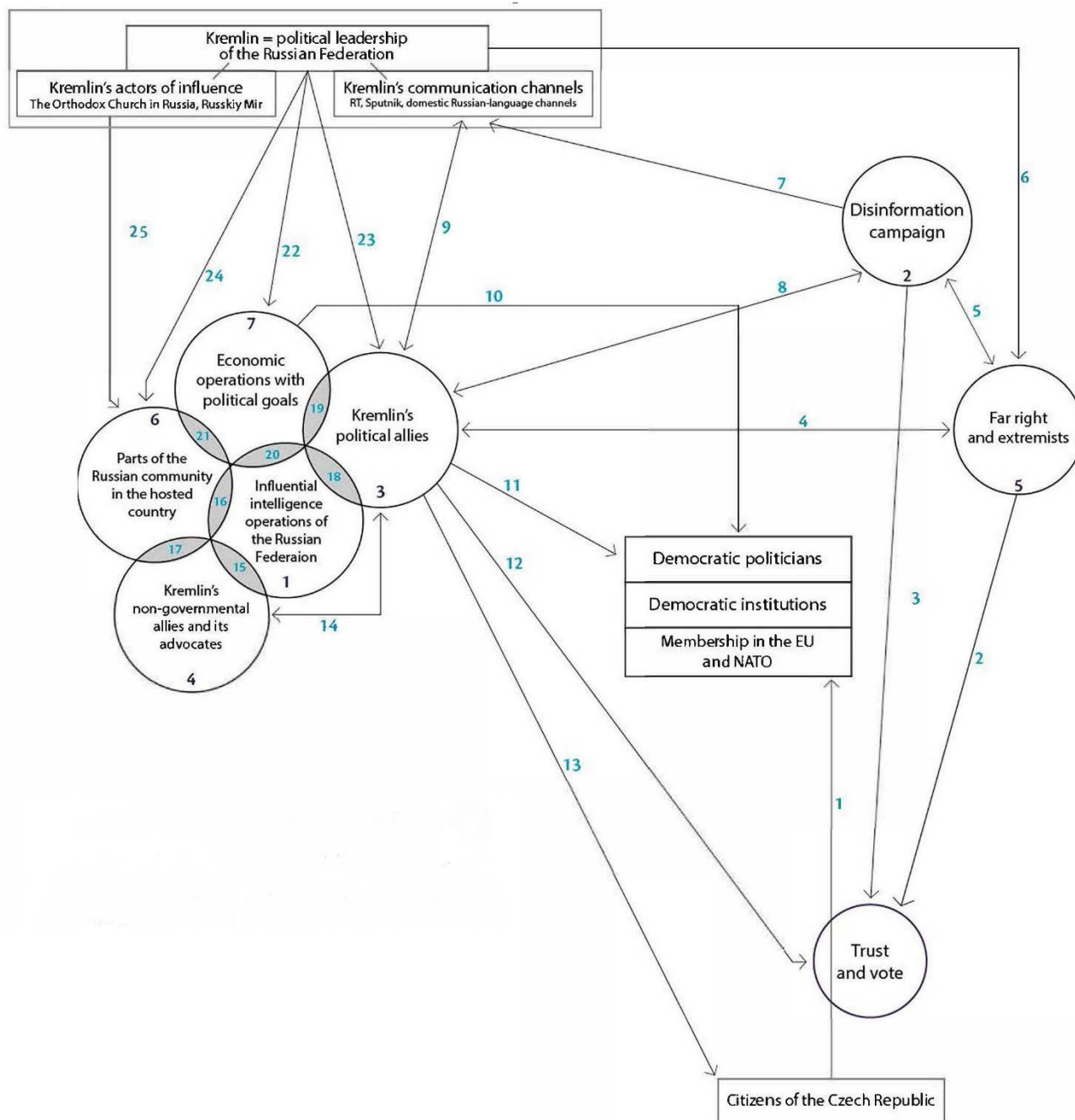
Ethnic Russians living in European states are seen by the Russian Federation as a foreland, which can be used for military and foreign policy goals. This is not to say that all the Russians living in Europe are serving Kremlin's interests, but they certainly are highly desired candidates for the Russian intelligence services for gathering sensitive information about their home countries. They can be motivated by their preserved personal connection with their state of origin, but also by possible financial benefits. Certain individuals from Russian communities can be used for media service operations or for justifying the actions of Russian foreign policy steps.

State-run economic operations

Companies close to the Kremlin use business means for political influence in the targeted European states. Their activities are most visible in the energy sector. Strategic energy deals between European countries and firms connected to the Kremlin can serve as a first step to elite capture. They help the Kremlin to impose its political and geopolitical interests. They increase the dependence of the state on friendly relations with the Kremlin, and the deals can potentially represent a tool for blackmailing political leadership. In Armenia, Russia gained control over the power plants and the national gas distribution network as a result of controversial assets-for-debt agreements with the Armenian government in 2003-2006.⁴ In Hungary, Russian energy company Rosatom is building two new units to the nuclear plant Paks (Paks II).

⁴ Official website of International Energy Corporation: <http://www.mek.am/en/index.html>, accessed on July 30, 2017

The relationship between individual actors in the scheme of influence of the Russian Federation in Central and Eastern Europe



1. Democracy is built on the trust of citizens in the democratic regime and their willingness to vote for (various) democratic politicians
2. Extremists challenge the democratic state and its foreign policy. They attempt to create the impression that the political and media establishment acts against the citizens. They share this interest with the Kremlin, which likes democratic politicians to be depicted in this way.
3. Authors of disinformation make attempts to manipulate the trust of citizens. They attempt to create the impression that the political and media establishment acts against the citizens. This is also in the interest of the Russian Federation.
4. The far-right and extremists often support politicians which are submissive to the Kremlin. Occasionally, the support is mutual.
5. The far-right and extremists are supporting their efforts by using the disinformation projects which they see as reliable news outlets. These disinformation projects also offer them a platform on which to showcase themselves.
6. The far-right and extremists advocate for the policies of the Kremlin and they often see a role model in the Russian Federation. The Kremlin uses them to support their domestic legitimacy by inviting them as “observers” or visitors to Donbas or Crimea. It also gives the individuals the feeling of being relevant.
7. Disinformation projects often defend the actions of the Russian Federation, directly or through selective agenda. The Kremlin’s communication channels, such as RT or Sputnik, are often the source of inspiration for other disinformation projects.
8. The Kremlin’s political allies often share and spread products of disinformation projects, they legitimize them, often receiving defence of their own actions in return.
9. Moscow’s political allies share and spread the Kremlin’s communication channels. On the other hand, the Kremlin’s allies are portrayed by these communication channels as allies of Vladimir Putin, and therefore they are used for domestic legitimization of Putin’s regime.
10. The Kremlin is attempting to use economic operations for political motives to gain influence over some politicians and turn some of them into their allies.
11. The Kremlin’s political allies usually directly attack democratic politicians. The Kremlin’s interest is for its allies to gain public support and to lower support for democratic leaders who do not tend to be submissive to aggressive steps made by the Russian Federation.
12. The Kremlin’s political allies directly attack the public trust in the EU and NATO membership or any association agreements and cooperation with these institutions. This goes in parallel with the interests of the Russian Federation and serves to weaken how a given state is anchored within the Euro-Atlantic security structures, or with the local allies to cause the state to withdraw its membership.
13. In essence, the Kremlin’s political allies advocate for some key views of the Kremlin towards their citizens. These allies play a role of interpreters for what is happening in the world for their citizens, while using the narrative presented by the Russian Federation. They usually share the Russian interpretation of what is happening in Ukraine, often denying organized Russian intervention on Ukrainian territory.

14. The Kremlin's political allies often cooperate with non-governmental actors who also act in accordance with the interests of the Kremlin.
15. The degree of connections between non-governmental actors who act in the favour of the Kremlin, and the Russian intelligence and influence operations are not mapped out well enough.
16. Selected parts of the Russian community are being used by the Russian intelligence services.
17. Selected parts of the Russian community may work for non-governmental entities which act in accordance with the interests of the Kremlin.
18. The Russian intelligence services are attempting to use operations to extend influence over the political allies of the Kremlin and influence their actions. They additionally recruit new individuals for conscious and unconscious cooperation.
19. Economic operations are often used for infiltration and gaining political allies in high-levels of the government.
20. The infiltration of influence operations of Russian intelligence services and economic actions with political goals are not sufficiently mapped.
21. The degree of infiltration of economic operations with political goals in parts of the Russian community is not sufficiently mapped out.
22. Economic activities of Russian entities with political interests are being directly or indirectly conducted from the power circle of the Kremlin. As a result, corporations like Gazprom, Rosatom and Rosneft are active in Europe.
23. The Kremlin supports its allies through the media, ideology and even financial means. It offers its allies the feeling of relevance and attempts to offer them a powerful symbolic platform. The Kremlin's political allies are then used in the Russian Federation for domestic legitimization of the Kremlin.
24. The Kremlin is using the presence of Russian communities in its target states. It presents these minorities as being in "danger" in states such as Georgia, Ukraine, or the Baltic states, and uses this excuse to justify foreign policy steps or manipulates it as a propaganda tool.
25. The Kremlin is using influential subjects, such as parts of the Orthodox Church or political activities disguised as cultural activities, to influence the Russian communities in target states. The Orthodox Church is often used as the main tool for spreading the Kremlin's political agenda while hiding under cover of religion.

After a series of events, starting with the annexation of Crimea, and continuing with efforts to undermine Ukrainian government, influencing the Dutch referendum about the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine, media coverage of the shooting down of the MH17 airplane, investigation of Kremlin's meddling into the presidential elections in the United States, and the activities of pro-Kremlin bots on social media during the referendum about Brexit; there is little doubt that the Russian Federation does not limit its goals to certain regions. The goal seems to be no less than to undermine all Western democratic systems.

Why is the Kremlin using these tools to undermine Western liberal democracies?



In order to prevent that from happening, democratic governments, non-governmental organizations and journalists need to take action, having both short-term defence and long-term prevention in mind. In several countries, strategies are already being drafted and implemented, but there are still many of them which lag behind.

The Visegrad group and Eastern Partnership countries are some of the most immediately threatened due to their geographical proximity and historical affiliations with the Russian Federation. This makes them very vulnerable, but also ideal for researching lessons learned in order to reveal which initiatives launched in these countries were successful, which were not, and especially, how these efforts could be replicated and their experiences used in other European countries or the United States.

Part 2: Policy assessment of the initiatives from Central and Eastern Europe

During Fall 2017, the partner organizations, in cooperation with the European Values Think-Tank, identified and assessed 2-5 governmental or civil society initiatives countering the Kremlin's hostile influence operations in their respective countries. A policy questionnaire (see Annex 1) has been created which the partner organizations completed after conducting insider interviews with the representatives of the initiatives. After two policy discussions with partners, other external experts and an extensive comparative work, the European Values Think-tank prepared and edited the policy assessment, presenting lessons learned from the participating countries. During Spring 2018, the preliminary conclusions of the study have been presented and further discussed with experts in The Hague, Berlin and Brussels. Based on the previous research by the European Values Think-Tank and the lessons learned and identified by the partner organizations, a comprehensive guide for design and implementation of a strategy against the Kremlin's hostile influence, based on the level of existing counter-measures taken by the individual countries, has been created by the European Values Think-tank.

The goal

The goal of the policy assessment was to produce lessons learned by the Visegrad countries and Eastern Partnership countries and prepare them in a format which will be useful for other democratic governments or civil society organizations which decide to tackle the Kremlin's hostile influence. In order to stop the subversive activities of the Russian Federation, it is necessary for as many Western countries as possible to take action. Our final product will make their task easier by highlighting useful information on which methods and strategies tend to work and what mistakes to avoid.

Our approach

This paper is based on a policy assessment of 2-5 governmental or civil society initiatives launched in each of the Visegrad and Eastern Partnership participating countries. These projects or institutions were chosen according to the following criteria:

- Efficiency and outreach (Are there examples of successes of these initiatives? Is there data available about the size of the audience/readership?)

- Relevance and comprehensiveness (Is the initiative using one tool from the framework or several? Does it contribute to coordination of countering hostile influence?)
- Replicability (Would it be possible to launch a similar initiative in other countries? Would it be effective? Is it specifically designed for the domestic environment?)
- Sustainability (Does the organization exist long enough to be able to evaluate its activity and efficiency? Does it have the potential to keep operational for a longer period of time?)

Each partner organization discussed the relevance of the given initiatives with domestic experts and used their own experience with their local situation in order to identify the most relevant projects.

Each partner organization filled out a policy questionnaire (Annex 1) about the chosen initiatives in their country. The questions have been designed so that they would capture the general character of the projects, but especially so that they would help identify the specific experiences, obstacles, and successes which are most important for government officials or civil society representatives who would seek to take similar action.

The structure of the questionnaire fits different types of organizations and projects. After finishing all the questionnaires, the initiatives were divided into sections, based on their main activities, and shown as examples of the best or worst practices.

Fact-checking: Exposure of the problem, not the solution

Name	www.sut.am	ACGRC myth-busting	Myth-Detector	STOP-FALS!	Antipropaganda.sk
Country	Armenia	Armenia	Georgia	Moldova	Slovakia
Sector	Non-governmental project	Non-governmental project	Non-governmental project	Non-governmental campaign	Non-governmental
Time of launch	Summer 2016	2014 (2017)	2014	November 2015 – October 2017	July 2015
Structure	8 – 9 people	5 people		Cooperation of Association of Independent Press, Independent Journalism Center and Association of Independent TV Journalists of Moldova	5 – 10 members of the editorial board, 5 – 10 external supporters
Financing	Open Society Institute (80 %) and NED	NED, Open Society Foundation, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom in South Caucasus	Open Society Georgia Foundation, USAID, Deutsche Welle	USAID	Private resources, Embassy of the United States in Slovakia, NATO Public Diplomacy Division
Core activities	Fact-checking political speeches and promises of politicians	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fact-checking training for local NGOs, journalists and activists; 2. Mapping attitudes of society towards international organizations; 3. Monitoring of media on the “fake news” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring and debunking fake news on social media, TV programmes and other sources of information 2. Media literacy training for youth 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exposing disinformation and manipulation in Moldovan and Russian media 2. Public debates in rural regions 3. Interactive media education 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily news 2. Newsfeed update – monitoring of external sources 3. Myth-busting 4. Multimedia content 5. Promotional activities 6. Commenting for media outlets, media briefings, cooperation with other media

Name	www.sut.am	ACGRC myth-busting	Myth-Detector	STOP-FALS!	Antipropaganda.sk
Stability and sustainability	Organization exists since 2014, initiative exists for two years.	Organization has existed for more than ten years, media monitoring is a new project	Project has lasted three years and expands.	The project has ended but some of its core activities are going to be expanded in the future.	Engagement of volunteers causes the personal capacities to change from time to time.
Problem	Populism and disinformation	Disinformation and propaganda	Disinformation and propaganda	Disinformation and propaganda	Propaganda and disinformation
Mission	Development of public opinion based on objective information	Development of public opinion based on objective information	Monitoring and exposing disinformation in Georgian media	Diminishing the impact of propaganda and manipulative information; developing the capacity of the Moldovan citizens for the critical analysis of the information received	Providing systematized and user-friendly source of fact-based information in the online environment, stretching the ability of the Slovak Republic to respond to hybrid threats
Outreach	Armenian audience	Armenian audience, events in 6 major cities	Social media users, TV audience, opinion-makers, population in regions	Partnership with media institutions, strong brand,	
Size of the audience	160 000 visits by 22 000 visitors	3000 people through personal meetings, cca 100 000 readers through partner media outlets	14 000 Facebook subscribers, 20 – 30 000 post reach weekly, 150 trainings participants, 150 e-mail subscribers	General public, young people and internet users, journalists	26 000 visitors of the website in last 12 months. Most popular articles reach 17 000 visits on the website. During the same time, the Facebook page posts reached 801 100 users.
Access points	Website, YouTube, other media	Events, Facebook page, press releases, e-mails	Website, Facebook page, morning program on TV Pirelli, e-mail list	Public meetings and discussions, printed and online media outlets, video documentary films, TV and radio channels, etc.	Website, Facebook page, media outlets.

Name	www.sut.am	ACGRC myth-busting	Myth-Detector	STOP-FALS!	Antipropaganda.sk
Media appearance	Once a week in Armenian media, mostly positive	Armenian and Western media almost every day, mostly positive	Frequent appearance on TV, occasional appearance in other mainstream media outlets, mostly positive	Often appearing in mainstream media with fake news stories	Mainstream media outlets sometimes borrow their articles.
Cooperation with politicians	Not the main goal, few cases of successful cooperation	Policy-makers and opposition politicians attend events, influence preventing unfavourable legislative amendments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact with politicians with the purpose of fact-checking information; 2. Working group lobbying for inclusion of the threat into Communication strategy on EU and NATO 	Not the goal, some politicians attended public discussions.	No attempted cooperation.
Contribution to public debate		Reaching to audience in the country and without internet	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The topics are often chosen according to regional interests. 2. People can contribute to the fact-checking activities by reporting fake news 	Stimulating the decision-making process.	
New information	Publishing information about weapons sales between A. and Russia, revealing corruption				
Format suitability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Mostly yes	

Name	www.sut.am	ACGRC myth-busting	Myth-Detector	STOP-FALS!	Antipropaganda.sk
Obstacles	One case of hacking	Harassment during visit to Russia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fast evolution of propaganda techniques 2. Lack of human resources 	Lack of access to some regions governed by pro-Russian authorities.	Securing continuity of the editorial board, mostly consisting of university students.
Solutions		Contact with Western partners	Learning new skills, seeking donors	Working with NGOs and local activists in respective regions – limited success.	Regular calls for applications to the editorial board.
Lessons learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information and analysis should be presented to the public in a concise and understandable way 2. Fact-checking is not only based on open-source information, organization is sending queries to state bodies, which leads to revealing hidden information 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is necessary to work with a wider range of the population, including people in remote regions, using different access points than the internet 2. International cooperation and foreign donors can help with projects which are not supported by local policy-makers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promoting media literacy is an effective long-term strategy 2. Using local TV networks in local languages and in regions is effective, these segments of population are more vulnerable to disinformation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Direct contact with citizens from rural areas without access to information must be continued and amplified. 2. It is important to work with grown-ups, middle-aged or elderly people who are the most active during elections. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When your core team consists mostly of students, it is better to include more members than needed in order to deal with their fluctuation. It is also useful to hire graduates. 2. At least one person in the editorial board must be professional to lead the team and to advise on the content of the website. 3. Cooperation with other media outlets is useful in order to enhance outreach. Mainstream media often welcome the offer to cooperate because of the “free” content.

Fact-checking and myth-busting initiatives are the most common civil society responses in V4 and Eastern Partnership countries. It is not very surprising. Monitoring disinformation in the media, analysing their narratives and debunking them is probably the most common way to understand the problem and to expose the threat to the public. Often it can be just as useful to focus the myth-busting activities on proclamations of politicians, especially in countries where the policy-makers are denying the threat of the Kremlin's hostile influence or even defending it. In countries with significant Russian-speaking minorities, it is also effective to focus not only on disinformation in local media outlets, but also in Russian-speaking media. It especially makes sense in countries where the political acknowledgment of the threat is low. However, debunking activities are not quite that popular with the public, consumers of the news usually do not knowingly look for debunks. Which is why the impact of fact-checking cannot be over-estimated. It is also not the solution of the problem, it serves as the first step to understanding, exposing and analysing the whole problem, which is something needed before more counter-measures can be designed.

Eastern-European fact-checking initiatives are quite inventive when it comes to reaching out to different segments of society, but it certainly takes a lot of effort to gain the attention of wider audiences. Nowadays it is important to remember that not all the citizens are using social media platforms, or even the internet. Inhabitants of rural areas or remote regions might be difficult to reach out to sometimes, but they are often the most active ones during elections and have significant influence on the political arena, yet they are sometimes the most vulnerable ones towards disinformation campaigns.

Appearance in the media is important. TV is still the most common source of information for people in many European regions. Regular TV programs explaining cases of disinformation, in local languages if necessary, can significantly contribute to the public awareness. In that sense, it is also fruitful to focus on personal contacts, public discussions and workshops in more remote or rural regions. National media outlets are usually not that interested in covering daily debunking efforts. They are more likely to pay attention to bigger reports revealing or debunking some type of a more intensive campaign. That does not mean that the report has to be long, concise materials are still easier to consume, but they should be less frequent, more detailed and focusing on more comprehensive problems. Also, including the journalists themselves in the fact-checking process can extend their interest in further promoting the issue.

It is important to present the information to the public in a concise and understandable way. When it comes to younger generations, the use of interactive materials, infographics and videos is encouraged. On the other hand, when working with adults and older people, just a plain style and an explanation during a TV program can be more effective.

The outreach can be even further expanded by engagement of the wider public. In some cases, citizens are encouraged to report disinformation or request authentication of information by the fact-checking organization. Apart from getting a wider audience, this can also support the legitimacy of the organization, since it does not decide which sources might be disinformation by itself but gives the chance to the citizens to fact-check any source.

A slightly controversial factor of myth-busting and fact-checking is the "naming and shaming" technique, targeting mostly policy-makers and media houses. It is not a universal method which would work in every environment, but it can be very useful for exposing the topic, ostracizing individual politicians and uniting the mainstream against these persons. However, it is not efficient enough to decrease credibility of large

mainstream media outlets. If they are the targets of your endeavours, it seems to be more efficient to identify some specific sensitive disinformation stories they published and expose these to the public. For typical naming and shaming to bear fruit, it is also recommended to use humour as a way to get public attention and get the exposure to spread more. Further research on the trustworthiness of media is needed in order to better understand in which cases “naming and shaming” works.

Fact-checking projects do not tend to get very political in their local environments and therefore there are only very rare cases of harassment. Apart from occasional negative coverage by pro-Kremlin media or Russian trolls, they are well perceived by their respective societies as experts on the topic. The most common obstacles they face are lack of human resources or funding. Most of them are funded by foreign donors, they do not reach to public funding.

A common trait of the fact-checking projects is, however, that this is not the only one of their activities. Fact-checking itself is very important, but especially with organizations which have been dedicating their work to myth-busting for a longer period of time have enough skills and knowledge to expand their focus. A typical second activity to fact-checking is promoting media literacy. Especially because the impact of individual fact-checks is usually quite low, the best thing these organizations can do is to teach as many people as they can how to fact-check themselves. They need to transfer their skills and knowledge to broader groups of society. Especially in countries where the mainstream media are solid and the influence doesn't paralyze the media and political environment, positive actions like trainings and workshops are desirable. The approaches differ – we talk about trainings of other civil society representatives, journalists and activists, but also workshops for young people and high school students, or interactive education through internet tools.

Last but not least, it is noticeable that the fact-checking initiatives have been funded mostly by donors from the United States like NED or USAID. Local governments or donors do not financially support them which makes their work more difficult and dependent on foreign funding.

Recommendations and lessons learned:

Lesson Learned #1: Fact-checking and myth-busting is the best way to understand, expose and explain the threat to the wider public.

Lesson Learned #2: Fact-checking should not be focused only on local media outlets.

- Suggestion A: In countries where the political representation is denying or supporting the hostile influence of the Kremlin, statements and promises of the politicians should be subject to fact-checking as well. However, it is not probable that this impact would go beyond exposure of the threat to some extent.
- Suggestion B: In countries with a significant Russian-speaking minority, the Russian-language media should be subject to fact-checking as well. Since we still do not know the Russian-speaking groups' media consumption habits, it is useful to be aware of the content that is provided in their language in the country.

Lesson Learned #3: It is crucial to make the effort to reach out to different segments of society. People living in the country or people of older age are an important electorate group while being probably the most vulnerable, their influence should not be underestimated.

- Recommendation 1: In order to reach out to older generations, use TV and radio programs to spread your message, not only the internet. Present the information in a concise and understandable way.
- Recommendation 2: In order to reach out to people living in rural or remote areas, visit them and organize public events and workshops for them.
- Recommendation 3: In order to get the attention from younger generations, use interactive materials and infographics which are easily understandable and sharable on social media.
- Recommendation 4: Expand your audience by engaging the public in the process of fact-checking. For example, give them the opportunity to report new or request fact-checking of specific news.
- Recommendation 5: In order to get attention from larger, national media outlets, focus on more comprehensive reports revealing intensive disinformation campaigns, not on daily debunking of single disinformation stories.
- Recommendation 6: Engage with journalists and make them part of the fact-checking projects, then they will have more motivation to promote work which is also their own.
- Recommendation 7: In order to raise the awareness of the policy-makers, contact them directly. Send e-mails or newsletters with well summarized information, in a “disinformation of the week” style.

Lesson Learned #4: The “naming and shaming” technique is efficient for exposing the topic to the public, ostracising individual policy-makers and uniting the mainstream against such persons. However, it is not a strong enough method for discrediting large mainstream media houses. Use humour in order to make the exposure more public.

Lesson Learned #5: Collecting disinformation cases and debunking them is important, but it also provides fact-checkers with knowledge and skill to be use in further activities.

- Recommendation 1: Use the data for further research and analysis in order to understand the problem more deeply.
- Recommendation 2: Use your skill and experience in fact-checking to promote the media literacy of different groups of society, for example interested experts, activists, journalists or students.

Governmental initiatives: How European governments (did not) learn to communicate

Name	Referendum: Government communication	MH17: Government communication	Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and European Affairs	Center against terrorism and hybrid threats
Country	The Netherlands	The Netherlands	Slovakia	Czech Republic
Sector	Government	Government	Government	Government
Time of launch	November 2015 – April 2016	July 2014	June 2017	January 2017
Legal basis/status	Inter-departmental task force at the MFA	Crisis response structure and communications structure between governmental departments within the National Core Team for Crisis Communication	Executive Institution of the Slovak Government. Institutionalization of the Strategic Communication of the Government.	Group within the Department of the Ministry of Interior
Structure	3 – 8 people	Special working groups in the highest levels of government		Cca 12 people
Financing	Two billion		State budget.	Budget of the Ministry of Interior
Core activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing information to foreign actors to explain the developments during the referendum 2. Answering questions from Parliament, journalists, and government officials 3. Assisting the government officials to promote or explain their political decision to vote in favour of the agreement (unofficially) 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Countering disinformation 2. Communication with the public about foreign policy priorities 3. Domestic communication narrative 4. Media briefings for educators or policy experts 5. Communication with the media 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring of the threats connected to internal security of the state 2. Evaluation of the threat and proposal of substantive and legislative solutions 3. Training of political parties and state and ministry officers 4. Spreading of expert knowledge and information about the threat amongst the wider and expert public

Name	Referendum: Government communication	MH17: Government communication	Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and European Affairs	Center against terrorism and hybrid threats
Stability and sustainability	Ad hoc initiative		Guaranteed but limited resources	Sustainability depends on the stance of the current government
Problem	Lack of knowledge about Ukraine and the contents of the association agreement within Dutch society.	Disinformation surrounding the downing of the MH17 airplane	<p>Lack of overarching strategic communication accepted through the political spectrum.</p> <p>Lack of support to the foreign policy priorities and orientation of the Slovak Republic by the public, especially the youth.</p>	Wide area of real and potential threats, including terrorism, protection of soft targets, extremism, violations of public order, criminal activities and disinformation campaigns.
Mission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the media, to provide information and to stimulate public debate. 2. According to the official mission, to answer questions from Parliament and journalists, to communicate with outside actors, monitoring 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To keep citizens informed about developments in the investigation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assurance of public support for Slovak foreign policy priorities 2. Raising public awareness about values, historical and civilizational adherence 3. Strengthening the image of the MFA 4. Coordination and cooperation with partners and organizations 	

Name	Referendum: Government communication	MH17: Government communication	Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and European Affairs	Center against terrorism and hybrid threats
Outreach	Actions stayed below the radar. Active call for government representatives to speak in public. Diplomacy with other governments.	Dutch citizens via television channels and newspapers, or broadcasts of press conferences		Wider public and expert community
Size of the audience	Over 1000 Twitter followers. 10 000 to 25 000 unique visitors per week on the website.	Entire Dutch population	General public, especially youth. Policy-makers, expert community, journalists, researchers.	Over 6 500 Twitter followers
Access points	Twitter account, website, appearances in the media. Internal government channels.	Major news organizations, governmental communication channels	Mass media, social media, briefings.	Twitter account, personal training and workshops
Influence	Influence on the outside – international actors and policy makers.	Presumably, according to the opinions of the Dutch public, yes.		Significant influence within relevant ministries
Media appearance	First negative coverage by no-campaigners resulted in criticism of the government for interfering and later on they avoided speaking in public.	Appearance in the media coincided with new reports and developments concerning the investigation of the crash. Coverage was mostly positive in the beginning, later criticism intensified and there were speculations about a cover-up on the side of the government.	Frequent positive media coverage.	Negative media coverage during the launch caused by inaccurate ideas about the purpose of the Centre
Cooperation with politicians	Communication almost exclusively with politicians, but with questionable effectiveness.	Strong connection to government officials and politicians.	The high-ranking politicians, experts and security professionals are presenting the strategic communication agenda the initiative shaped.	CTHH offers trainings to political parties.

Name	Referendum: Government communication	MH17: Government communication	Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and European Affairs	Center against terrorism and hybrid threats
Contribution to public debate	Deliberately not.	The effort was to stay away from the public debate and not to influence public opinion. The goal was to steer the public attention towards factual investigation reports.	Yes, through media and politicians, but also projects on raising public awareness in schools.	CTHH publicly debunks disinformation dangerous to internal security.
New information				
Format suitability	It should have been a fully public, government campaign, based on knowledge of the MFA, or a completely independent structure openly providing information without choosing sides.	Yes, no viable alternative.		Yes
Obstacles	Accusations of being a propagandistic government outlet, lack of public support, unengaged way of communicating with the public, leaked documents.	Criticism for covering up government's intentions or holding back vital information.	Lack of resources	Accusations of censorship, disinformation about its activities, public attacks by the President
Solutions	None.	No change in strategy.	Linking resources and coordinating activities to better address challenges.	Explanations of its mission statements and activities in the media.

Name	Referendum: Government communication	MH17: Government communication	Ministry of the Foreign Affairs and European Affairs	Center against terrorism and hybrid threats
Lessons learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governmental communication about complex issues has to be taken seriously. Informed media strategy is key to preventing disinformation efforts from taking hold. It must be communicated clearly what the motivations are behind the campaign. 2. Once a task-force is established, it has to engage with the public in a serious way, otherwise it opens a debating space in which the key issue is barely discussed. 3. The mission of such a task-force has to be clear from the beginning, and its activities must be correspondent with it. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is important to keep the balance between providing too much information (accusations of bias) or too little (accusations of cover-up). 2. Government initiatives should avoid preliminary judgments or evaluations and stick to factual information and reports, in order to gain legitimacy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In order to gain public support for foreign policy orientation and priorities, a substantial national strategic communication narrative is needed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When a state institution like this is being launched, it needs to be well communicated to the public in order to avoid leaving space for speculation 2. Such centres need a long-term strategic communication strategy for being able to face political and media attacks by opponents 3. Training and educating state and ministry officers and politicians contributes to the overall resilience of the country, while also raising confidence in the resilience of the system by the public

Establishing a governmental initiative tasked with countering disinformation campaigns and dealing with strategic communication is a sensitive step which has to be thought through and planned out very carefully and in great detail. Attempts to launch stratcom units with different competences, structures and capabilities are visible across the all of Europe. The cases we present differ in their time frame – some of them were temporary, issue-based initiatives revolved around a political or security event, the other ones are permanent departments within governmental structures. Generally, it seems that permanent institutions are more efficient in the sense that they might be better prepared when a crisis comes, and already have the know-how on how to deal with that.

Prior to the establishment of any unit, we strongly advise spending months or even years researching the exact character of the threats and problems the new body is going to face. It is necessary to review the existing policies and measures so that the unit can fill the gaps. Efficient coordination and sufficient competences for the unit are crucial for the future tasks it will fulfil. In that area, there are several examples of badly designed units – the Ukrainian Ministry of Information, for example, has been created very quickly as a response to a crisis situation and it turned out to be weak and incapable of dealing with the problems it faces.

The most obvious problem these initiatives are facing is public opinion and acceptance. Many of them are accused of cover-ups, holding back information or even censorship. This is often caused by unclear mission statements or by activities which do not correspond with that statement. Prior to these initiatives are established, their motivations, tasks and purposes have to be clear. Later on, the initiatives should not over-step their authority or act outside their power range. The government has to decide whether it needs a unit which is going to explain and promote their views, or rather an institution which is going to collect and provide factual information about specific events. Strategic communication can be value-based, as we see in the case of Slovakian MFA, but it cannot act as a press office of political representatives, it has to admit its stances to begin with.

These units also have to actively engage with the public via media outlets and social media accounts if they want to be taken seriously. Once they are established, avoiding public debate can create a lot of space for speculation and disinformation, and might result in suspicions amongst citizens. Even criticism and false accusations should not prevent members of the initiatives from communication and patient explanation of their activities. Otherwise the whole situation might worsen. It is understandable that not all the information can always be provided, but in some cases declassification of information can prevent more disinformation and manipulation from spreading. This, however, has to be a political decision. Part of the information vacuum can also be filled by non-governmental informal networks.

Strategic communication units usually consist of experts who can transfer their knowledge and skills and thus contribute to more extensive coordination between different governmental departments and ministries. Organizing workshops, training and raising awareness amongst state officers will not only prove the need for such a unit to exist, but can also improve resilience of the government and the whole democratic system respectively against the hostile influence. Since these institutions, like the Czech CTHH, usually focus on a whole range of issues and threats, not only disinformation campaigns, it also helps the public understand that disinformation operations are part of internal security threats, and that the government is investing capacities to solve the issue.

These types of centres should not avoid working with politicians and political parties. To have allies in political parties is mutually beneficial. Such persons can profile themselves on a specific issue and they

can contribute to the agenda significantly. Meetings with politicians should not be public, however. Strategic communication units also have to be aware that despite giving talking points and training to politicians, they can easily be transformed into a political weapon through abuse of the institution.

Recommendations and lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1: Strategic communication and countering disinformation are sensitive issues. Before establishing any public body dealing with these threats, careful planning and review of current policies is necessary, even if it takes months or even years.

Lesson Learned #2: Permanent and well-prepared structures tend to work better than ad hoc initiatives with unclear responsibilities.

Lesson Learned #3: The statement of any strategic communication unit or initiative needs to be very clear and transparent.

- Recommendation 1: The mission of the initiative has to be well communicated to the public, preferably before it is launched.
- Recommendation 2: The activities have to correspond with the original mission and tasks.
- Recommendation 3: It is possible for such an initiative to be value-based, but transparency is key. Any values or stances the initiative promotes have to be explicit and known to the public.

Lesson Learned #4: Strategic communication units and initiatives cannot avoid communication. Holding back information can create a lot of space for disinformation and speculations.

Lesson Learned #5: A lack of information can be solved either by political decision to declassify some information, or non-governmental informal networks.

Lesson Learned #6: Strategic communication units should contribute to the overall resilience of the democratic system by also raising awareness, educating and training state administration officers within relevant ministries or political candidates.

Lesson Learned #7: Strategic communication units should work with politicians and political parties while implementing a common strategic communication framework. This kind of work should not be public and there have to be restrictions in order to prevent these units from becoming political weapons.

Research: In need of mapping pro-Kremlin actors and polling

Name	Russian influence on Georgian NGOs and media	Monitoring of pro-Russian paramilitary and extremist movements in Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland	Information warfare on the internet
Country	Georgia	Hungary	Poland
Sector	Non-governmental	Non-governmental	Non-governmental
Time of launch	2015	May 2016	July 2016
Legal basis/status			
Structure		Cross-border network of research institutions with extensive experience in the field.	Cooperation of think-tankers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine.
Financing	Pro bono	NED	International Visegrad Fund
Core activities	Examination of Russian influence in Georgia with the focus on local media outlets and NGOs, identification of organizations serving Russian interests.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Desktop research conducted by think-tanks and academic institutions, general analytical framework for understanding far-right and paramilitary movements. 2. Fieldwork conducted by journalists, interviews with experts in the field and with current or former members of the extremist subcultures. 3. Compilation of available results into five local country case-studies and regional analysis. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis of disinformation websites (chosen by the project partners) 2. Analysing their methods, main channels and narratives 3. Collection disinformation and debunking

Name	Russian influence on Georgian NGOs and media	Monitoring of pro-Russian paramilitary and extremist movements in Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland	Information warfare in the internet
Stability and sustainability	Research laid ground for subsequent studies. IDFI's project Damoukidebloba.com website raises awareness about the Russian hostile influence by publishing researches, infographics and relevant materials acquired while working on the research.	Project ended in April 2017. It has successfully created a long-term network for information sharing and launching of similar cooperation.	Project ended.
Problem	Existence of NGOs allied with the Kremlin using subversive methods, having non-transparent funding schemes and spreading negative narratives.	Strong potential of using violence and the efforts of Kremlin stakeholders to amplify this tendency in order to further destabilize Ukraine and the region around it.	Pro-Kremlin disinformation on the internet
Mission	Identification of pro-Russian NGOs and media and provide evidence of their activities.		The project's main goal was to understand the complexity of tools adopted by the Kremlin to manipulate public opinion and affect political, social and business environment in the V4 countries plus Moldova and Ukraine.
Outreach	Media, academic circles, third sector, political groups and interested public.	The final regional report was translated into each country's national language. Papers were presented at the closing conference held in Budapest.	
Size of the audience	Over 23 000 Facebook subscribers, 250 people on the e-mail list.	Over 100 guests at the closing conference. Many foreign embassies represented at the event. Several hundreds of media appearances.	

Name	Russian influence on Georgian NGOs and media	Monitoring of pro-Russian paramilitary and extremist movements in Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland	Information warfare in the internet
Access points	Website, Facebook page, e-mails		Website of the project, websites of partner organizations. Conference, live stream from the conference. Promotion by EEAS East StratCom Task Force.
Influence	One of the pioneering attempts to provide research on this topic.		More influential amongst experts than the general public.
Media appearance	Presentation covered by key TV channels, TV discussions about the study, mostly positive.	Several hundreds of media appearances in the countries under review, in the Western media, as well as in Ukraine.	Mention by the Polish Newsweek, academic quotes, several media mentions, mostly positive.
Cooperation with politicians	Study available to politicians, some positive feedback.		No
Contribution to public debate			Study not very popular in the media.
New information	IDFI researchers exposed the fact that 11 NGOs which issued a declaration calling on the Georgian government to restore diplomatic relations with Russia had one and the same founder.	The research highlighted that paramilitary/extremist organisations are indeed posing a national security threat throughout the region by keeping their secessionist, revisionist, and ultranationalist cross-country historical grievances dating back to World War Two alive.	The level of knowledge the study brought differed country to country. In Poland, some disinformation stories, actors and tools were revealed for the first time.
Obstacles	Lack of financial and human resources. Lack of cooperation from state institutions.		Lack of media interest

Name	Russian influence on Georgian NGOs and media	Monitoring of pro-Russian paramilitary and extremist movements in Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland	Information warfare in the internet
Solutions			The report was sent to journalists, but the response was moderate.
Lessons learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In order to understand the scope of the problem and the main issues any country faces, looking into ties between pro-Kremlin actors, especially NGOs and media, is crucial. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are multiple tools of Russian influence, and therefore its research usually requires multi-tasking. Cooperation between journalists, think-tankers and academics presents a capable mix of expertise to map different aspects of the Kremlin's activity. 2. The presence of mainstream investigative journalists can provide with the greatest possible, nation-wide or international audience after the research results are published. 3. Kremlin's influence is still a new phenomenon for researchers, therefore new methodological designs are needed and encouraged to be shared. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In order to conduct successful research, it is useful to use a methodology already existent on the international field, if available. It helps researchers construct a common position and prepare common definitions. 2. Studies focused merely on research and analysis, but not on investigations, are not set to attain public attention. They are probably going to reach out to expert communities.

In order to improve the understanding of the threat of the Kremlin's hostile influence, its tools and scope, individual investigations and fact-checking activities need to be complemented by more in-depth and comprehensive research. In the Central and Eastern European countries, such research has mostly been conducted by non-governmental organizations and think-tanks, with the help of journalists and academics.

Several of these research projects have been focused on the mapping of pro-Kremlin actors in the respective countries. This is an important first step in order to present and analyse the scope of the Kremlin's influence on the local environment. Such research has to be quite complex. Even though the researchers are usually dependent on open source intelligence, they can still bring to light valuable information, especially because they are able to put the individual actors and connections into broader context and present the data in a comprehensive form. Non-governmental organizations in several countries, like Hungary, already attempted similar projects, often cooperating with international partners as well.

The subject of research, which has been widely missing until now, is a systematic and regular polling focused on media consumption and testing disinformation narratives with the public. Generally, the impact of disinformation campaigns can be difficult to prove, and without data from polling it can be close to impossible to persuade some political actors to take action in order to show the extent of the influence already embedded in the country. There have been individual attempts to analyse public opinion, but no regular activity with questions repeating every year. This is the case not only in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, but in the EU generally as well.

In countries where public awareness is still low and not much research has been done previously, it is useful to start from the local point of view. First you need to have enough knowledge and data about the local environment before being capable of effective comparison with other countries. Once organizations get to the point of more in-depth and advanced research, the most common problem is resources. In order to gain funding and capacities from international donors, broader research projects are encouraged, with partners from different countries. These projects not only provide comparable data, they also connect researchers and activists from the region and help create communication channels between them. Thorough local research can also be one of the cases where the "naming and shaming" technique is incorporated into the reporting works. Simple collection and analysis of disinformation tends to be less successful with the public and media attention, which shows that the best ways to present disinformation are still to be found. Furthermore, international attention of experts can increase the attention paid to the research in the domestic arena.

Studies and research do not easily get attention of the wider public and media. However, if that is the goal, the research should be complemented with investigative work, ideally by mainstream journalists. New revelations relevant for the domestic environment can raise the level of attention given to the studies, while participation of journalists can open access points to media outlets. Translating the final text of the study or results of the research into local languages can help as well. Engaging with journalists, academics and other experts will also generally provide better conditions for covering a wider range of the Kremlin's multiple tools of influence. If possible, use or create communication channels, e-mail groups or Facebook chats with the actors who are capable of contributing to or promoting the research. Generally, it is important to remember that the PR strategy for promoting the research has to

be well planned ahead of time, as well as the main goal of the research. Without these two components, it is almost impossible to successfully reach out to the target audience.

Research should also be summarized in a concise way and presented to the political representation, either through in-person presentations or at least by sending it to the politicians directly. Even though the public might not want to pay attention to it, clear numbers and data can be very important to politicians. However, this process is only eligible in countries with at least partial political acknowledgment. If the government is deliberately or unknowingly taking pro-Kremlin stances and the opposition is weak, it is not probable that the results of the study will be picked up.

In order to use the data and findings of the research to their full potential, it is useful to create a sustainable platform for them. Establishing a website which works with the data and publishes infographics and materials connected to the research might be one good idea on how to accomplish that. Organizing advocacy trips and presenting results to different policy-makers in order to influence decision-making can be another one.

The area of the Kremlin's hostile influence is still a new phenomenon when it comes to academic and expert research. There are not a lot of methodological frameworks already created and many terms are not sufficiently defined. To solve this, cooperation between researchers is needed. If it is possible to use methodology already used on the international level, for example the framework used by the EEAS STRATCOM East Task Force, it should be at least tried and eventually enhanced. If you come up with new methodological frameworks, discuss them with colleagues domestically and internationally, and try to share them. This will contribute to a more stable approach towards research in this field.

Recommendations and lessons learned:

Lesson Learned #1: So far, research has mostly been conducted by think-tankers and non-governmental institutions. However, in order to cover the varied range of the Kremlin's tools, cooperation is necessary between think-tankers, journalists, academics and other experts.

Lesson Learned #2: The first step should be the mapping of pro-Kremlin actors in the country and highlighting connections between them in a comprehensive way.

Lesson Learned #3: It is necessary to do systematic and regular polling focused on testing the susceptibility of the public to disinformation in order to get data on the impact of disinformation campaigns.

Lesson Learned #4: Pioneering researchers should focus more on locally-focused studies and investigations.

Lesson Learned #5: For more advanced research and more in-depth analysis, international cooperation is encouraged. It can provide more comparable data and be more influential on the European level.

Lesson Learned #6: When conducting research with foreign partners, it is not only easier for institutions to get sufficient funding, but it also helps create networks for communication, information sharing and exchanging experiences between them. International attention also increases the interest in the research domestically.

Lesson Learned #7: Engagement with investigative journalists or investigative work by the think-tankers themselves can raise the public and media attention to the research. Use or create informal communication channels with them ahead.

Lesson Learned #8: Plan the PR strategy and set the goals of the research ahead, otherwise it is close to impossible to reach out to the target audience.

Lesson Learned #9: Reach out to the politicians as directly as possible with clear summary and brief analysis of the data you collected. If there is at least partial political acknowledgment among the government or the opposition, they can use these results as talking points.

Lesson Learned #10: When conducting research, don't be satisfied with the final report. Use the data and your results in such a way that the recipients will be able to absorb them without reading a long report. For example, establish a website with interactive summaries of your results, produce infographic referencing your research or organize advocacy trips and discuss your results with relevant policy-makers.

Lesson Learned #11: Contribute to the international community of think-tankers and research with new ideas about methodological frameworks or use the already existing ones if available.

Investigative media projects

Name	Citizens' initiative meets Investigative journalism: Exposure of Kremlin connections	The Átlászó investigative portal
Country	Netherlands	Hungary
Sector	Non-governmental	Non-governmental
Time of launch	July 2014	2011
Legal basis/status		Civic legal status
Structure	Uncoordinated collaboration between journalists for major newspapers, volunteer-activists who monitor social media, and technical experts who search for and analyze publicly available (meta)data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring public data requests aimed at different state actors, enabling private citizens to publish data request stories. 2. Listing official resources provide by different state agencies to acquire data on public procurement tenders, public contracts, public project finances 3. Enabling citizens to share their stories about personal corruption cases. 4. Legal assistance to private citizens 5. Hungarian leaks, online infrastructure for anonymous whistleblowing and public data sharing 6. Semi-autonomous investigative centres providing expertise in the field of education or local affairs connected to Hungarian diaspora in Romania 7. Network of Hungarian independent, watchdog NGOs and media
Financing	Non-existent	Individual donations
Core activities	No regular activity, occasional investigations. Exposing Kremlin ties of key influencers, fake accounts of MH17 victims relatives. Monitoring Twitter and other social media in order to recognize developing disinformation early.	Geopolitical insights into possible high-level corruption cases involving the Kremlin, and the Hungarian government, reveals the agents of Russian influence in Hungary, the personal, political, economic, cultural relations between the Russian and Hungarian political/business elite

Name	Citizens initiative meets Investigative journalism: Exposure of Kremlin connections	The Átlászó investigative portal
Problem	Fake stories and influence campaigns that will have a serious impact on politics, investigations and other serious national developments	Capture of the Hungarian mainstream media by political or economic interest groups that decide what issues are being published instead of journalists. Moreover, the government uses state-media as a tool for propaganda or the National Media and Infocommunications Authority as a punitive control to limit the free media market.
Mission	Countering (Russian) disinformation efforts specifically by debunking false information efforts at an early stage. Such efforts have to be on time, pro-active, complete and must reach a large audience.	Ensuring freedom of media, helping the Hungarian electorate to make informed decisions, defending whistle-blowers who shed light on a corruption, of abuse of political power.
Outreach		
Size of the audience	The twitter accounts of the citizen activists reach a total of only about 1500+ followers. <i>De Volkskrant</i> , which employs a journalist who is a key connector in this group, is one of the largest newspapers in the country with a readership of 218.000 in 2016	The site is ranked as the 1065 th most visited site in Hungary, which translates into around 500.000 visits on a monthly basis.
Access points	National media outlets	
Influence	The published articles have raised a great deal of awareness about Russian disinformation in the Netherlands	The site is “the” investigative journalism that every decision-maker, opposition politician, intelligentsia, and informed voter reads or relates to as an etalon. In its opposition subculture, Átlászó’s impact is even more significant given the close cooperation with other independent NGOs who either publish under its umbrella or they can be considered to be the core network of the site.
Media appearance	Coverage on the exposing articles by traditional media is positive. As expected, coverage on alternative news sites is often negative and aggressive, but even there, the investigative effort is sometimes appreciated. The group as a whole has never had any appearance, as they themselves do not even see themselves as a group.	
Cooperation with politicians	Reports sent to politicians	

Name	Citizens initiative meets Investigative journalism: Exposure of Kremlin connections	The Átlászó investigative portal
Contribution to public debate	It regularly publishes widely read articles in national media outlets that specifically call out the problem that the initiative tries to address	
New information	It has revealed the extent to which Russian disinformation efforts occur within the Netherlands, and has given concrete examples of such instances occurring	Revealing corruption cases and investigation of Kremlin-ties.
Format suitability	Nationally syndicated journalists have a large audience, are professional in terms of training and journalistic ethics, and are generally trusted by the public.	
Obstacles	Time and effort, the absence of financing to process large amounts of data, and time-consuming information gathering.	The approach of the government, lack of resources, limitations of press freedom.
Solutions	From the individual actors, there seems to be no clear initiative to raise funding or incentive to create an official structure.	
Lessons learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the Netherlands the trust in traditional media is fairly high. The basis of success is the constant substantive monitoring of disinformation development on social media. Essential is the discovery of a developing story before it has had the chance to spread and influence public perception. 2. Despite sharing information, the group managed to circumvent accusations of being a government mouthpiece. Partly this is because of the low level of coordination. 3. Doing investigative work on individual cases of disinformation appears to be a good way of countering disinformation more generally. Quality more important than quantity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The site not only publishes investigative articles, but it provides the legal tools to defend informant, launch official inquiries against state actors. 2. Outsourcing functions to acquire local knowledge or to support a creation of a new expert unit allows to take a holistic approach of complex issues of the Kremlin's power projection. 3. Engaging civil society and audience more directly allows the portal to have a direct impact on societal, political processes.

Independent journalism is one of the core elements of democratic societies. Apart from other functions, it serves as one of the main tools to build the resilience of society, providing objective information about any attempts to influence domestic affairs and investigating ties between foreign powers and local actors. Investigative journalists should take part in many types of activities mentioned in this report, they can contribute to debunking more complex disinformation campaigns, uncover their sources, investigate corruption of different political actors and contribute to research projects mapping the local links to the Kremlin.

However, the situation is not the same for investigative journalism in all European regions. The approach of the government, the tradition of independent media space, trust of the public in the mainstream media and the general level of press freedom creates different conditions. These conditions are not going to be overcome by the same types of initiatives.

In countries with a long-term tradition of quality mainstream media and higher level of trust from the public, journalists have better opportunities to openly investigate and expose hostile subversive operations. They do not necessarily need a hierarchical structure or extensive coordination, even though collaboration is supported. In order to make their work more effective, they can use the help of civil society, for example via social media, in order to catch disinformation campaigns early and respond. In these cases, journalists might even be a more suitable group for debunking disinformation on a more regular basis than activists. Their voice could be more authoritative and they have better skills and resources to describe and explain disinformation operations in greater detail. They do not have to debunk every marginal story, but they have capacities to prevent them from spreading and to show the public the extent of such operations and the motivations behind them.

If the government is in denial, or even enables the foreign power to conduct influence operations, the situation is more complicated for journalists. In order to gain resources, financial and personal, they have to work with other non-governmental organizations and experts. This also helps with spreading the results of their work to the wider public. In order to reach out to the audience, it is encouraged to engage with them, give them a chance to participate in the investigation process and offer them platforms for sharing their own experiences, or even legal assistance. Such a format can be more authentic and better respond to the needs of the audience.

Recommendations and lessons learned:

Lesson Learned #1: Investigative journalists can contribute to other types of initiatives, especially to debunking and mapping pro-Kremlin actors in the country.

Lesson Learned #2: The format of investigative platforms and initiatives has to adjust to the local environment. Political acknowledgment of the threat of Russian hostile influence, the level of press freedom, the tradition of independent journalism and the trust of the public in mainstream media are the most impactful factors.

Lesson Learned #3: In countries where the public trust and press freedom is high:

- Recommendation 1: Ad hoc cooperation can be more effective than hierarchical structure
- Recommendation 2: Use of social media platforms and other open source information can help catch disinformation campaigns early and expose them before they spread.
- Recommendation 3: Debunking by journalists can be more authoritative than by activists.

Lesson Learned #4: In countries where the press freedom is low or where the government is not supportive of independent journalism:

- Recommendation 1: In order to overcome financial and personal obstacles, investigative journalists should outsource some of their work and cooperate with civil society organizations.
- Recommendation 2: Engage with the citizens and respond to their direct needs in order to gain authenticity and credibility.

Ethnic minorities and different social groups: You need to know them to work with them

Name	Russian diaspora	Russian language schools	Hromadske radio
Country	Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	Ukraine
Sector	Non-governmental	State-funded schools	Non-governmental
Time of launch	1993		September 2014
Financing			International donors (British Embassy in Ukraine), crowdfunding
Core activities			Daily 4 hours broadcast – discussions, interviews, surveys, calls from listeners etc.
Problem			People living in Donbas territories did not have reliable information sources after the conflict started. National media were hostile to them and they were targets of disinformation campaigns.
Mission			To provide balanced information related to situation in Donbas.
Outreach			Originally targeting citizens from Donbas, nowadays the one-region orientation is less strong. Serves as a platform for dialogue on wider issues with representation of Donbas voices.

Name	Russian diaspora	Russian language schools	Hromadske radio
Size of the audience	119 000 members of Russian-speaking minority	In 2013, the tuition language in 15 secondary schools is Russian, 214 secondary schools provide education in both languages. Overall, 82 535 pupils have chosen Russian as the language of tuition.	
Access points	Universities – mostly offer higher education in Russian, the Moscow State University and other Russian universities have opened branches in Azerbaijan.		Radio channel.
Influence		Many famous Russian decision-making influencers have praised the state of Russian schools and language in Azerbaijan. This point is sometimes used to normalize relations.	People from occupied territories widely distrust mainstream media, but they have some level of trust to Hromadske radio.
Media appearance	Azerbaijani media expect reaction or comments from the Russian community. In many cases, such reaction helps to build the reputation of Azerbaijan as a non-threatening country to Russia and normalize the relations.		
Cooperation with politicians	The diaspora organisations' members have been active in 2013 Presidential elections. The main opposition candidate was Russian Azeri's backed Rustam Ibrahimbeyov, a well-respected member of Azeri intelligentsia.		
Format suitability			Independence from business and political interests ensures neutrality and trustworthiness of their content. Governmental communication would be much less trustworthy for the users, especially in Donbas

Name	Russian diaspora	Russian language schools	Hromadske radio
Obstacles			Ruined infrastructure in the frontline zone, jammed radio signal in the occupied territory. Inability to visit occupied territories. Accusations of being Russian allies.
Solutions			Hromadske Radio cooperates with national authorities to obtain more frequencies to widen its audience in the Eastern Ukraine. It conducts numerous offline events and outdoor campaigns to attract more listeners and build the trust with local population. Journalists and editors of Hromadske Radio visit the region frequently to communicate its mission and services for the Eastern Ukraine. They hold on tight to their ethic and principles in order to develop the trustworthy reputation among the audience. This is hard to estimate the effect of such measures because the team has no tool to track the real dynamics of its audience.
Lessons learned			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication during information war should consider the specifics of the audience. Involvement of representatives of target audiences, frequent offline communication with it may help. 2. Inclusive media space is a real long-term solution to ensure stability of societies and increase their resilience against destabilizing influences. The truly non-discriminative solution will be to establish a media field that will be common for all and equally representative of different social groups. 3. Promoting dialogue and reconciliation, you should get rid of pathos and give a right to people on another side to have their own reasons and opinion.

As we have seen during recent years, Russian minorities in European countries are commonly used by the Kremlin for manipulation, disturbing public order, influencing the political environment or for defending their foreign policy interests. This is a common problem for Eastern European countries neighbouring Russia, but also for Central and Western European states with significant Russian diaspora, like Germany. Members of Russian communities are usually vulnerable to disinformation operations, they watch Russian state media and often lack information sources in their language which are not sponsored by the Kremlin. The same goes for communities in occupied territories, who are under a strong influence of Kremlin's policies.

This is not to say that all ethnic Russians or Russian-speaking communities are being used by the Kremlin or are subjects of propaganda, but the potential threat is certainly there as we have seen in several cases across Europe, including the German Lisa case. The problem is that most of the governments have little knowledge about the behaviour and political or geopolitical preferences of these minority groups. In order to change that, it is necessary to prepare and launch sensitive research methods which would help to understand their political and media consumption behaviour. Such data would increase the chances of successfully reaching out to these communities, provide them with quality news content and avoid their potential radicalisation.

From the little we know, members of Russian minorities often prefer Russian-language media outlets over channels in the local language, even though they understand both languages. However, not a lot of countries have established public media outlets in minority languages. This might provide minorities with objective information as an alternative to Russian state media, which is spreading propagandistic messages. The same goes for inhabitants of occupied areas. The domestic programs should not be hostile to them, but represent their views in their programs. Media consumption could serve as a socializing factor, integrating them more with other citizens.

The same goes for language schools, considering Russian-language education has been traditionally functional in the country. Even though we believe that European countries should be able to call out Russia for its aggressive behaviour, it does not mean that Russian citizens living in Europe should be oppressed in any way. Just like Russian-language broadcasts, the possibility to study in the Russian language also might help with their integration.

The state should know about the activities of Russian diaspora organizations. It is necessary to distinguish between so-called NGOs and GONGOs, which are promoting Kremlin's views, and non-governmental organizations working with Russian minorities, helping with their integration and providing them with information and programs. Initiatives which are truly independent should be supported since their influence might enhance the relations between local citizens and Russian minorities.

Recommendations and lessons learned:

Lesson Learned #1: Conduct sociological research amongst Russian minorities in order to understand their political behaviour and media consumption habits

Lesson Learned #2: Establish objective and quality Russian-speaking media outlets which will equally represent their opinions and views

Lesson Learned #3: Give Russian students the opportunity to study in their language, especially if bilingual education has a tradition in your country. However, work on increasing the quality of education in the national language, so that even Russian-speaking citizens have an incentive to choose a non-Russian school.

Lesson Learned #4: The state should be aware of the activities of Russian non-governmental organizations. It is crucial to be aware of those groups which only appear independent, but in reality only defend the Russian regime and its aggressive policies. However, support for truly independent organizations helping Russian minorities with their integration is needed.

Networking and coordination: When the government is in denial, civil society must work together

Name	Beacon project	Center for Propaganda and Disinformation Analysis Foundation	NGOs in Slovakia
Country	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Sector	Non-governmental	Non-governmental	NGO, with broad participation
Time of launch	2016	March 2017	
Legal basis/status		Foundation	
Structure	<p>The IRI established the project framework, developed the Versus tool, and provides all necessary online and offline infrastructure. Second, the IRI contacted main partners, including the European Values Think-tank in the Czech Republic, the Globsec Policy Institute in Slovakia, and the Political Capital Institute in Hungary, with considerable analytical practice in (pro-Russian) disinformation research. Local expertise was combined between several other local actors from every country where the Beacon is available (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland to date). Each main partner involved other local actors in disinformation monitoring, including journalists, policymakers and academics.</p>		NGOs cooperate on an equal, informal and voluntary basis with some facilitation.

Name	Beacon project	Center for Propaganda and Disinformation Analysis Foundation	NGOs in Slovakia
Financing	NED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Donations, subscriptions, inheritances, grants and subsidies by domestic and foreign, legal and natural persons 2. Income from collections and auctions 3. Securities 4. Interest and bank deposits 5. Assets, real estate and property rights 6. Copyright and intellectual property 7. Income from economic activities 	Organizations have provided contributions as they may, including volunteer work.
Core activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Creating a “black list” of proven or suspicious disinformation sites b. Collecting data into a database c. Running keyword-based queries to reveal different disinformation narratives 2. IRI provides the general framework for cooperation in which local partners provide their input 3. Independent institutional research by local partners 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training 2. Consulting and preparing analytical materials 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public opinion polls 2. Op-eds and commentary in the national media 3. Pro-democratic and pro-Western narratives as well as narratives against extremism and Russian propaganda 4. Konspiratori.sk - list of conspiracy websites to dissuade advertisers 5. Antipropaganda.sk, Sebavedome.sk - online debunking and discussion platforms 6. Debunking and fact-checking initiatives 7. Facebook initiatives using humor to fight disinformation, propaganda and extremism 8. Investigative journalism 9. E-learning 10. Student manuals on critical thinking and media literacy 11. Discussions with students and teachers 12. Media briefings

Name	Beacon project	Center for Propaganda and Disinformation Analysis Foundation	NGOs in Slovakia
Problem	Regional policy research institutions or media lack the necessary ICT resources to monitor pro-Russian propaganda across different disinformation outlets simultaneously.	Propaganda, disinformation, other hybrid, information or psychological operations in the Polish information space.	A wide range of issues and threats, from intelligence and influence operations, disinformation efforts, relevant political allies, NGO allies and GONGOs, to European radical and extremist groups.
Mission		Strengthening the foundations and structures of civil society, raising awareness about the threats posed by propaganda and disinformation, contributing to building a Polish system of distributed response to hostile activities in the information space.	Advancing the values of freedom and democracy and Slovakia's firm anchoring in the European Union and NATO. Advocating substantial engagement by the international community in favor of an independent, democratic Ukraine and a modern, European-oriented Russia.
Outreach	The IRI managed to legitimize the initiative among Washington and local politicians, thus putting the fight against Russian disinformation on the main Trans-Atlantic political agenda.	Audience in Poland, CEE countries, EP countries, Russia, the US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy makers in national institutions • Expert community focusing on hostile foreign influence • Concerned journalists and researchers • Public at large
Size of the audience		More than 10,761 Facebook subscribers, 430 Twitter followers	
Access points	Workshops and conferences to open the project up to a wide array of analysts and policymakers in Prague, Bratislava, and Vienna etc.	Internet, social media, traditional media outlets, public events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet, social media, traditional media outlets, public events, closed-door sessions.

Name	Beacon project	Center for Propaganda and Disinformation Analysis Foundation	NGOs in Slovakia
Stability and sustainability			
Influence			NGO activists have achieved rising clout in the media and the public and engaged policymakers and politicians in their activities. Working with the public at large, rather than with elites only, has been of key importance.
Media appearance		Increasing media attention. At least one appearance in Polish media per week. Some appearances in foreign media.	Experts and activists have been regularly cited in the media and directly contributed to the rising awareness of the public about the threat of disinformation, propaganda, and information warfare techniques used by the Kremlin.
Cooperation with politicians		The foundation would like to play a key role as an advisory body in the field of external propaganda and disinformation in Polish cyber and information space. It wants to cooperate with the new cybersecurity department established by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland.	Policymakers and security professionals on active duty in the government have participated in NGO activities which have served as a networking platform for civil servants from different ministries, allowing them to make informal contact and facilitate interagency cooperation. They have consistently contributed to the public debate on Russia-specific issues in particular and other foreign and security policy issues in general.
Contribution to public debate		Foundation experts participate in public events in Poland and abroad, such as CYBERSEC 2017.	Civil society actors have consistently contributed to the public debate on Russia-specific issues in particular and other foreign and security policy issues in general.

Name	Beacon project	Center for Propaganda and Disinformation Analysis Foundation	NGOs in Slovakia
New information		The foundation reveals new information about external propaganda, disinformation and hybrid operations in Poland.	
Format suitability		The non-governmental organization is a link between the government, media, NGOs and society. Only the involvement of all these groups can be effective in counteracting external threats.	NGOs could benefit from wider engagement with the private sector.
Obstacles	Language barriers, technical glitches in the Versus tool. Theoretical and some practical research frameworks are still missing.	Financial issues.	Close collaboration between NGOs holds great potential in achieving unity of purpose between disparate actors working on similar issues. The lack of funding invested by Slovak public institutions into fighting hostile disinformation reflects a poor understanding of the challenge and there is no policy in place to deal with this threat.
Solutions		Voluntary work of experts and journalists.	Find a healthy balance between public and non-public activities. Work shoulder to shoulder and use professional facilitation to address any barriers to cooperation and coordination. Coordinate project proposals and/or build project consortia. Advocate for the adoption of national policies and substantial increases of investment into measures against hybrid warfare and for the promotion of liberal democracy at home and abroad.

Name	Beacon project	Center for Propaganda and Disinformation Analysis Foundation	NGOs in Slovakia
Lessons learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Versus tool is a huge technological advancement for most of the local partners who are usually not able to buy the equivalent business solutions available on the market. 2. The Beacon Project connects two basic levels in the fight against Russian disinformation. The research umbrella channels Trans-Atlantic, European or regional macro-knowledge down to the local level. In the same process, national partners collect data on disinformation that is only available in local languages, and transfer this micro-data to the macro-level. Thus, the initiative is able to put together the big picture of Russian disinformation transcending national or linguistic borders. 3. The project provides the fight against Russian hybrid warfare with immense political legitimacy by connecting European, and American decision makers. At the same time, the project interconnects different types of expertise needed to study disinformation from the fields of academia, civic policymaking, and journalism. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A platform for all initiatives and experts dealing with disinformation is an idea worth considering in other countries where there is no space to exchange ideas and views among experts dealing with pro-Kremlin disinformation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Networked initiatives must be enabled by professional, non-partisan facilitators and move towards a commonly agreed set of priorities based on common values and a shared purpose. This is a patient, long-term, human-intensive process. Much of the effort is below-the-radar.

During our review, we identified several initiatives which slightly differ in their main goals and methods of work but are connected by their contribution to creating a long-term network of individuals or organizations focusing on countering the Kremlin's influence. As we already mentioned in the chapter about research, the tools of the Kremlin to interfere with democratic systems are various and comprehensive, therefore it is only right that the response should have the same scope. You need a network to defeat a network. The most effective strategies combine and complement the work of activists, journalists, experts, academics, public administrators and politicians. But, as we can see from the initiatives under review, the formal character of the network may have many different faces. The Beacon Project is an initiative supervised and directed by an international organization, connecting initiatives across Europe. CPDA is a local institution with a clear structure and hierarchy, which aspires to be a connection point between the government and civil society. The Slovak NGO response has involved institutions and individuals working independently but cooperating and coordinating their activities on an informal and voluntary basis.

The initiatives have different approaches towards working with politicians. While the IRI works only with civil society in the region and then promotes and legitimizes issues abroad, CPDA consults the government. The situation in Slovakia is not ideal either, although there are politicians who are willing to engage on the subject. Engaging and communicating with politicians is highly dependent on the long-term political environment. Contact with Hungarian government officials would be almost impossible. Poland is traditionally suspicious about civil society involvement in public affairs.

Something which is still almost completely missing in the Central and Eastern European region is long-term, informal cooperation between civil society and the government that is initiated by the government. The Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs worked with civil society organizations and consulted them prior to the establishment of the Stratcom unit. However, this represents an exception to the rule. The activities of the Baltic states indicate that systematic governmental support, often financial, to non-governmental organizations, think-tanks and experts can be very fruitful for both sides. Members of civil society have enough resources to conduct their own projects in the field and gain expertise in areas that are important to the government. Later on, during a crisis or preparations for major countermeasures, the government can use this expertise to its own advantage, such as cyber security, for example. NGOs can also become informal commentators, publicly speaking about matters that the government cannot or should not address.

Recommendations and lessons learned:

Lesson Learned #1: You need a network to defeat a network. The Kremlin's various tools for hostile influence are best countered by a network of individuals and organizations with different compositions, skills and approaches.

Lesson Learned #2: Entities capable of cooperation and coordination are easier to promote abroad, which helps them secure funding, a common problem for non-governmental organizations.

Lesson Learned #3: When possible, networks should include political representatives, government officials and public administrators. This will help promote a common understanding of the problem and its needs. It will also enable an effective division of labor.

Lesson Learned #4: Networks can also help with technical assistance and other capacities that non-governmental organizations cannot afford individually. Collaborating in a network allows them to expand their outreach by helping each other promote their activities.

Lesson Learned #5: Generally, the private sector must be involved in existing networks. Individuals who are intensely focused on a single issue sometimes lack skills or knowledge regarding marketing, IT or other useful areas in the fight to counter foreign influence.

Lesson Learned #6: Long-term support of civil society organizations helps them gain expertise which the government can call on in times of crisis.

Legislative proposals: Only good when temporary

Name	National Security Audit Conducted by Czech Government (2016-2017)	Package of legislative amendments Against Pro-Russian Anti-State Propaganda	Prohibition of Russia-made films
Country	Czech Republic	Georgia	Ukraine
Sector	Governmental	Non-governmental	Governmental
Time of launch	2016	2017	2015
Legal basis/status	Strategic document and subsequent Action Plan approved by the government	Legislative proposal by Transparency International, Georgia	Law passed by Parliament
Structure	<p>The evaluation was conducted in ten areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Terrorism 2) Extremism 3) Organized crime 4) Influence of foreign powers 5) Security aspects of migration 6) Natural threats 7) Anthropogenic threats 8) Threats in cyberspace 9) Energy, raw materials and industrial security 10) Hybrid threats and their influence on the safety of Czech citizens <p>Each chapter was completed and reviewed by the relevant ministry.</p>	<p>The initiative aims to make amendments and additions to current Georgian broadcasting legislation. Draft amendments and additions are followed by an explanatory note.</p>	<p>The government agencies responsible for implementation of the decision are: the Ukrainian State Film Agency (which provides broadcast licenses) and the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine (monitoring).</p>
Financing	Ministry budgets	Financial support from the Swedish International Development Agency, the Swedish Foreign Ministry and USAID.	

Name	National Security Audit Conducted by Czech Government (2016-2017)	Package of legislative amendments Against Pro-Russian Anti-State Propaganda	Prohibition of Russia-made films
Core activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the Czech security system in certain areas, done by an expert group consisting of representatives from the security community. 2. Designing recommendations to fill gaps in Czech security in terms of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Legislature b. Personnel/capacities c. Coordination for evaluation of threats d. Long-term development of communication infrastructure and technology of public administration and eGovernment e. Cooperation with the public and private entities f. Support and deepening of security research 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meeting with media and civil society organizations – with an abstract of those discussions included in the draft package of amendments prepared by a working group. 2. Presentation of the package to the Parliament 3. Review of the package by the Committee on Legal Issues and approval by the Committee 4. Presentation of the package to the plenary session 	<p>In Ukraine, a film needs to obtain a broadcast license to be shown in cinemas and on TV. The Ukrainian State Film Agency is responsible for licensing. The changes made in new legislation disallow the Agency to issue a license for any film that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. was produced in Russia later than January 1, 2013; b. contains elements of propaganda, such as glorifying Russian soldiers and policemen, or legitimizing the Kremlin's aggressive foreign policy. <p>It is important to note that such films are not prohibited, they just cannot be shown on TV or in cinemas. However, they are available online, and elsewhere.</p>
Stability and sustainability	Based on the National Security Audit Conducted by Czech Government (2016-2017), an Action plan has been created which will be implemented in the coming months/years.	The successful adoption of the amendments depends on the political will to do so.	

Name	National Security Audit Conducted by Czech Government (2016-2017)	Package of legislative amendments Against Pro-Russian Anti-State Propaganda	Prohibition of Russia-made films
Problem	The worsening security environment in Europe, the migration crisis, terrorism, armed conflicts in Europe, and new types of threats.	It is legally possible in Georgia to consume or spread anti-state content, such as calls for a Russian military presence in the country in pre-election advertisements.	Since 2013, Ukraine has been a victim of extremely aggressive information pressure from the Russian Federation. It has been flooded with anti-Ukrainian, anti-Western, and antidemocratic content of all kinds: not just news, but shows, movies, books, and video games produced in Russia have been used as weapons in an information war. In September 2014, Russian film broadcasts took up 1/6 of the broadcasting time on national TV channels. On average, each channel broadcasted 7.5 hours of Russian films every day, the content of which was full of Kremlin propaganda.
Mission	To evaluate threats and the resilience of the Czech Republic against these threats.	To establish legal restrictions on propaganda and Russia's aggressive mass media strategy.	To establish a legal tool to foster Ukrainian national security in the information field by putting limitations on any form of propaganda spread by the aggressor state
Outreach	The Audit will have implications on all parts of the Czech security community, public administration and ministries. Experts and representatives of civil society have been engaged in the evaluation process.	Politicians are a primary audience for outreach, along with journalists and media outlets broadcasting political campaigns.	In general, the initiative affected all Ukrainian TV consumers living in areas controlled by the Ukrainian government, amounting to more than 35 million Ukrainians. However, it is important to note that the law does not apply to the Internet. Ukrainians have unregulated access to Russian-made films online, and via satellite.
Access points	National media outlets, government website.	Meetings with media and civil society representatives, Facebook page and website, TV outlets.	

Name	National Security Audit Conducted by Czech Government (2016-2017)	Package of legislative amendments Against Pro-Russian Anti-State Propaganda	Prohibition of Russia-made films
Influence	The Audit contributed to the overall security system of the Czech Republic. Recommendations have already been implemented from the chapter focusing on the influence of foreign powers. The Center against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats has been established within the Interior Ministry. There is now a task force assigned to election security. Trainings of political parties and public servants have also been conducted. As a whole, the security system is gradually becoming more resilient.	This was the first attempt in Georgia to ban state-centric and pro-Russian propaganda activities at a national level	This decision led to a significant decrease in the presence of Russian films being broadcast on Ukrainian TV channels. While the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting has detected several broadcasts of modern Russian films on TV, in general, Russian-made movies and series have been replaced with media from Turkey, America and elsewhere. On average, the amount of time that Russian films air on TV each day decreased from 7.5 hours in September 2014 to 2.1 hours in November 2015. This outcome was unexpected. However, what was not expected was that the content deficit that came from restricting Russian content pushed Ukrainian media holdings to invest in their own national productions.
Media appearance	Mainstream media sometimes mentioned or analyzed the Audit, but the subject has generally not been in the spotlight.	Active media engagement, wide coverage during the drafting process and parliament deliberations. Media coverage was generally positive.	
Cooperation with politicians	The National Security Audit Conducted by Czech Government (2016-2017) was conducted under the supervision of the government and the relevant ministries, particularly the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Industry and Trade.	Consultations have taken place with various politicians and policy makers.	

Name	National Security Audit Conducted by Czech Government (2016-2017)	Package of legislative amendments Against Pro-Russian Anti-State Propaganda	Prohibition of Russia-made films
Contribution to public debate	The National Security Audit showed the most visible gaps in the Czech security system and therefore stirred the discussion about what can be practically done to overcome these gaps.	It is partly a product of public debate.	The initiative did not affect public debate. Instead, it highlighted the consensus in the Ukrainian media expert community regarding the threats contained in Russian films, and the need to take rapid measures to minimize those threats.
New information		Existing gaps in the legislation.	
Format suitability	All government, public administration and security experts who are active in the relevant areas of security have been participating in the Audit. Each chapter had a civil society consultant. This combination of state and non-governmental expertise was appropriate for performing a truly comprehensive evaluation in order to make practical recommendations.	The NGO character of the amendments indicates solidarity among civil society, but it would be advisable to have the government and politicians show interest in these types of initiatives.	
Obstacles	Conducting such a comprehensive review of state security capabilities in all the necessary areas is a challenging task which requires at least partial political consensus, a high level of coordination and supervision.	Getting the stakeholders on board, the sensitivity of the topic – freedom of speech, direct mentions of Russia, implementing the law in the future.	National TV channels favor the cheaper, Russian-made content and frequently try to find ways around legal barriers. The easiest loophole is changing the release date in the final credits of a movie (the film must be produced before 2013 to be allowed); or deleting the Russian state symbols from the film and announcing that the film was made in Ukraine, about Ukraine.

Name	National Security Audit Conducted by Czech Government (2016-2017)	Package of legislative amendments Against Pro-Russian Anti-State Propaganda	Prohibition of Russia-made films
Solutions	The Audit was not an ad hoc or hasty activity. The actors took the time to plan everything properly and conduct a detailed analysis. There are specific people in the relevant departments who are responsible for implementing the Action Plan.	Consulting with civil society and journalists, addressing political advertisements and agitation, not content from media outlets, targeting any foreign propaganda.	Thorough monitoring by the state regulator and strict control by civil society enhance the effectiveness of the law. Numerous civic initiatives and non-profits (like the <i>Vidsich</i> , <i>Boycott of Russian Cinematography</i> , <i>Detector Media</i> , <i>the Institute of Mass Information</i>) ensure constant monitoring of TV content and report violations, helping the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine and the Ukrainian State Film Agency to react and take appropriate measures.
Lessons learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The European security environment is changing. A rising number of new threats means that countries have to review their capabilities in order to be able to face them. A comprehensive review of strengths and weaknesses will contribute to a better understanding of security threats, as well as to planning concrete steps that need to be taken in order to strengthen the domestic security system. 2. The government should utilize the knowledge and expertise of civil society, the expert community and the private sector. This kind of cooperation will contribute not only to the quality of the Audit, but will also help create networks and communication channels between parts of society with shared interests. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every state that is a victim of direct Russian propaganda can benefit from such initiatives, especially in the post-Soviet space. Increased regulation will reduce the opportunities available to pro-Russian political figures and satellite political parties to campaign with propaganda. 2. Initiating multi-level discussions involving various actors as a catalyst for anti-Russian propaganda legislation is crucial to forming a consensus among stakeholders. 3. Such initiatives necessitate smart strategies, particularly when it comes to the media, not to limit freedom of expression and freedom of speech. One option is to target political advertisements containing Russian propaganda in a way that does not impact other media content. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State policy for information security should be based on a clear understanding of the problem, and a vision of the results expected. Without research and analysis, we can only make assumptions about policy effectiveness. 2. Restrictions may have an effect in the short term, but this is a poor long-term strategy. In the age of information, restrictions and limitations are no more than a partial solution. The Internet and new technologies make information widely available. Therefore, if we aim to change the way media is consumed, we should seek more effective strategies than simple prohibition. 3. Importing films is a security issue. As with food or energy, the state should ensure its own production of films and entertainment media, or at least diversify media imports. Dependence on the media content of a single country, ensuring its domination of the sector, should be considered a threat.

The legislative responses of the Czech Republic, Georgia and Ukraine to the Kremlin's influence differ in many ways. Still, they all have the same goal: to restrict the access point for propaganda into their societies. Also, preparing or implementing legislative measures can significantly raise awareness about this issue among public and political representatives. In Ukraine and the Czech Republic, state administrations have a sufficient level of awareness and can be their own catalysts for reform. In Georgia, however, civil society has had to take the situation into its own hands and push parliament to make legislative amendments.

In all of these cases, any legislative proposal has to be carefully planned. Laws establishing new structures and units have to be especially detailed and must only come after a thorough analysis of the problem at hand, otherwise they might be counterproductive, as is the case with Ukraine. The Ukrainian Ministry of Information has been designed mostly intuitively and its effectiveness is highly questionable.

Generally, the impact and success of legislative measures is still uncertain, due to the lack of positive results. Major laws changing political or media culture or interfering with it significantly can cause an especially strong political backlash and can eventually end up being counterproductive. Small amendments in regulations and other sub-legislative measures tend to be more effective and widely accepted by the public as well.

Conducting the National Security Audit in the Czech Republic was motivated by a changing security environment, as part of preparations to face new threats. The other legislative solutions are designed to manage already existing problems. The difference here is that the Czech Republic had the time and opportunity to do a comprehensive review of threats and to evaluate the security system's strengths and weaknesses. It identified gaps which are slowly going to be filled via the incremental execution of the Action Plan. Meanwhile, Georgia and Ukraine were more intensely pressed by time and the necessity to do something as soon as possible. Their legislative initiatives focus on singular issues. Today, since Europe faces new kinds of threats, a review similar to the Audit would also help those governments learn about these issues and prioritize them.

Civil society was involved in both the National Security Audit and the Georgian package of legislative amendments. Experts and journalists were consulted in order to make the proposals as effective as possible, and to avoid public outrage later on in case the new legislation touched upon sensitive issues. Media regulation tends to be a sensitive issue. Any attempt to limit freedom of the press and speech is going to be met with accusations of censorship or state propaganda. Therefore, involving journalists in the solutions was helpful for identifying specific problems in the media environment in order to triage only the most dangerous forms of Kremlin influence.

Recommendations and lessons learned:

Lesson Learned #1: The state should initiate a review of the security system and existing laws ahead of time so it has the opportunity to improve its security as needed and will have time to carefully plan the necessary reforms.

Lesson Learned #2: Amending regulations and sub-legislative measures is more effective than amending laws, which interferes with the political and media culture in the country.

Lesson Learned #3: Any legislative change should be widely consulted with civil society, the expert community and practitioners. In addition to improving the quality and effectiveness of regulations, this will contribute to their credibility, especially in regard to sensitive issues like regulating the media.

Lesson Learned #4: Freedom of speech is an important value in democratic societies and this should be preserved. Media content should not be over-regulated. However, when it comes to anti-government political proclamations and campaigns, especially before elections, some mild restrictions should be put in place on what can and cannot be promoted.

Lesson Learned #5: Legal regulation is sometimes necessary, especially during a war. It can be acceptable if done carefully and sensitively. However, it should always be understood as a temporary solution and must be accompanied and complemented by other long-term strategies that focus on building resilience and educating citizens.

Education: Not just about media literacy

Name	Boon foundation	Detector Media: innovative solutions for critical thinking
Country	Armenia	Ukraine
Sector	Non-governmental	Non-governmental
Time of launch	2013	February 28, 2016
Legal basis/status	Foundation	
Structure	10 team-members	A team of 26 people participated in its creation, including media experts, journalists, photographers, artists, IT experts, designers, infographers, animators, psychologists, and managers. The website contains 16 chapters dedicated to different aspects of media – how it is used and manipulated, and how a consumer can protect himself or herself from fake information and manipulations in the age of information war.
Financing	OSI, GMF, Gulbenkian foundation, DVV	Czech Embassy in Ukraine
Core activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Online TV broadcasting of shorter expert forums on researched topics and a scientific series related to public affairs and other topics. 2. The Boonus Educational Program – classes on civil society studies for pupils, available online. 3. The Detector Project aimed at revealing populism and propaganda, focusing on statements made by politicians. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Idea design and structure development. Detailed ToRs were developed for each of the chapters to ensure the proper performance of authors and designers. 2. Production of Media Driver content. 16 texts, 5 animated videos and more than 20 infographics were specially created for the website. 3. Creative editorship. A group of teenagers was invited to help the team with creative ideas about how to make the website more attractive to its audience. All of the chapters come with tests, quizzes, and “achievements,” among other novelties. 4. Promotion through social media, and by means of presentations and events.

Name	Boon foundation	Detector Media: innovative solutions for critical thinking
Stability and sustainability		Media Driver's sustainability is ensured by: i) the sustainability of the institution that possesses it (Detector Media); ii) the attractiveness of the content to be shared and reposted in social networks (quizzes, personal achievements, funny stories, videos); iii) a special design: each chapter consists of a number of blocks, and each separate block is enough to communicate some aspect of critical thinking – so, no matter where you open it or how much you read, you will learn something.
Problem		Despite the declaration by the government that media literacy is a priority for ensuring information security, media culture has not become a mandatory subject in school curriculums.
Mission	Making education and science available to the wider public, promoting critical thinking, being a media platform.	The mission of Media Driver is to ensure access for young Ukrainians to interesting, user-friendly formats of educational content to increase their critical thinking skills in an age of information war.
Outreach	Armenian citizens, mostly from Yerevan, Armenian populations in Moscow, Los Angeles and France. The typical audience is well-educated, between 18 and 35 years old.	<p>The target audience of Media Driver is teenagers between 13 and 16, Internet users from Ukraine (appr. 1.46 million).</p> <p>Special measures were undertaken to tailor the website to the specific forms of information consumption and the psychology of its target audience. In particular:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is prepared by practitioners, not pedagogues 2. Representatives of the target audience were engaged 3. The audience does not only consume, but also produces information 4. The cognitive and behavioural specifics of the target audience were considered

Name	Boon foundation	Detector Media: innovative solutions for critical thinking
Size of the audience	250,000 visitors per month	
Access points	Website, online TV	The team does not rely only on shares and reposts on social networks to promote Media Driver. Web promotion is combined with traditional tools like presentations at children's clubs and schools, printed items (copybooks with infographics from Media Driver on the cover are quite popular among schoolchildren) and souvenir products.
Influence	Their products are used by Armenian universities. Significant influence during elections and referendums.	The manual was designed for teens; however, the team also wanted the material to be used in schools during lessons on critical thinking (offered as electives). That is why the negotiations were initiated with the Ministry of Education of Ukraine so that it recommended Media Driver to help the teachers. However, the political influence was surprisingly wider than expected. Detector Media received requests from different government bodies and Ukrainian Army entities to present the materials to press officers in order to help them to improve their performance.
Media appearance	Occasional appearances on Armenian TV stations, online media outlets and regional channels. The coverage has been almost exclusively positive.	The media paid a lot of attention to Media Driver when it was launched, in February-March 2016. On its very first day, the website was attended by 4,500 visitors and 80 accounts were created by users. However, afterwards the initiative disappeared from the media, and the intensity of use decreased. That is why a special media plan was developed for promoting the website. Regular public events are held, in particular on the local level, to attract more attention from the media, as well as other communicators (like non-profits working in the field of critical thinking; media pedagogues; parents etc.) These measures not only promote the manual, they also put the topic of critical thinking on the public agenda, which is especially important under conditions of information war.
Cooperation with politicians	No cooperation, politicians sometimes invited to online TV programs.	

Name	Boon foundation	Detector Media: innovative solutions for critical thinking
Format suitability		In case like this, it is not important if the initiative is implemented by the state, by non-profits or by someone else; what matters is that it is communicating about critical thinking in a manner that is attractive to its audience. However, in Ukraine, non-government ownership increases trust among citizens in occupied territories, and among Russia supporters, which makes it a valuable tool for building resilience against Kremlin propaganda.
Obstacles	No direct threats. Politically and socially difficult situation in Armenia. Funding problems.	People in remote communities and rural areas in Ukraine still have limited access to the Internet. Meetings and presentations conducted in these communities demonstrated a noticeably high interest in the topic (that is not surprising, as these people are the main targets of information attacks), but an online format does not work best for these people – they need something user-friendly, but printed. Therefore, other approaches are needed to reach these audiences. In addition, the team is not permitted to visit occupied territories with presentations and trainings. Therefore, they can only rely on online tools to promote the manual among those audiences.
Solutions		Detector Media conducts special events (trainings and lessons) in communities close to the frontline. 5,000 notebooks were printed with infographics on their covers about critical thinking, and distributed (with the help of the Ukrainian Army's CIMIC groups) for free among the schools of the area. However, these activities are not enough to ensure a sustainable education about critical thinking for these citizens.
Lessons learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In post-Soviet countries with no established and well-developed curriculum for teaching about civil society and public affairs, such initiatives are highly important and contribute to independent thinking. 2. The foundation presents research on propaganda and populism to the public among other topics connected to philosophy, sociology and science. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The messages/skills/knowledge targeted to build society's resilience against misinformation and propaganda, should be custom made in order to be effective. Specific audience characteristics should be considered (what do they need, how do they feel, what is their agenda, how do they consume information), and communicated in a manner that is as friendly to the audience as possible. General approaches may ensure wider coverage, but they suffer from a limited capacity to achieve real engagement. Involving representatives of target groups in the design stage of the communication campaign will produce better results. 2. A wider circle of communicators, especially ones on a very local level, should be engaged to spread the messages/skills/knowledge. This includes grass-roots NGOs, local media outlets, and community platforms that are best able to communicate with specific audiences. This is Media Driver's current approach to communication. 3. Today, the public demand for critical thinking skills is higher than ever. Innovative products in this field get significant attention among very different kinds of stakeholders and interest groups, including government agencies and media outlets. Institutions working to counter propaganda should use this as an access point to communicate relevant knowledge to society.

Media literacy and civic education are crucial building blocks for society's resilience. Education in these areas needs to be promoted and improved among societal groups, regardless of age. Education policy should generally be a government matter, but governments frequently neglect to put media literacy education very high on their agendas. That is why non-governmental organizations should be utilized to supplement state efforts, at least temporarily. Many of these organizations are already working throughout Europe, but many of them operate on a small scale and do not have the necessary outreach.

Recommendations and lessons learned:

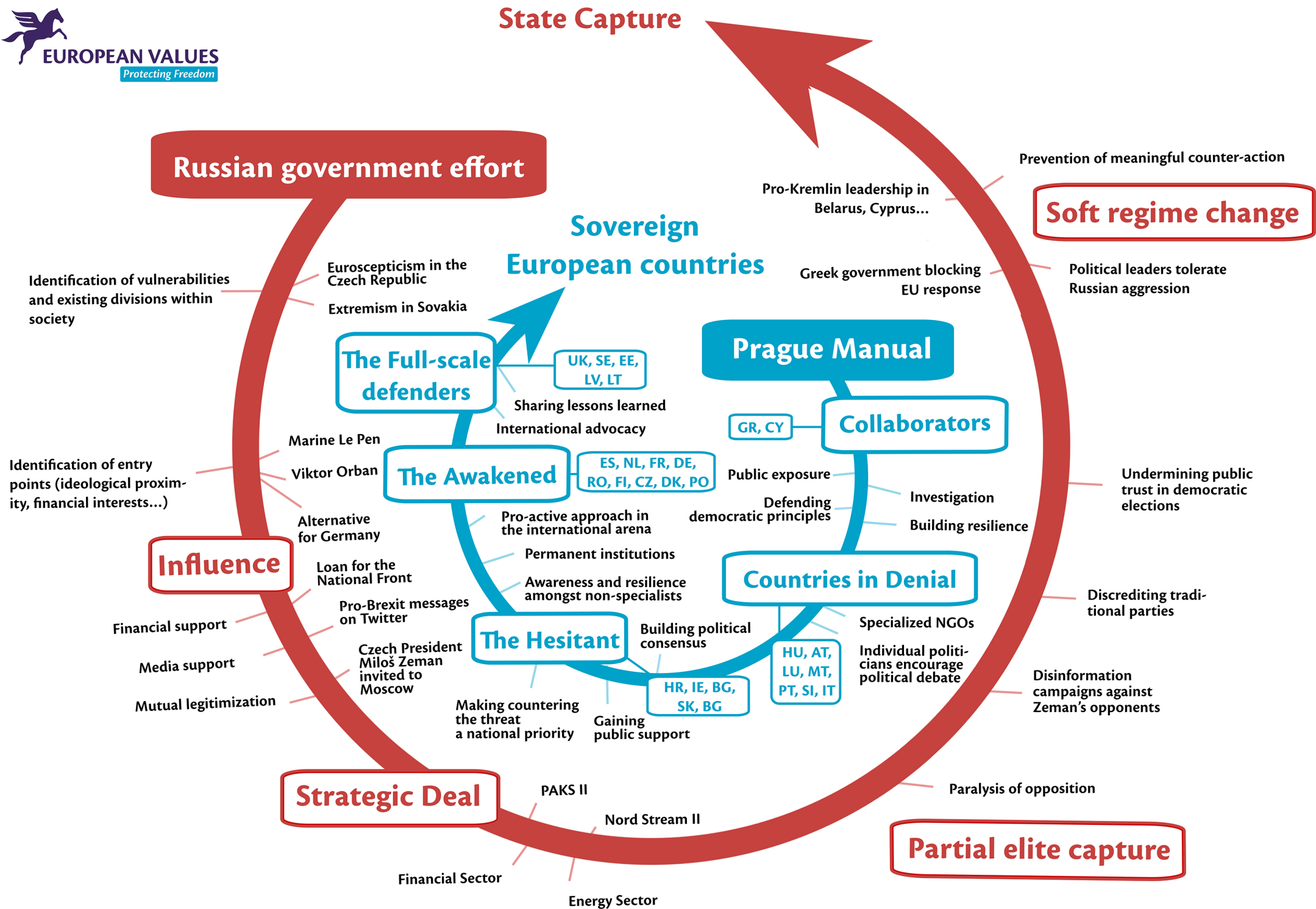
Lesson Learned #1: In countries with a low level of public awareness about and interest in the Kremlin's hostile subversive operations, research on propaganda and populism should be brought into their awareness by being discussed in a broader context instead of as a single issue. People are more likely to take the time to deeply study this topic if it is brought to their awareness.

Lesson Learned #2: When creating educational materials, you have to take the needs and preferences of specific age groups into consideration. In an ideal case, members of the target audience should be involved in the planning process.

Part 3: How to design and implement strategies against the Kremlin's hostile influence

Since the beginning of the expert debate on the Kremlin's hostile influence several years ago, studies have been conducted and policy papers written suggesting various counter measures. Even though some of the recommendations already produced have been quite specific, only rarely do we see step-by-step guidebooks that provide instructions for implementing countermeasures in countries that understand the threat at very different levels.

This Kremlin Watch strategy is such a guidebook, meant for any policy maker or representative of civil society wishing to counter the Kremlin's hostile influence in their own country. It contains suggestions, recommendations and lessons learned from the theoretical and empirical experiences of the European Values Think-tank, its partner organizations in Central and Eastern Europe and many consultations with government officials and civil society in European countries. The goal of the guidebook is to provide recommendations for preventing, stopping or gradually reversing the process of state capture attempted by the Kremlin, shown in the following graph:



How to use the guidebook

Based on the review of countermeasures planned and implemented by the EU28 Member States on government and non-government levels, we prepared an evaluation scale with which it is possible to categorize countries into several groups. The categorization criteria are the political acknowledgment of the threat, government countermeasures and intelligence activities. You can use our categorized index of EU Member States or, if you do not agree with our evaluation or come from a non-EU country, you can use the scale to categorize the country of your interest on your own. After that, you can scroll to the corresponding chapter and look for recommendations that will help advance your country to a higher level, if successfully implemented. The recommendations are divided into groups based on whether you are a representative of civil society, a government official or a different type of actor who is interested in launching or supporting efforts to counter the Kremlin's influence in your country.

How to evaluate the state of play in your country

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	The majority of governing politicians deny or systematically underplay the existence of the Threat.	No relevant state response to the Threat is allowed by the government.
2	Threat partially recognized	Individual politicians in the government recognize the existence of the Threat. The majority of governing politicians are reluctant to acknowledge the threat	Ad hoc minor non-coordinated initiatives by individual state experts are allowed, but a comprehensive policy is not proactively pursued by the government.
3	Government recognizes the threat	The majority of governing politicians recognize the existence of the Threat and allow individual government bodies to initiate discrete, ad hoc responses	Specific government ministers seek to develop a policy response, individual countermeasures are already implemented in practice, others are being planned. There is agreement on political strategy.
4	Government asks for policy countermeasures	Steps are being taken for setting up a national defence system to counter hostile foreign influence operations.	The government directly tasks its security institutions to create a comprehensive policy to counter the Threat, instead of ad hoc non-coordinated initiatives.
5	Government-wide policy countermeasures in place	A government-wide approach is adopted, policy is established and implemented.	Specific initiatives are already in practice, 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 spread based either on its convictions or for opportunistic reasons.	The government takes specific measures limiting the country's ability to resist Russian influence or enabling the Kremlin to accomplish its goals, i.e. limiting freedom of the press, collaborating 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 effectiveness of these measures is questionable.	One or only a few departments of the state administration show concern about disinformation and influence operations and take steps to counter them. They are focused on specific problems, such as cybersecurity or media literacy. The lack of resources or support prevents these initiatives from being fully effective. 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 proven to be effective.	One or only a few departments of the state administration show concern about disinformation and influence operations and take steps to counter them. They are focused on specific problems, such as cybersecurity 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 own programs for strategic communication. These programs comprehensively target hostile interference and subversion and focus 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 a lack of resources, coordination or a comprehensive 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 own programs for strategic communication. These programs comprehensively target hostile interference and subversion and focus 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 counterintelligence activities

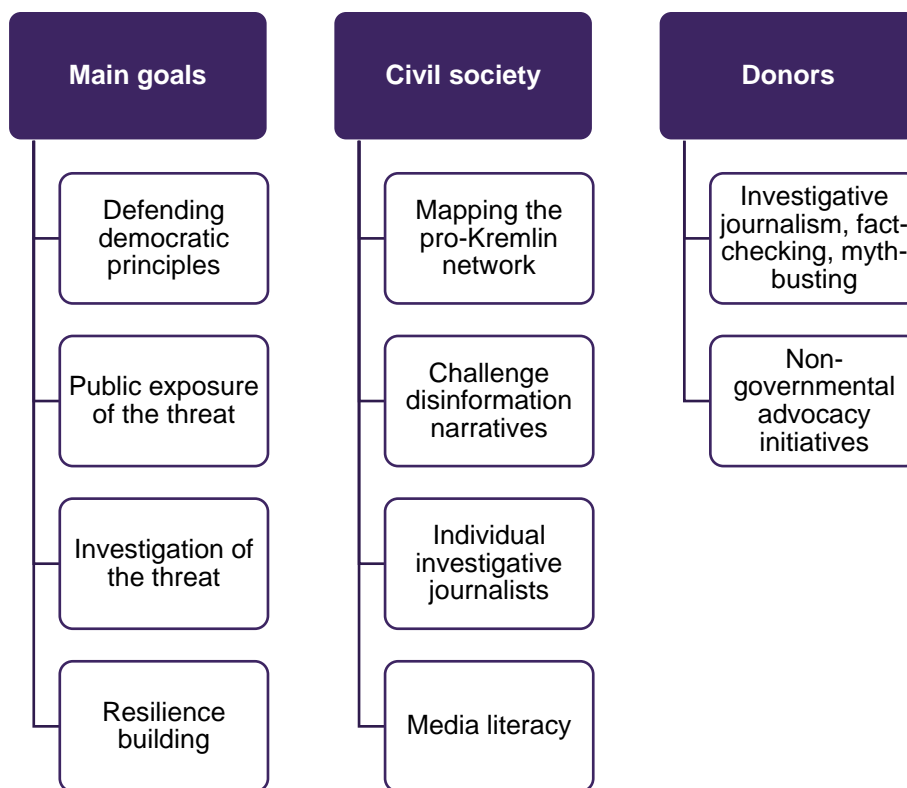
Rating	Description	Symptom	Criteria
0	Collaboration	The intelligence services are taking steps limiting the ability of the society to counter hostile interference and subversion.	There are cases of unlawful investigation or attacks on domestic journalists, threats against the local population, etc.
1	Ignorance	The intelligence services are not concerned with hostile interference and subversion in any way.	The intelligence services do not express concern about hostile interference and subversion. They do not name disinformation and influence operations in their reports or in any public statements as a security threat.
2	Acknowledgement of the threat	The intelligence services are aware of the Threat 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 analyze the issue or describe its different aspects, perpetrators and motives.
3	Understanding the threat	The intelligence services have a deeper 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 are able to analyze the issue and identify its channels, perpetrators and motives.
4	Occasional interference	The intelligence services understand the issue and, in one or two cases, act in order to counter disinformation or influence operations.	Besides addressing hybrid threats in detail in public documents and statements, there are single cases when the intelligence services acted in order to counter them, i.e. exposing Russian spies or investigating 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. Russian connections are frequently investigated and exposed in the country, training programs for public officials and/or cyberattack countermeasures.

Evaluation of countermeasures taken by the EU Member States⁵

	EU28	Political acknowledgement of the threat	Government counter- activities	Counter- intelligence activities	Total
“Collaborators”	Cyprus	0	0	0	0
	Greece	0	0	0	0
“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
“The hesitant”	Croatia	2	1	1	4
	Ireland	1	2	1	4
	Bulgaria	1	1	2	4
	Slovakia	2	2	1	5
	Belgium	2	2	2	6
“The awakened”	Spain	3	2	2	7
	Netherlands	2	2	3	7
	France	4	3	1	8
	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
“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

⁵ <http://www.europeanvalues.net/eu28countermeasures2018/>

“Collaborators”



In countries where the government is denying the existence of the disinformation threat or even welcomes and assists Russian efforts to spread its influence (Cyprus or Greece), progress is going to be very slow and painful. Civil society must play a leadership role in these countries. However, it can also be significantly limited by non-supportive or even restrictive government attitudes. Still, that does not mean that nothing can be done to improve the situation.

Main goals

1. Defending democratic principles

- Politicians are under pressure from civil society to ensure fair elections, freedom of the press or transparency of political financing

2. Public exposure of the threat of Kremlin’s hostile subversion

- Local media or individual journalists inform about Kremlin’s hostile activities
- Expert community is aware of the scope of Kremlin’s hostile subversion

3. Investigation of the scope of the threat of Kremlin’s hostile subversion

- Anecdotal cases of Kremlin’s hostile subversion are being revealed by investigators

4. Building resilience amongst citizens

- Different segments of population are improving their media literacy and level of civic education

Due to the lack of political acknowledgement of the threat of Kremlin's hostile subversion, it cannot be expected from the political elites to start any meaningful action. The work of civil society is also going to be extremely difficult due to governmental measures which are often directly undermining any meaningful effort to counter Kremlin's subversion. This is why the activities have to be more subtle, gradually building the awareness and general resilience of the society. Only after this goal is reached, the public and the civil society can push back against the hostile activities. This can be supported by the following steps:

Civil society

The steps for representatives of civil society, academics or an activists starts with understanding the scope of the problem, mapping the main actors in your country spreading the Kremlin's influence and increasing public awareness about the issue. Basically, the main goal is to put the problem on the agenda of concerned experts and parties which can help publicize the matter and start communicating the problem inside and outside the country. Often the activities will not be focused strictly on the Kremlin's influence, but on basic democratic principles, law enforcement and improving the general environment in order to enable more civil society actors to work freely.

Mapping the pro-Kremlin network in your country

1. Civil society organizations should scrutinize and monitor politicians and institutions. Journalists, NGOs and think-tanks need to be transparent in reporting on and disclosing the political positions and actions of pro-Kremlin political entities. The complexity of this issue calls for a multidisciplinary approach under the NGO umbrella – investigation, political research, media, security, intelligence and foreign policy experts all need to work together.
2. Try to conduct research that maps the pro-Kremlin actors in your country and exposes the threat to as many people as possible. In order to cover the entire spectrum of Kremlin tools, cooperation is necessary between think-tankers, journalists, academics and other experts.
3. Once you have a clear understanding of your local environment and basic research has been done, it will help to coordinate and compare your data with foreign civil society organizations. Working with international partners makes it easier to get sufficient funding from foreign donors. It also helps create international networks for communicating, sharing information and exchanging experiences. International attention also increases domestic interest in your research.
4. Investigative work by journalists and think-tankers can help raise awareness about your research. That is why it is important to establish informal communication channels with such entities before the research is published. Plan your PR strategy and set research goals ahead of time, otherwise it is nearly impossible to reach your target audience.
5. When conducting research, don't be satisfied with the final report. Arrange your data and analysis so that readers can access them without reading a long report. For example, establish a website with interactive summaries of your results, create an infographic from your research or organize advocacy trips to discuss your results with relevant policy makers.
6. Contribute to the international community of think-tankers and researchers with new ideas about methodological frameworks or use already existing ones, when available.

Challenge disinformation narratives

7. Publicly challenging disinformation narratives must be intentional & frequent. Pro-Kremlin politicians and NGOs need to be publicly challenged and brought to accountability for their actions. Possible approaches to accomplish this include public campaigns or research & investigative efforts.
8. Watchdog and analytical, non-governmental institutions such as activist think-tanks need to engage daily with disinformation projects. Precise weekly monitoring of specific disinformation campaigns and trends is mandatory. This kind of work needs to produce a publicly available map of pro-Kremlin influence and a list of the systematic publishers of pro-Kremlin disinformation.
9. At least one local, competent NGO should regularly send disinformation cases to the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force.
10. The same examples of disinformation should be publicized and scrutinized locally, via as many channels as possible, including social media, regional media outlets and TV stations.
11. Local, regional debates need to be conducted. NGOs and think-tanks need to engage with pro-Atlantic political entities. Outreach activities such as multi-partisan debates between regional politicians should be conducted in order to mitigate the perception that this effort is foreign or comes from “the establishment.”
12. Expand your audience by engaging the public in fact-checking. For example, give them the opportunity to report news or request fact-checking for specific news.

Individual investigative journalists should contribute to counter efforts

13. Apart from think-tankers and activists, established journalists can contribute significantly to exposing the problem. Journalists in “collaborator” countries have difficult jobs already because their governments often do not appreciate the advantages of media freedom. But even individual, quiet work by individual investigators can move the country one step closer to better understanding the scope of the threat.
14. In order to overcome financial and personal obstacles, investigative journalists should outsource some of their work and cooperate with civil society organizations.
15. Engage with citizens and respond to their direct needs in order to gain authenticity and credibility.

Teaching media literacy

16. Think-tankers and NGOs conducting fact-checking activities should use their skills and knowledge to maximize their efforts by teaching the rest of society how to fact check. Workshops on civic and media literacy should be taught at primary and secondary schools. Teachers also need to be educated about working with information and how to distinguish disinformation.
17. Research on propaganda and populism can be added to existing class curriculums, instead of being treated as a separate issue.
18. Take the needs and preferences of specific age groups into consideration. In an ideal case, members of the target audience should be involved in the planning process.

Donors

Support investigative journalism and fact-checking and myth-busting initiatives

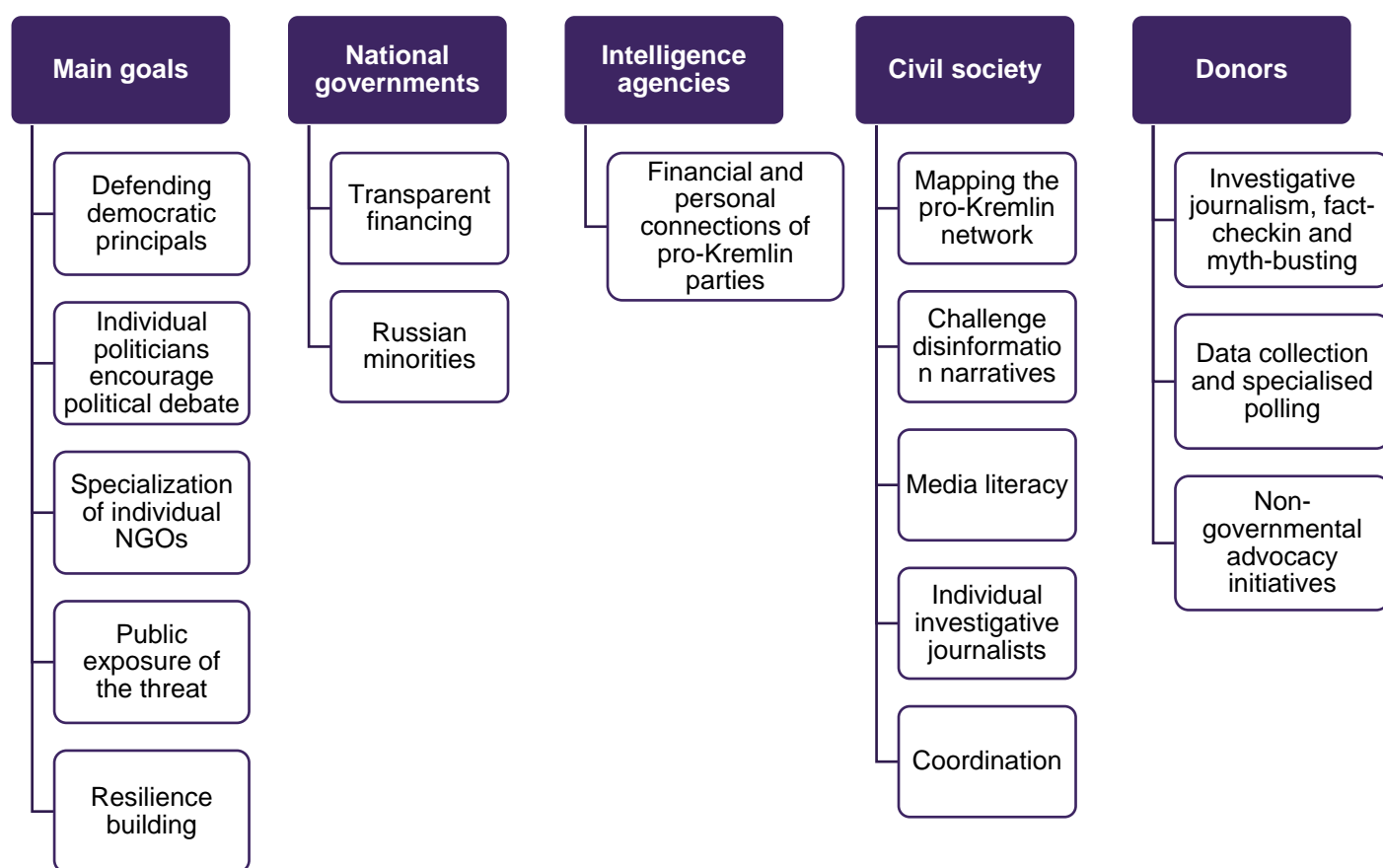
1. Support national and international investigative journalists and projects working on exposés of disinformation operations. Provide short and midterm grants to individual journalists and investigative groups for specific topics or periods of time (e.g., electoral campaigns in targeted countries).
2. Support national and international fact-checking organizations investigating disinformation content. Provide long-term grants to fact-checking organizations.

Support non-government advocacy initiatives aiming to place this issue on the public agenda

3. Support activities that will put this issue on the public and political agenda by demonstrating the urgency and complexity of the threat. Enhance activities using expert knowledge for advocating towards specific policy makers on the international level.
4. Identify a regular platform for the in-depth exchange of best practices between leading advocacy organizations. For example, specialized restricted sessions can be held at major conferences like GLOBSEC, MSC, and WSF, or at specialized events like the STRATCOM SUMMIT
5. Organize a small, specialized team of reliable think-tank experts who will constantly brief key European and U.S. policy makers at the parliamentary and executive levels. Enhance the Tour de Capitals advocacy initiative, something that is already being pursued by the IRI Beacon Project.

“Countries in Denial”

The second group of countries also faces challenges posed by the attitude of national governments, but there are visible bits and pieces of established NGOs or individual policy-makers who are concerned and actively try to dedicate their work to countering the Kremlin’s influence. These efforts have to be supported, better coordinated and must use well-planned methods to increase the number of actors who understand the problem.



Main goals

1. Defending of general democratic principals

- a. Politicians are under pressure from civil society to ensure fair elections, freedom of the press or transparency of political financing

2. Individual politicians have to include countering Kremlin's hostile subversion in their agenda

- a. Individual politicians raise the issue in relevant forums
- b. Individual politicians raise the issue in national media

3. Individual NGOs have to start specializing on countering Kremlin's hostile subversion

- a. Individual NGOs conduct specialized research in order to get relevant data exposing the threat
- b. Individual NGOs are part of international networks of specialized organizations

4. More comprehensive investigation and mapping of the scope of Kremlin's hostile subversion has to be conducted

- a. Individual NGOs and journalists are focusing on systematic investigation of the threat

5. Building resilience amongst citizens

- a. Different segments of population are improving their media literacy and level of civic education

In many of the countries in denial (like Hungary or Italy), the main goal for civil society is to watchdog and defend democratic principles like transparency of political financing or freedom of the press. However, unlike in the previous group, there is space for individual politicians (most probably from the democratic opposition) to take the issue of countering of Kremlin's hostile subversion on their agenda. They should stir the debate about the threat and express the need for at least low-key counter-measures to be taken.

The situation is slightly different in countries where the lack of political debate about Kremlin's hostile subversion has been caused mostly due to the lack of publicly known direct exposure to it. Even in regions like this, however, proper investigation and exposure of any possible Kremlin's hostilities should be conducted. Resilience building amongst society stays being one of the priorities as well.

Active NGOs should start building their expertise and specialization in this field, so that they can be better equipped and prepared for countering Kremlin's hostile subversion. They should start creating networks amongst civil society and contribute in areas where the response of the governments remains weak.

National governments

The task for individual politicians is to push for measures which will later enable more concrete steps to counter the Kremlin's influence. Generally, the goal is to improve the overall resilience and level of protection of the democratic system, making it more difficult for Russian interests to penetrate.

Ensure transparent financing of political parties

1. Each member state should have a very strict legal framework which would disallow (or would effectively penalize) non-transparent funding of political parties or political candidates. The Kremlin tries to support radical and extremist political powers in Europe therefore states need to tighten their legislature in order to make the transparency of funding legally binding and effectively enforceable.

Do not ignore Russian minorities

2. Not all countries in this category have significant Russian minorities, but even if their numbers are small, they should not be underestimated. The Russian Federation often uses individuals or NGOs as an intelligence springboard or for mobilization. The idea is not to persecute this ethnic group, but to understand their behaviour, needs and preferences.
3. Russian minorities need to be studied, talked to and supported in order to avoid grievances. Each national government needs to have precise knowledge regarding the situation of and trends within its minorities.
4. Development and implementation of specific measures to integrate Russian-language minorities are needed, especially considering lessons learned from the Baltic region. Special interest must be focused on giving them access to independent and objective Russian-language media. Genuine grievances need to be addressed and no generalization should be used.
5. Conduct sociological research amongst Russian minorities in order to understand their political behaviour and media consumption habits.
6. Give Russian students the opportunity to study in their language, especially if bilingual education has a tradition in your country. However, work on increasing the quality of education in the national language, so that even Russian-speaking citizens have an incentive to choose a non-Russian school.
7. The state should be aware of the activities of Russian non-governmental organizations. It is crucial to be wary of those which appear independent but in reality defend the Russian regime and aggressive policies. Conversely, support of truly independent organizations helping Russian minorities and their integration is needed.

Intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies

1. The financial and personal connections of pro-Kremlin politicians and parties to the Russian regime and its proxies need to be followed and (potentially publicly) disclosed since they pose a risk to national security.

Civil society

Mapping the pro-Kremlin network in your country

1. Civil society organizations should scrutinize and act as watchdogs for politicians and institutions. Reporting on the political positions and actions of pro-Kremlin political entities needs to be done transparently and contextualized by journalists, NGOs and think-tanks. The complexity of this issue calls for a multidisciplinary approach under the NGO umbrella – investigation, political research, media, security, intelligence and foreign-policy expertise must come together.
2. NGOs should try their best to launch research mapping pro-Kremlin actors in your country and expose the threat to as many people as possible. In order to cover the varied range of the Kremlin's tools, cooperation is necessary between think-tankers, journalists, academics and other experts.
3. Once you have a clear understanding of your local environment and the basic research has been done, it is useful to coordinate and compare your data with foreign civil society organizations. Working with international partners makes it easier to get sufficient funding by foreign donors, but especially it helps create networks for communication, information sharing and exchanging experiences between them. International attention given to research also increases interest in it domestically.
4. Engagement with investigative journalists or investigative work by think-tankers themselves can raise public and media attention on the research. Use or create informal communication channels with the media ahead of the publication of the research. Plan a PR strategy and set the goals of the research project ahead of time, otherwise it is close to impossible to reach out to the target audience.
5. When conducting a research project, don't be satisfied with the final report. Use the data and your results in such a way that the recipients will be able to get back to them without reading a long report. For example, establish a website with interactive summaries of your results, produce infographics referencing your research or organize advocacy trips and discuss your results with relevant policy-makers.
6. Contribute to the international community of think-tankers and researchers with new methodological frameworks or use pre-existing ones if available.
7. Reach out to politicians as directly as possible with a clear summary and brief analysis of the data you collected. If there is at least partial political acknowledgment among the government or the opposition, they can use these results as talking points.
8. A public list of companies paying to advertise on pro-Kremlin conspiracy outlets and official Kremlin "media" needs to be established by watch-dog NGOs. Those companies need to be questioned as to why they are advertising on such platforms and why are they threatening their reputation. National businesses and SME associations need to be engaged within this campaign as much as possible.

Challenge disinformation narratives

9. Public challenging of disinformation narratives must be strong & regular. Pro-Kremlin politicians and NGOs need to be forced into accountability not only regarding their funding, but moreover their actions. Public campaigns or research & investigative efforts are an effective path to success.
10. Watchdog and analytical non-governmental institutions such as activist think-tanks need to engage in daily anti-disinformation projects. Precise and weekly monitoring of specific disinformation campaigns and trends is required. This needs to result in a publicly available map of pro-Kremlin influence and a list of systematic publishers of pro-Kremlin disinformation.
11. At least one local and competent NGO should regularly send disinformation cases to the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force.
12. These same examples of disinformation should be publicized and scrutinized locally, by as many channels as possible. Use social media, but also try to work with regional media outlets or TV stations.
13. Debates mainly in regions with citizens need to be conducted. NGOs and think-tanks need to engage with pro-Atlantic political entities. Outreach activities such as multi-partisan debates by politicians in the region should be conducted in order to mitigate the perception of the “establishment against the people”.
14. Expand your audience by engaging the public in the fact-checking process. For example, give them the opportunity to report or request fact-checking of specific news.
15. Detailed and regular polling on the impact of disinformation must be conducted. Lack of relevant data on measuring the impact of various disinformation techniques and methods is one of the key problems when tailoring counter-measures. Comparable national polls need to be conducted on a regular as well as ad-hoc basis to establish knowledge on what works in which national and local contexts. Those polls should be sponsored by international institutions and foundations.

Teaching media literacy

16. Think-tankers and NGOs conducting fact-checking activities can use their skills and knowledge best if they can also teach them to the rest of society. Civic and media literacy workshops should be conducted at primary and secondary schools. Teachers also need to be educated on working with information and how to distinguish it from disinformation.
17. Research on propaganda and populism can be included amongst other topics in educational programs and classes, not only as a single issue.
18. Take the needs and preferences of specific age groups into consideration. In an ideal case, members of the target audience should be involved in the planning process.

19. Individual investigative journalists should contribute to the counter-efforts

20. Apart from think-tankers and activists, established journalists can contribute significantly to exposing the problem. Many in the countries from this group, have difficult jobs as it is, since their governments often do not appreciate the advantages of media freedom. But even individual and

more low-key work by individual investigators can move the country one step closer towards better understanding the scope of the threat.

21. In order to overcome financial and personal obstacles, investigative journalists should outsource some of their work and cooperate with civil society organizations.
22. Engage citizens and respond to their direct needs in order to gain authenticity and credibility.

Create a wider network and coordinate your roles

23. You need a network to defeat a network. The Kremlin's various tools of hostile influence are best countered by networks of individuals and organizations with different kinds of positions, skills and approaches.
24. Entities capable of cooperation and coordination are easier to promote abroad, which then helps with ensuring funding, the lack of which is a common problem for non-governmental organizations.
25. If the political culture allows it, networks should include political representatives, government officials and public administrators. It will help forge a common understanding of the problem and its needs as well as enable a division of labour.
26. Networks can also help with technical assistance and other capacities non-governmental organizations could not afford individually. They will also expand their outreach since they can help each other with the promotion of their activities.
27. Generally, the involvement of the private sector is needed in existing networks. Experts and people highly focused on single-issues sometimes lack skills or knowledge regarding marketing, IT or other areas which are very useful in countering foreign influence. Try to reach out to companies which acknowledge their civic responsibilities.

Donors

Support investigative journalism and fact-checking and myth-busting initiatives

1. Support national and international investigative journalists and projects working on exposés of disinformation outlets. Provide short and midterm grants to individual journalists and investigative groups on specific topics or periods of time (e.g., electoral campaigns in targeted countries).
2. Boost national and international fact-checking organisations investigating the content of disinformation stories. Provide long-term grants to fact-checking organisations and to the in-house fact-checkers of major publishing houses in selected vulnerable countries

Support data collection and specialised polling

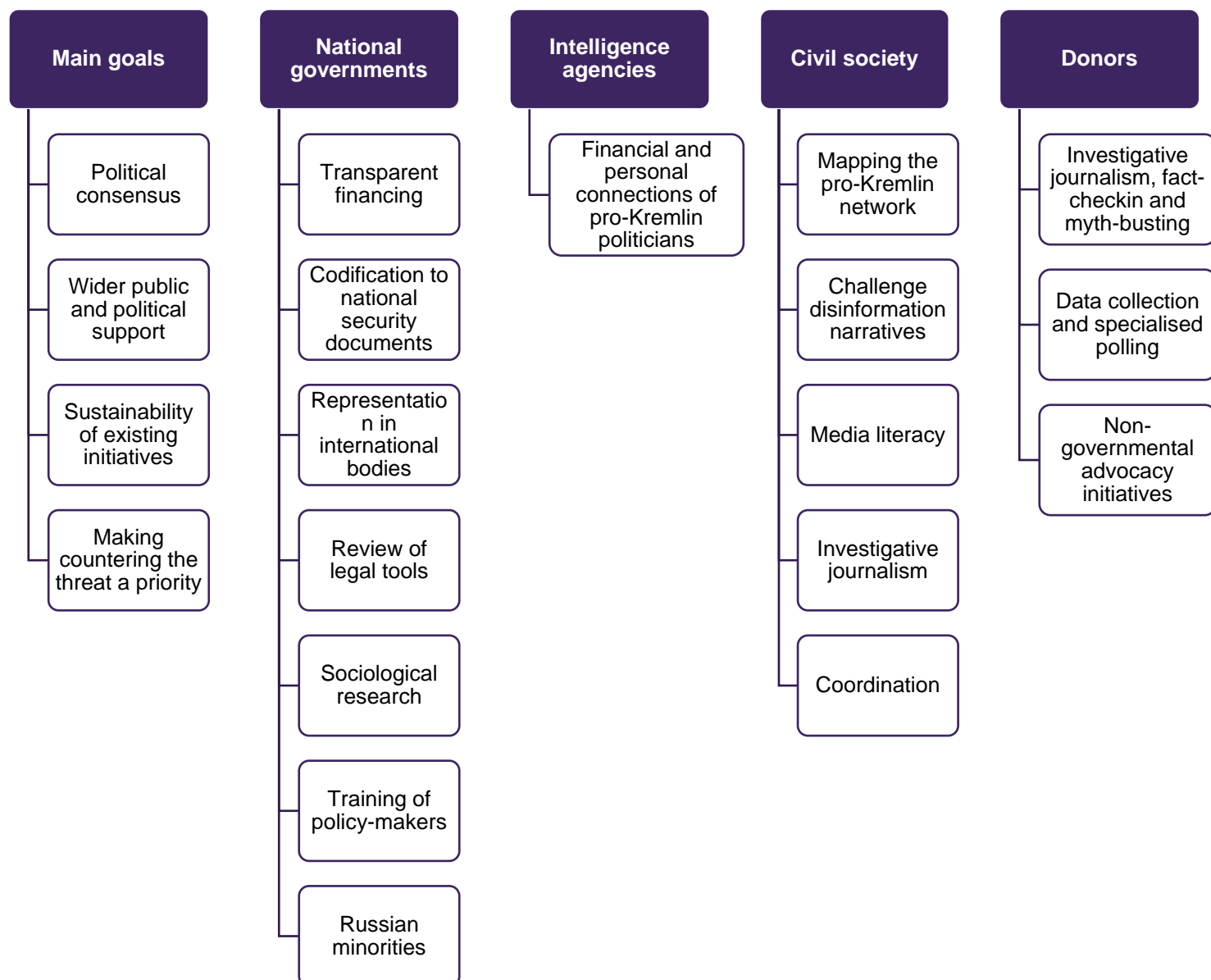
3. Support projects that will deliver credible data on the structure and intensity of disinformation campaigns. Contract a selected group of reliable think-tank experts who have experience with empirical research in this field and have them prepare a methodological handbook for practical research, including definitions, criteria, and methods. Based on this handbook, create a grant scheme for the support of empirical research projects in selected countries

Support non-governmental advocacy initiatives aiming to place this issue on the public agenda

4. Support activities that can push this issue onto the public and political agenda by demonstrating the urgency and complexity of the threat. Enhance activities where expert knowledge can be used for advocacy with selected policy-makers on the international level.
5. Find a regular platform for an in-depth exchange of best practices among leading organisations in the advocacy field. For example, specialised restricted sessions can be held at big league conferences like GLOBSEC, MSC, and WSF, or at specialised events like STRATCOM SUMMIT
6. Contract a small specialised team of reliable think-tank experts who will constantly brief key European and U.S. policy-makers at the parliamentary and executive level. Enhance the Tour de Capitals advocacy initiative already being pursued by the IRI Beacon Project.

“The Hesitant”

Hesitant countries do not generally consider countering Kremlin’s hostile subversion a priority on the political level, however they already have some initiatives in the governmental or non-governmental level underway. They might be focused more on the hostilities conducted in Eastern Europe (i.e. Belgium) or the main weigh of countering the threat might still lie on the civil society (i.e. Slovakia). However, the already established governmental or non-governmental entities create more space for advocating for a more comprehensive response. Many of these countries is slowly starting to realize that the threat of Kremlin’s subversive operation exists, however the political elites do not pay enough attention to it or lack motivation to conduct more meaningful steps.



Main goals

1. Building political consensus amongst governing politicians

- a. Individual governing politicians are admitting the existence of the threat in national media and in relevant forums
- b. Majority of the governing politicians is not actively preventing meaningful action from taking place

2. Gaining wider support for activities countering Kremlin's hostile subversion

- a. Established initiatives countering Kremlin's influence are well communicated to the public
- b. The public supports these activities and is aware of their goals and meaning

3. Making individual governmental initiatives sustainable

- a. Established initiatives are not dependent on ad hoc support of individual politicians, they are not threatened by minor changes in the government
- b. Established initiatives have sufficient funding to conduct long-term planning

4. Making countering Kremlin's hostile influence one of the main priorities

- a. The threat is codified in strategic documents as one of the priority issues
- b. The issue is being raised in the diplomatic sphere as one of the foreign policy priorities

The political parties, individual politicians and established NGOs have to pro-actively advocate and gain supporters for more comprehensive counter-measures, they also have to try to ensure sustainability for them (i.e. by codifying the threat into strategic documents). In order to do that, they have to coordinate and gradually build consensus amongst governing policy-makers. Besides anecdotal exposure of the threat, it is highly necessary to more systematically measure the impact of various tools used by the Kremlin's machinery to spread its influence. Therefore the initiatives which are already underway can become more efficient.

National governments

Ensure transparent financing of political parties

1. Each member state should have a very strict legal framework which would disallow (or would effectively penalize) non-transparent funding of political parties or political candidates. The Kremlin tries to support radical and extremist political powers in Europe therefore states need to tighten their legislature in order to make the transparency of funding legally binding and effectively enforceable.

Codify disinformation efforts to national security documents

2. Targeted and systematic disinformation influence by the Russian Federation should be defined as a threat to national security and to the democratic legal system. This should be explicitly codified within the national Security Strategy and the Foreign Policy Strategy or their equivalents.

Your country should be represented in international bodies active in the field

3. Send a seconded national expert to the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force. This will provide you with a representative there who knows the jargon of the field and understands the local media environment. It will significantly contribute to EU efforts to expose the Kremlin's disinformation activities.
4. NATO STRATCOMCOE should be supported and used by more member states. The work of the NATO Centre of Excellence for Strategic Communication needs to be used more often by national administrations. Joint exercises or trainings, including knowledge sharing, should be conducted on a regular basis, primarily at the request of member states. Additional funding from member states should be provided for NATO STRATCOMCOE. National disinformation - analysis teams should be the main partners for STRATCOMCOE, possibly serving as liaisons to national institutions such as the Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry, Foreign Ministry and intelligence services. Intensive STRATCOM training programs for (a) national civil and military personnel, and (b) like-minded civil society actors should be increased in capacity and frequency. Member states should request such training missions.

Review available legal tools

5. A national review of available legal tools should be conducted. Juristic experts need to be trained with emphasis placed on this specific topic of foreign subversion. If an existing case is available (e.g. the national mutation of Sputnik), states should proceed once they are fully prepared for the legal case. The first direction has already been shown by OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

Understand the attitude of your society

6. The state needs to have precise and up-to-date knowledge on geopolitical attitudes and the general vulnerabilities & grievances of its society. Only then can the state tailor specific long-term or urgent measures targeting such weak spots. This activity usually lays at the Extremism Department of the Interior Ministry which possesses knowledge and extensive sociological data. One possible solution is to have the Interior Ministry provide a long-term grant to the Academy of Sciences or respected sociological university institutes to conduct polling and research on a quarterly basis.

Train the vulnerable policy-makers and decision-makers

7. National politicians, diplomats and high-level state bureaucrats are obvious targets for disinformation and influence campaigns, intimidation or intelligence theft attempts. Those vulnerable individuals often fall into hostile active measures without initially knowing or realizing it. Interior ministries and counterintelligence agencies need to find an appropriate way to train such vulnerable groups and provide them with common standards on information security and protocols.

Work with Russian minorities

8. Not all countries in this category have significant Russian minorities, but even if their numbers are small, they should not be underestimated. The Russian Federation often uses individuals or NGOs as an intelligence springboard or for mobilization. The idea is not to persecute this ethnic group, but to understand their behaviour, needs and preferences.

9. Russian minorities need to be studied, talked to and supported in order to avoid grievances. Each national government needs to have precise knowledge regarding the situation of and trends within its minorities.
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Intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies

Track financial and personal connections

1. The financial and personal connections of pro-Kremlin politicians and parties to the Russian regime and its proxies need to be monitored and (potentially publicly) disclosed since they pose a risk to national security.

Set your priorities straight

2. National governments need to set clear priorities for their counterintelligence agencies – i.e. exposing Russian agents & co-operators. Such prioritization will translate into more resources and knowledge for the respective departments of intelligence services. Once captured, legal proceedings need to be initiated where feasible (i. e. such as high-treason cases run by the Estonian Counterintelligence Service KAPO). Those proceedings need to be as public as possible in order to raise awareness for the phenomenon and exert deterrence.
3. If there are projects which are systematically hostile towards liberal democratic values and the security interests of a state, they must be placed on investigative journalist and counterintelligence agency watch lists. It is in the public's interest to know which participants and fund origins are behind disinformation projects. As such, investigation and public disclosure is required. It should be a habitual practice to disclose the ownership and staff of any media outlet project with journalistic social peer pressure being the only effective way to achieve this.

Civil society

Mapping the pro-Kremlin network in your country

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14. Expand your audience by engaging the public in the fact-checking process. For example, give them the opportunity to report or request fact-checking of specific news.
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Investigative journalists should contribute to the counter-efforts

19. Apart from think-tankers and activists, established journalists can contribute significantly to exposing the problem. In the countries from this group, have difficult jobs as it is, since their governments often do not appreciate the advantages of media freedom. But even individual and more low-key work by individual investigators can move the country one step closer towards better understanding the scope of the threat.
20. In order to overcome financial and personal obstacles, investigative journalists should outsource some of their work and cooperate with civil society organizations.

21. National and international professional journalistic associations should be very active in this field. For example, they should adjust their code of conduct, develop and use their ethical commissions against those who systematically engage in disinformation and hide behind the cover of journalism. Those individuals and projects should be put under public and journalistic scrutiny and publicly expel those who discourage such scrutiny.
22. Media outlets and journalistic associations need to develop training programs for journalists on the modus operandi of disinformation campaigns and on the capabilities available to help reveal disinformation. Faculties of journalism need to incorporate special programs into their curriculums, supported by the state, and potentially provide additional funding while simultaneously making it their fight against disinformation as well as a national security priority. International lesson-sharing through OSCE, Council of Europe or non-governmental actions would also be required.

Create a wider network and coordinate your roles

23. You need a network to defeat a network. The Kremlin's various tools of hostile influence are best countered by networks of individuals and organizations with different kinds of positions, skills and approaches.
24. Entities capable of cooperation and coordination are easier to promote abroad, which then helps with ensuring funding, the lack of which is a common problem for non-governmental organizations.
25. If the political culture allows it, networks should include political representatives, government officials and public administrators. It will help forge a common understanding of the problem and its needs as well as enable a division of labour.
26. Networks can also help with technical assistance and other capacities non-governmental organizations could not afford individually. They will also expand their outreach since they can help each other with the promotion of their activities.
27. Generally, the involvement of the private sector is needed in existing networks. Experts and people highly focused on single-issues sometimes lack skills or knowledge regarding marketing, IT or other areas which are very useful in countering foreign influence. Try to reach out to companies which acknowledge their civic responsibilities.

Donors

Support investigative journalism and fact-checking and myth-busting initiatives

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Support data collection and specialised polling

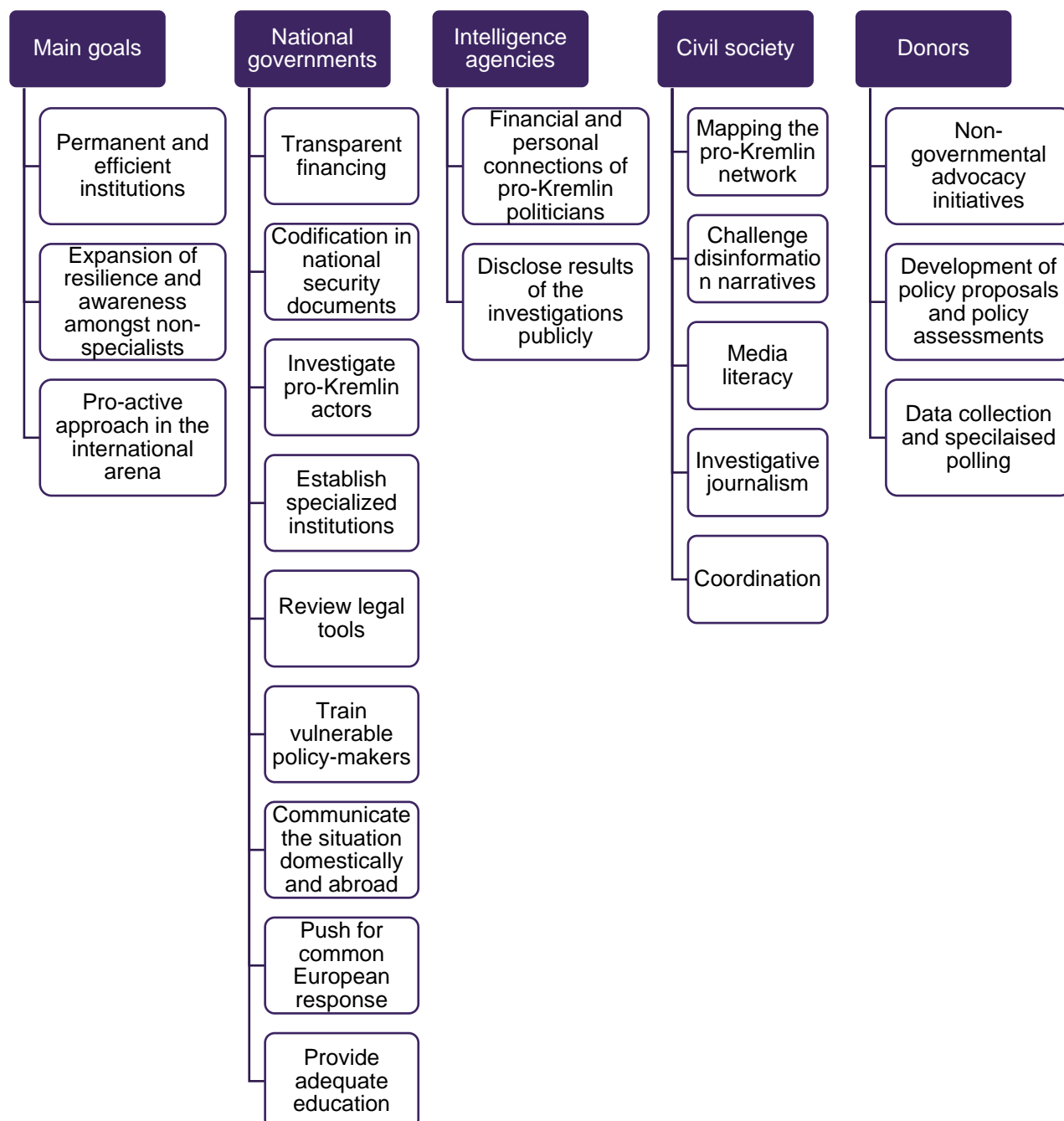
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Support non-governmental advocacy initiatives aiming to place this issue on the public agenda

4. Support activities that can push this issue onto the public and political agenda by demonstrating the urgency and complexity of the threat. Enhance activity where expert knowledge can be used for advocating towards selected policy-makers on the international level.
5. Find a regular platform for an in-depth exchange of best practices among leading organisations in the advocacy field. For example, specialised restricted sessions can be held at big league conferences like GLOBSEC, MSC, and WSF, or at specialised events like STRATCOM SUMMIT
6. Contract a small specialised team of reliable think-tank experts who will constantly brief key European and U.S. policy-makers at the parliamentary and executive level. Enhance the Tour de Capitals advocacy initiative already being pursued by the IRI Beacon Project.

“The Awakened”

The awakened countries are usually the ones which have already established a resilience to disinformation or have begun to work on specific counter-measures in various areas. Even though their activities might be more comprehensive, they might still lack sufficient coordination or lack some crucial components in order to be able to protect the country against Kremlin’s subversive influence completely. They also need to be more active on the international field, pro-actively support international bodies like the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force, and more visibly push for common European response to the problem. Their threat assessment and awareness of the scope of the threat allows them to start establishing specialized institutions which are going to target the more urgent problems these countries have.



Main goals

1. **Creating permanent and sustainable institutions to counter Kremlin's hostile subversion**
 - a. The government officials have sufficient knowledge about the scope and modus operandi of the threat in order to be able to conduct an institutionalized response
 - b. Majority of the governing politicians does not prevent the specialized institutions from working effectively
2. **Raising resilience and awareness of non-specialized government officials and politicians**
 - a. Not only individual politicians and officials, but also non-specialized policy-makers possess sufficient awareness of the threat in order to be trained and educated on the issue
 - b. Majority of the governing politicians and officials are aware of the activities of specialized institutions and understand their goals and meaning
3. **Pro-active approach on the international level**
 - a. Governing politicians are actively using international institutions responding to Kremlin's hostile subversion
 - b. Governing politicians are raising the issue on international forums and actively push for more active approach of international institutions to counter the threat

National governments

Codify disinformation efforts to national security documents

1. Targeted and systematic disinformation influence by the Russian Federation should be defined as a threat to national security and to the democratic legal system. This should be explicitly codified within the national Security Strategy and the Foreign Policy Strategy or their equivalents.

Ensure transparent financing of political parties

2. Each member state should have a very strict legal framework which would disallow (or would effectively penalize) non-transparent funding of political parties or political candidates. The Kremlin tries to support radical and extremist political powers in Europe therefore states need to tighten their legislature in order to make the transparency of funding legally binding and effectively enforceable.

Investigate and scrutinize pro-Kremlin actors

3. Elected politicians should establish special parliamentary committees to investigate pro-Kremlin influence within the state. The committee should conduct public hearings, which would also contribute to raising public awareness.
4. Pro-Kremlin politicians should be ousted from sensitive positions such as security or defense committees, especially intelligence oversight committees, via regular parliamentary procedures.
5. Task counterintelligence agencies with conducting comprehensive reports on pro-Kremlin politicians, influences, and their modus operandi. These need not be public, but can serve the

government in providing a scale of the level of infiltration of hostile influence in the national political arena.

Establish specialized institutions

6. Establish a national specialized centre for disinformation analysis and strategic communication at the Ministry of Interior. Such a team should be multi-disciplinary (foreign policy, national security, homeland security, communication and media experts) and headed by a leader trusted by key members of the cabinet. The team should cooperate and coordinate with trusted professionals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, the Army, the Police and all national intelligence services.
7. The mission statement of the centre needs to be very clear and transparent, and ideally well communicated to the public before launch. If any values or stances are promoted by the centre, they must be explicit and public.
8. The centre cannot avoid communication and create space for disinformation and speculations if it does not have to. The information void can be solved either through political decisions to declassify information or via non-governmental informal networks.
9. The centre should contribute to the overall resilience of the democratic system by educating, training and raising the awareness of state administration officers within relevant ministries as well as political candidates.
10. The centre should work with politicians and political parties while implementing a common strategic communication framework. This kind of work should not be public, however there must be restrictions in order to prevent these centres from becoming political weapons.
11. Appoint a national governmental coordinator for countering disinformation campaigns who could also serve as the public face of the process of launching counter-measures against influence operations.

Review the legal tools

12. A national review of available legal tools should be conducted. Judicial experts need to be trained with an emphasis placed on this specific topic. If an existing case is underway (e.g. national mutation of Sputnik), states should proceed once they are fully prepared for the legal case.
13. Establish a task force of media law experts, conduct analysis on whether the existing legal framework is sufficient and identify which blind spots or discrepancies need to be covered and addressed.

Understand societal attitudes

14. The state needs to have precise and up-to-date knowledge on geopolitical attitudes and the general vulnerabilities and grievances of its society. Only then can the state tailor specific long-term or urgent measures targeting weak spots. This activity usually lies with the Extremism Department of Interior Ministries who possess deep knowledge and extensive sociological data. One possible strategy is to have the Interior Ministry provide a long-term grant to the Academy of Sciences or alternatively to respected sociological university institutes in order to conduct polling and research on a quarterly basis.

Ensure that representatives of the state are not vulnerable

15. Politicians, diplomats and high-level state bureaucrats should be trained and provided with common standards and protocols on information security.

Clearly name, describe and communicate the situation domestically and abroad

16. Conduct advocacy trips to allied states and institutions which dispose of limited knowledge and interest in the issue. Travel to states which already have full-scale strategies implemented to learn more about their approach. Present evidence of the hostile subversive operations in your country publicly.
17. Monitor and publicize connections between the Kremlin and extremist groups. These connections need to be conceptualized within state counter-extremism strategies. State security institutions need to effectively track these activities and make them public. Put these activities on the foreign policy agenda where appropriate.

Push for a common European response

18. Pressure the European Commission to increase the capacity of the East STRATCOM Team. The currently serving nationally seconded experts supported by volunteers from Member States and Eastern Partnership countries should be reinforced by a few dozen communication, policy and intelligence experts. The system of contributors to the disinformation database should be professionalized.
19. Support and make use of the NATO Stratcom CoE. Joint exercises and trainings, including knowledge sharing, should be conducted regularly at the request of member states. Request training missions for national civil and military personnel and like-minded civil society actors.
20. Concerned countries should follow the British example and create a common trust fund or endowment fund for strategic communication & political resilience. This fund would support bold projects with innovative approaches which are often highly political and are unable to access usual EU/NATO funding. 10 million EUR in annual funding would be an appropriate start

Provide adequate education on all levels

21. Identify strategic university programs and find sustainable long-term plans for their funding and quality-control. This way you will be able to produce more experts on specific issues, i.e. Eastern European or Russian studies.
22. Not all of the countries in this category have significant Russian minorities, but even if their numbers are relatively small, they should not be underestimated. The Russian Federation often uses individuals or NGOs as an intelligence springboard or for mobilization. The idea is not to persecute this ethnic group, but to understand their behaviour, needs and preferences.
23. Russian minorities need to be studied, talked to and supported to avoid grievances. Each national government needs to have precise knowledge regarding the situation and trends within its minorities.
24. The development and implementation of specific measures to integrate Russian-language minorities is needed, especially considering lessons learned from the Baltic region. Special attention must be exercised by giving them access to independent and objective Russian-language media. Genuine grievances need to be addressed and no generalization should be used.

25. Conduct sociological research amongst Russian minorities in order to understand their political behaviour and media consumption habits.
26. The state should be aware of the activities of Russian non-governmental organizations. It is crucial to be wary of NGOs which appear independent but in reality defend Russian regime and its aggressive policies. However, the support of truly independent organizations helping Russian minorities with their integration is needed.

Intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies

Track financial and personal connections

1. The financial and personal connections of pro-Kremlin politicians and parties to the Russian regime and its proxies need to be followed and (potentially publicly) disclosed since they pose a risk to national security.

Have clear priorities

2. National governments need to set clear priorities for their counterintelligence agencies, i.e. exposing Russian agents. Such prioritization will translate into more available resources and knowledge for the relevant departments of intelligence services.

Investigate and publicly disclose information about purveyors of disinformation

3. It is in the public interest to know which physical and legal persons are behind disinformation projects. Investigation and public disclosure are required.

Civil society

Mapping the pro-Kremlin network in your country

1. Civil society organizations should scrutinize and act as watchdogs for politicians and institutions. Reporting on the political positions and actions of pro-Kremlin political entities needs to be done transparently and contextualized by journalists, NGOs and think-tanks. The complexity of this issue calls for a multidisciplinary approach under the NGO umbrella – investigation, political research, media, security, intelligence and foreign-policy expertise must come together.
2. NGOs should try their best to launch research mapping pro-Kremlin actors in your country and expose the threat to as many people as possible. In order to cover the varied range of the Kremlin's tools, cooperation is necessary between think-tankers, journalists, academics and other experts.
3. Once you have a clear understanding of your local environment and the basic research has been done, it is useful to coordinate and compare your data with foreign civil society organizations. Working with international partners makes it easier to get sufficient funding by foreign donors, but especially it helps create networks for communication, information sharing and exchanging experiences between them. International attention given to research also increases interest in it domestically.
4. Engagement with investigative journalists or investigative work by think-tankers themselves can raise public and media attention on the research. Use or create informal communication channels with the media ahead of the publication of the research. Plan a PR strategy and set the goals of

the research project ahead of time, otherwise it is close to impossible to reach out to the target audience.

5. When conducting a research project, don't be satisfied with the final report. Use the data and your results in such a way that the recipients will be able to get back to them without reading a long report. For example, establish a website with interactive summaries of your results, produce infographics referencing your research or organize advocacy trips and discuss your results with relevant policy-makers.
6. Contribute to the international community of think-tankers and researchers with new methodological frameworks or use pre-existing ones if available.
7. Reach out to politicians as directly as possible with a clear summary and brief analysis of the data you collected. If there is at least partial political acknowledgment among the government or the opposition, they can use these results as talking points.
8. A public list of companies paying to advertise on pro-Kremlin conspiracy outlets and official Kremlin "media" needs to be established by watch-dog NGOs. Those companies need to be questioned as to why they are advertising on such platforms and why are they threatening their reputation. National businesses and SME associations need to be engaged within this campaign as much as possible.

Challenge disinformation narratives

9. Public challenging of disinformation narratives must be strong & regular. Pro-Kremlin politicians and NGOs need to be forced into accountability not only regarding their funding, but moreover their actions. Public campaigns or research & investigative efforts are an effective path to success.
10. Watchdog and analytical non-governmental institutions such as activist think-tanks need to engage in daily anti-disinformation projects. Precise and weekly monitoring of specific disinformation campaigns and trends is required. This needs to result in a publicly available map of pro-Kremlin influence and a list of systematic publishers of pro-Kremlin disinformation.
11. At least one local and competent NGO should regularly send disinformation cases to the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force.
12. These same examples of disinformation should be publicized and scrutinized locally, by as many channels as possible. Use social media, but also try to work with regional media outlets or TV stations.
13. Debates mainly in regions with citizens need to be conducted. NGOs and think-tanks need to engage with pro-Atlantic political entities. Outreach activities such as multi-partisan debates by politicians in the region should be conducted in order to mitigate the perception of the "establishment against the people".
14. Expand your audience by engaging the public in the fact-checking process. For example, give them the opportunity to report or request fact-checking of specific news.
15. Detailed and regular polling on the impact of disinformation must be conducted. Lack of relevant data on measuring the impact of various disinformation techniques and methods is one of the key problems when tailoring counter-measures. Comparable national polls need to be conducted on a regular as well as ad-hoc basis to establish knowledge on what works in which national and local contexts. Those polls should be sponsored by international institutions and foundations.

Investigative journalists should contribute to the counter-efforts

16. Apart from think-tankers and activists, established journalists can contribute significantly to exposing the problem.
17. National and international professional journalistic associations should be very active in this field. For example, they should adjust their code of conduct and develop and use their ethical commissions against those who systematically engage in disinformation while hiding behind the cover of journalism. Those individuals and projects should be put under public and journalistic scrutiny and those who discourage such scrutiny should be publicly expelled.
18. Media outlets and journalistic associations must develop training programs for journalists on the modus operandi of disinformation campaigns and on the existing tools used to reveal disinformation. Faculties of journalism need to incorporate special programs into their curriculums, supported by the state, and potentially provide additional funding while simultaneously making the fight against disinformation their own as well as a national security priority. The sharing of best-practices internationally through OSCE, the Council of Europe or non-governmental actions would also be required.

Create a wider network and coordinate your roles

19. You need a network to defeat a network. The Kremlin's various tools of hostile influence are best countered by networks of individuals and organizations with different kinds of positions, skills and approaches.
20. Entities capable of cooperation and coordination are easier to promote abroad, which then helps with ensuring funding, the lack of which is a common problem for non-governmental organizations.
21. If the political culture allows it, networks should include political representatives, government officials and public administrators. It will help forge a common understanding of the problem and its needs as well as enable a division of labour.
22. Networks can also help with technical assistance and other capacities non-governmental organizations could not afford individually. They will also expand their outreach since they can help each other with the promotion of their activities.
23. Generally, the involvement of the private sector is needed in existing networks. Experts and people highly focused on single-issues sometimes lack skills or knowledge regarding marketing, IT or other areas which are very useful in countering foreign influence. Try to reach out to companies which acknowledge their civic responsibilities.

Teaching media literacy

24. Think-tankers and NGOs conducting fact-checking activities can use their skills and knowledge best if they can also teach them to the rest of society. Civic and media literacy workshops should be conducted at primary and secondary schools. Teachers also need to be educated on working with information and how to distinguish it from disinformation.
25. Research on propaganda and populism can be included amongst other topics in educational programs and classes, not only as a single issue.
26. Take the needs and preferences of specific age groups into consideration. In an ideal case, members of the target audience should be involved in the planning process.

27. Teachers also need to be educated on working with reliable information and how to distinguish it from disinformation. Teachers' unions or associations need to work alongside specialized NGOs to provide teaching professionals with methodological frameworks, pedagogical tools and practical training in order to address this. Pedagogical Faculties need to incorporate special programs in their curriculums, while the state needs to officially support and require such efforts and potentially provide additional funding alongside its national security priorities.

Donors

Support non-governmental advocacy initiatives aiming to place disinformation on the public agenda

1. Support activities that can push this issue into the public and political agendas by demonstrating the urgency and complexity of the threat. Enhance activities where expert knowledge can be used in advocating towards selected policy-makers on the international level.
2. Find a regular platform for an in-depth exchange of best practices among leading organisations in the advocacy field. For example, specialised restricted sessions can be held at big league conferences like GLOBSEC, MSC, and WSF, or at specialised events like STRATCOM SUMMIT.
3. Contract a small specialised team of reliable think-tank experts who will constantly brief key European and U.S. policy-makers at the parliamentary and executive level. Enhance the Tour de Capitals advocacy initiative already being pursued by the IRI Beacon Project.

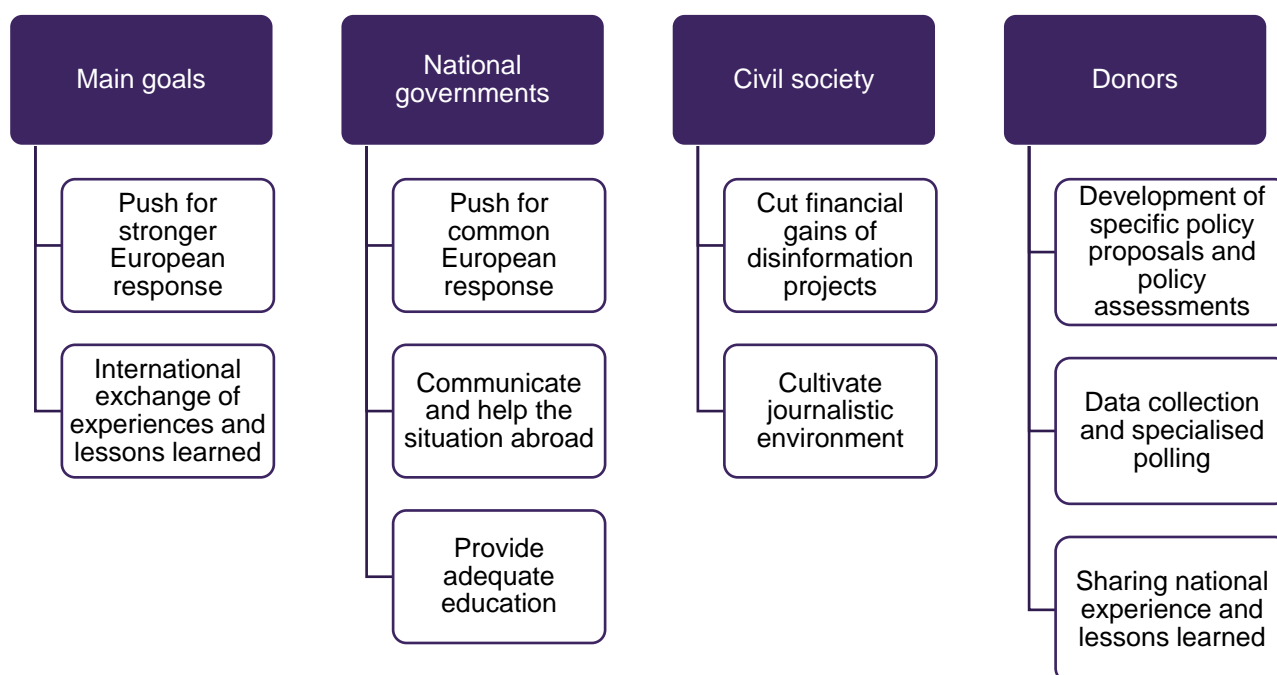
Support the development of specific policy proposals and assessments of existing policy initiatives from other countries in order to establish a national strategy

4. Boost solid policy assessment and development based on shared knowledge and experience from relevant countries which can be transplanted and implemented in your country.

Support data collection and specialised polling

5. Support projects that will deliver credible data on the structure and intensity of disinformation campaigns. Contract a selected group of reliable think-tank experts who have experience with empirical research in this field and have them prepare a methodological handbook for practical research, including definitions, criteria, and methods. Based on this handbook, create a grant scheme for the support of empirical research projects in selected countries

“The full-scale defenders”



These countries are exemplary in addressing disinformation with comprehensive counter-measures and long-term resilience building. Their main goals are to help other countries get on their level by pro-active international advocacy, providing more lessons learned and education and experience exchange amongst European countries.

Main goals

1. Political pressure within international bodies for a stronger European response

- Governing politicians are pro-actively calling for stronger response of international institutions to counter the threat

2. Exchange of experiences and lessons learned amongst European countries

- Governing politicians are raising the issue when dealing with other countries, actively designing or supporting projects for transnational exchange of experiences

National governments

Push for a common European response

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Clearly describe, communicate and help the situation abroad

4. Conduct advocacy trips to allied states and institutions which dispose of limited knowledge or interest in the issue. Travel as well to states with full-scale strategies to learn more about their approach. Present evidence of the hostile subversive operations in your country publicly.
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Civil society

Cut the financial gains of disinformation projects

1. A public list of companies paying to advertise on pro-Kremlin conspiracy outlets and official Kremlin “media” needs to be established by watch-dog NGOs. Those companies need to be questioned as to why they are advertising on such platforms and why are they are threatening their reputations.

Cultivate your journalistic environment

2. National and international professional journalistic associations should be very active in this field. For example, they should adjust their code of conduct and develop and use their ethical commissions against those who systematically engage in disinformation while hiding behind the cover of journalism. Those individuals and projects should be put under public and journalistic scrutiny and those who discourage such scrutiny should be publicly expelled.
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Support data collection and specialised polling

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Support activities focused on sharing national experience and lessons learned

3. Make use of the knowledge and experience of frontline countries for lesson-sharing with other concerned states. Identify competent lecturers and organize monthly workshops in concerned countries.

Annex 1 - Policy Questionnaire

1. Character of the initiative

1.1. Provide a brief description of the initiative

1.1.1. State / NGO / Private sector

1.1.2. Time of launch

1.1.3. Legal basis/status

1.1.4. Structure

1.1.5. Financing

1.1.6. Core activities

1.1.7. Stability and sustainability

2. Efficiency of the initiative (2 page max.)

2.1. What specific problem or threat does the initiative aim to counter?

2.2. What is the official mission or objective of the initiative?

2.3. What is the outreach of the initiative?

2.3.1. What is the size of its audience?

2.3.2. What are its access points to the target audience?

2.4. Is the initiative influential?

2.4.1. How often does it appear in the media? Is the coverage more positive or negative?

2.4.2. Does it have contact with relevant politicians or policy makers in general? Does it cooperate with them in an efficient way?

2.4.3. Does it contribute to the public debate?

2.5. Has the initiative revealed any new information or knowledge? Did these information get to the target audience?

2.6. Is the character of the initiative (state, NGO, private) the best one possible? Would the purpose of the initiative be better fulfilled by an initiative with different basis?

2.7. What are the main obstacles of the initiative preventing or limiting it in reaching its goals and fulfilling its purpose?

2.8. Does the initiative take any action in order to overcome these obstacles? If so, is it at least partly successful?

2. Summary of the lessons learned (Short summary, ½ page max.)

2.1 Identify three main findings about the initiative which should be replicated or prevented in other countries

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We help to face aggressive regimes, radicalisation within the society, the spread of authoritarian tendencies and extremist ideologies including Islamism.

We provide decision-makers with expert recommendations and we systematically watch and evaluate their performance. We consider active citizens, accountable politicians, political parties that fulfil their role, as well as cohesive society that shares the values of individual freedom, human dignity and equal rights to be the principle elements of a functioning liberal democracy.

Since 2005, as a non-governmental and a non-profitable organisation which is not linked to any political party, we have pursued research and educational activities. In addition to publishing analytical papers and commentaries for the media, we organise conferences, seminars and training sessions for both experts and the wider public. Our events provide a platform for dialogue amongst politicians, experts, journalists, businesspeople and students.

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