



## COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS

When fake news and cyber-attacks  
exacerbate crises

### AGENDA

23 and 24 May, Helsinki, Finland



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## ***Policy context***

Hybrid threats are a growing concern for social cohesion and continuity of governments. In recent years this new form of threat has come to occupy the minds of the crisis managers and security policy communities that must remain vigilant to new challenges to the governance of critical risks. The forms of hybrid risk campaigns vary, but what they have in common is an asymmetrical and insidious character. They can threaten to weaken a State and major state institutions or industries by exploiting vulnerabilities inherent to open and democratic societies. These threats require minimal resources and can leverage the low cost high impact influence of social media. From cyber-attacks on critical systems to disinformation campaigns on social and broadcast media, recent examples demonstrate the power of hybrid threats to erode social cohesion, trust in public institutions by citizens, electoral processes and continuity of government.

In light of the major risks posed by some hybrid threats for the functioning and resilience of our societies and economies, risk and crisis managers are keenly aware of the need to pay heightened attention to them. Managing hybrid threats is not a new field. Countries have long standing experience in measures to mitigate the impact of disinformation campaigns on political stability, the economy and key government functions. The use of the digital domain, however, has significantly altered this discipline. Many practices are untested and many benefits can come from sharing experience in a cohesive workshop setting. The mitigation measures to hybrid threats include developing countermeasures to false narratives and providing the right evidence to bear at the right moment. They also point to the need for strengthening public safety and national security services, which provide the front line capacity to identify, respond and manage civil emergencies and other types of crisis or disasters.

In emergency situations, crisis managers and emergency responders need to concentrate on their core tasks to save lives, reduce damages and initiate rapid recovery. Disinformation, rumours or fake news have demonstrated their potential to distract emergency services from these tasks, and to reduce their effectiveness. Cyber-attacks have revealed the vulnerability of government information management and official communication systems, including some that can be essential to manage crises and emergencies, such as warning sirens, CCTVs and health services. Hybrid threats have the potential to significantly affect the capacities of government to respond to crises at time when they are needed the most.

Under the auspices of the OECD High Level Risk Forum, this 7<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Strategic Crisis Management will address the key challenges faced by governments in adapting their crisis management systems to take hybrid threats into account. The sessions will focus on key questions as: How to identify a hybrid threat campaign? What can government do to make their risk management capabilities, crisis management and communication systems more resilient to this emerging threat? The workshop will contribute to strengthening countries' capacity to anticipate and respond in a high level interactive format through focused policy discussions, and dynamic working group exercises. The goal will be to identify good practices and foster knowledge sharing on these key issues for the national resilience and security of our societies, which are essential to maintain trust in public institutions at times of emergency.

## ***Background documents***

- The Changing Face of Strategic Crisis Management, OECD, (2015)
- OECD Recommendation on the Governance of Critical Risks, OECD, (2014)

## Day 1

**09h00 – 09h30 Welcome coffee and tea**

**09h30 – 09h50 Opening remarks**

- *Mr. Timo Lankinen, Permanent State Under-Secretary, Finland Prime Minister's Office*
- *Ms. Tina Gabbrielli, Chair, OECD High Level Risk Forum*

**09h50 – 10h45 Keynote presentation 1: Hybrid Threats and Response - the Reality and Future**

- *Professor Jarno Limnéll, Aalto University*

**10h45 – 11h00 Coffee break**

### **MORNING SESSION: Identifying and understanding hybrid threat campaigns**

**11h00 – 12h45 Session 1: How can countries identify hybrid threats and understand their implications for crisis management?**

This session will provide an opportunity for peer to peer learning on how to address hybrid threat campaigns that have been identified and how to grasp their full impact within short timelines. The complexity of hybrid threats increases at times of crises, when essential systems and critical resources may come under stress. Invited speakers will present their experiences with concrete cases to illustrate how such threats can exacerbate crises. Participants will discuss good practices in the detection, identification and understanding of hybrid threat campaigns to reinforce the development of sense-making capacities before and during a crisis.

**Moderator:** *Ms. Tina Gabbrielli, Chair, OECD High Level Risk Forum*

**Speakers:**

- *Dr. Georg Peter, Head of Technology Innovation in Security Unit, EU Joint Research Center*
- *Dr. Patrick J. Cullen, Senior Researcher, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs*

**Questions for discussion:**

- What specific risks emanate from hybrid threats for crisis managers and public authorities at the highest level?
- How can hybrid threat campaigns be identified and how can government agencies cooperate across administrative silos to mitigate them?
- What value can international cooperation add to the detection and mitigation of hybrid threats?

**12h45 – 13h00 Presentation: The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats**

The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats was established in 2017 to serve as a hub of expertise supporting individual and collective efforts to enhance capabilities, resilience, and preparedness to counter hybrid threats with a special focus on European security. Its current membership includes Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA. This presentation will focus on the Centre's role and activities and will nourish the workshop's discussion on international cooperation to counter hybrid threats.

**Speaker:** *Mr. Matti Saarelainen, Director of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats*

13h00 – 14h30 *Lunch break*

## **WORKING-GROUP DISCUSSION on emerging hybrid threats and their implications for crisis management**

14h30 – 15h30 **Session 2: Towards group identification of hybrid threats scenarios**

*Moderator: Mr. Charles Baubion, OECD*

After an introductory presentation, participants will be invited to reflect in moderated breakout groups on potential hybrid threat crises with the aim to reduce blind-spots and identify opportunities for strategic planning amongst crisis managers. The working group discussion will allow identifying hybrid threats scenarios based on recent experiences, strategic crisis management exercises and drills, and foresight activities. A prioritisation process will allow each group to select several hybrid threat crisis scenarios to be presented and discussed in plenary.

15h30 – 15h45 *Coffee break*

## **AFTERNOON SESSION: Strengthening national resilience of crisis management structures to hybrid threats**

15h45 – 17h30 **Session 3: Reducing vulnerabilities of inter-agency crisis management networks to hybrid threats**

Multiple government agencies, private sector partners and civil society organisations are involved in crisis management networks. While security levels for government national crisis cells are often at the highest, weak points within the network can undermine the effectiveness of the response, in case of attacks. This panel will discuss the specific vulnerabilities that such partnerships face to hybrid threats and participants will be invited to discuss lessons learned from joint crisis management systems and structures in terms of their capacity to improve resilience.

***Moderator:** Dr. Miriam Haritz, Director for Crisis Management, Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance, Germany*

***Speakers:***

- *Dr. Owen Jackson, Assistant Director – International Resilience, Civil Contingency Secretariat, UK Cabinet Office*
- *Mr. André Duvillard, National coordinator, Swiss National Security Network*

***Questions for discussion:***

- What are the key vulnerabilities of crisis management systems to hybrid threats?
- How can governments secure key crisis management functions, such as hazard and threat monitoring, warning and communication systems?

17h30 – 18h00 **Plenary discussion and wrap-up of first day**

18h00 – 19h00 *Cocktail reception*

## Day 2

**08h30 – 09h00 Welcome coffee and tea**

### **MORNING SESSION: Countering fake news narrative during crises**

**09h00 – 10h00 Keynote presentation 2: Democratic Self-defence against Disinformation**

- Ambassador Daniel Fried, Atlantic Council

**10h00 – 11h30 Session 4: Public policies to counter disinformation through public/ private partnerships**

Recent disinformation campaigns have shown how quickly disinformation can spread widely across social media platforms and influence citizens and decision-makers. At times of crisis, this can divert the attention of responders, affect the sense-making and decision-making process and generate false perceptions and expectations of citizens. This session will offer an opportunity to discuss concrete examples from recent disinformation campaigns and discuss the policy options that countries have to counter them, including through public/ private partnerships.

**Moderator:** *Mr. Jack Radisch, OECD*

**Speakers:**

- *Mr. Nils Svartz, Deputy Director General of Swedish Civil Contingency Agency*
- *Mr. Mike Hanley, Head of Digital Communications, World Economic Forum*
- *Mr. Janne Elvelid, Head of Public Policy Sweden, Facebook*

**Questions for discussion:**

- How to counter influence fake news campaigns during crises?
- What are the resources and skills that government need to develop within their crisis management systems and institutional communications to adjust to this new threat?
- How can governments use an iterative approach to adapt to a hybrid threat campaign?

**11h30 – 11h45 Coffee break**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND WAY-FORWARD**

**11h45 – 12h00 Workshop take-aways**

**Rapporteur:** *Ms. Saara Jantunen, Doctor of Military Science, Finnish Defence Forces*

**12h00 – 13h00 High-Level Concluding Roundtable**

**Moderator:** *Mr. Stéphane Jacobzone, OECD*

**Speakers:**

- *Ms. Tina Gabbrielli, Chair, OECD High Level Risk Forum*
- *Mr. Mikko Kinnunen, Finland Ambassador for Hybrid Issues*

**Questions for discussion:**

- How can like-minded countries coordinate action to more effectively prevent and respond to hybrid threats?
- What is the role for Center of Government in developing and coordinating a strategy to counter hybrid threats?
- What scope is there for the private sector to play a role in such strategy?