

Full-Scale Democratic Response to Hostile Disinformation Operations

50 Measures to Oust Kremlin Hostile Disinformation Influence out of Europe

This paper has been consulted with several dozens of state and non-state diplomatic, academic, security and intelligence professionals. The author would like to express his gratitude for their inputs and feedback. Special thanks goes to Ben Nimmo, Peter Pomerancev, Stefan Meister, Yevhen Fedchenko, Jakub Kalenský and Peter Kreko.



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Kremlin Watch is a strategic program of the European Values Think-Tank, which aims to unravel and confront instruments of Russian hybrid war which is focused against liberal-democratic system.

An aggressive disinformation effort by the Russian Federation and its allies has been very visible within EU member states since 2013 - the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis. The Kremlin uses this vehicle as part of its hybrid warfare to achieve its strategic objective to disrupt the internal cohesion of NATO, the EU and its willingness to react to aggressive policies of the Russian Federation. It also aims at a policy change in the case of sanctions, the Dutch referendum on EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, or the Brexit debate. The Chief of the Armed Staff of the Russian Federation, Valery Gerasimov, [calls it](#): "Information confrontation aimed at the reduction of the fight potential of the enemy".

These disinformation efforts employ a multi-layer strategy. Where an authentic grievance or setback is present, the Kremlin disinformation machinery tries to explore and exploit it¹. At the EU and NATO level, it tries to use pro-Kremlin attitudes of selected politicians² to undermine collective efforts. Within the EU, it aims to widen the already existing gaps between the South and the East, or new and old member states on the West versus the East. At the member state level, the goal is to undermine the trust of citizens towards their governments, allied organisations and states, democratic political parties, mainstream media or state institutions (such as judiciary or police) in general. Another goal is to promote pro-Kremlin politicians and parties in the likes of Alternative For Germany, the Front National in France, Jobbik in Hungary, Marian Kotleba's LSNS in Slovakia, or UKIP in the UK. The defense Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Shoygu, openly referred to [this approach](#) of warfare in 2015 stating that "the time has come, when we all recognize, that words, camera, photo, the Internet and information in general have become yet another type of weapon, yet another type of armed forces."

Disinformation efforts target already existing grievances and cleavages, and exploit them further. We can never say that disinformation efforts are the only reason for the existence of these problems, but we can clearly point out that exploring such weak spots is an aim of the Kremlin machinery and specific documented actions translating as proof of such effort.

¹ Generally: in case of European debate on migration and Islam by implanting disinformation in form of fake stories. Specific example: German „Lisa Case“ in January 2016.

² Such as governing Greek Syriza, some tendencies among governing German Social Democrats, sitting Czech President Miloš Zeman, or selected radical but relevant parties such as French National Front.

Let us use the most striking empirical examples while keeping in mind the limitations of the data:

- Only 29% of German and 29% of Italian citizens said [in a 2015 Pew poll](#) that Russia should be blamed for the violence in Eastern Ukraine.
- 53% of French and 58% of German citizens said in a [2015 Pew poll](#) that their country should not use military force to defend a NATO ally if Russia were to attack it.
- Only 31% of German citizens stated that German soldiers should stand in defence of NATO members - Poland and the Baltic states - if they were attacked by Russia, according to [2016 research](#) by the Bertelsman Foundation and the Institute for Public Affairs: an already shocking outcome.
- Much analysis of such modus operandi has already been conducted over recent years; yet truly effective and practical policy steps are and have been rare. As such, this paper lays out specific recommendations in four key areas where urgent action is necessary. The list is not exhaustive, yet we deem that these are the most important steps which can and should be taken. This paper aims to be a coherent policy strategy implementable by appropriate practitioners.

There are four clusters of steps which need to be taken:

1. Firmly put hostile disinformation efforts on the **foreign & security policy agenda**.
2. **Publicly challenge** supporters of Kremlin-sponsored disinformation efforts, especially among politicians and public figures.
3. **Disclose** disinformation campaigns substance and vehicles.
4. Systematically **build resilience** within free societies.

Framework of Kremlin disinformation & influence efforts

	Intelligence & influence operations	Disinformation efforts	Cooperating with relevant political allies already in the institutions	Orchestrating NGO allies & GONGOs	Supporting European radical and extremist groups	Using ethnic minority in targeted state	Kremlin-run economic operations for political gain
Characterization of specific instrument	Foreign - state agents and local collaborators are used to get sensitive & classified information of the targeted state. Those means are also used to influence – bribe, intimidate or blackmail specific figures of the targeted state.	Kremlin funds and runs specific disinformation projects (RT, Sputnik). Dozens of pro-Kremlin disinformation online projects have dubious funding and personal structures and act as Kremlin allies and multipliers.	Kremlin supports political allies in European political groups by personal connections, financial, disinformation and ideological means. They help to spread pro-Kremlin influence in the institutions.	Kremlin orchestrates an NGO in EU member state to have representation of its interests. Other NGOs who share Kremlin objectives are indirectly supported.	European far-right and far-left radicals and extremists get supported by the Kremlin. Apart from ideological connections, they participate in the legitimization of elections via electoral monitoring procedures.	Portion of ethnic Russian minority in EU member state is vulnerable to Kremlin-run intelligence and influence operations. Part of it can be activated for active measures in moments of need or crisis.	State-run companies are often used to lobby for political interest – including decisions on strategic energy sector.
Model examples	Kremlin intelligence operations in Nordic states (mapping local landscape) or in Baltic states (kidnapping local citizen).	Targeted disinformation campaigns into Dutch referendum on EU-Ukraine AA in April 2016. Numerous fabricated disinformation stories aiming at poisoning European migration debate.	Constant advocacy of pro-Kremlin narratives by Nigel Farage, Marine Le Pen, representatives of Alternative fur Deutschland.	Activities of some Kremlin-funded Russian-compatriot organizations in Baltic states.	Ideological and quasi-media support for European far-right and extremist groups who get often invited to Russia to coordinate and showcase support.	Anti-governmental demonstrations of German Russians in Germany as part of disinformation operation Lisa in January 2016.	Influence of Gazprom to German or Serbian politics, Lukoil in Czech politics.

Brief overview of suggested counter-measures if framed in the four response areas:

Measures overview	RESPONSE AREA ONE: Firmly put hostile disinformation efforts on the foreign & security policy agenda.	RESPONSE AREA TWO: Publicly challenge supporters of Kremlin-sponsored disinformation efforts, especially among politicians and public figures.
EU & NATO INSTITUTIONS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Codify disinformation efforts into the European Global Strategy 2. European diplomacy should address disinformation aggression 3. EEAS should triple the capacity of the East STRATCOM team 4. EP should conduct a report and numerous public hearings on disinformation. 5. Budgetary authority to provide EEAS East Stratcom with a dedicated budget line 6. NATO STRATCOMCOE & EEAS East STRATCOM need to create a common analytical framework for disinformation 7. Disinformation must become one of the key priorities for the EU Representation & Delegations, NATO should speak national languages 8. Eurostat should conduct polls on vulnerability of European societies 	
NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Codify disinformation efforts to national security documents 10. Concerned EU governments should make their cases. 11. FAC should task HighRep to conduct report on disinformation efforts 12. Monitor & name connections between Kremlin and extremist groups 13. Financial Snap Unit should be established and trained for crises 14. NATO STRATCOMCOE should be supported and used by more member states 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Financial and personal connections of politicians to Kremlin must be investigated 16. Special parliamentary committees should investigate & scrutinize 17. Pro-Kremlin politicians should be voted out of posts related to national security 18. Counterintelligence units should conduct detailed review reports for their governments 19. Real transparent financing of political parties is a key preventive tool 20. Allies need to cooperate on joined trainings & support of NGOs
CIVIL SOCIETY:		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Civil society should scrutinize & watchdog politicians & institutions 22. Public challenging of disinformation narratives must be strong & regular 23. Debates with citizen need to be conducted

Measures overview	RESPONSE AREA THREE: Disclose disinformation campaigns substance and vehicles.	RESPONSE AREA FOUR: Systematically build resilience within free societies.
EU & NATO INSTITUTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24. EEAS should fund NGO network around its Disinformation Review 25. EU comparative studies of legal frameworks on quasi-media projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38. The Commission should appoint 15 million EUR starting 2017 for NGO projects 39. The Commission should conduct a study on the vulnerabilities of European institutions to hostile foreign influence
NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26. National Disinformation Analysis Teams need to be established 27. Appoint national governmental coordinator for countering disinformation 28. Conduct national reviews of available legal tools against disinformation operations 29. Prioritize exposing Kremlin influence for domestic counterintelligence 30. Transparency of ownership & financing of media is a must 31. Definitions & media legal framework should be debated 32. Media & civic society need to be protected by national security apparatus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40. States should conduct regular and detailed sociological research on grievances 41. Politicians, diplomats & bureaucrats should be trained against influence operations 42. Public broadcasters could dedicate special attention to covering disinformation 43. States need to support university degrees in Eastern European/Russian studies 44. Russian minorities need to be studied, talked to and supported to avoid grievances 45. 10 million EUR allied fund should fund disinformation studies & countering 46. States should pay close attention to influence of disinformation to their security forces 47. Special strategic communication studies programs should be developed
CIVIL SOCIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 33. Daily myth-busting & challenging of disinformation narratives 34. Disinfo-countering NGO initiatives need to be financially supported 35. Public exposure of companies paying to advertise on pro-Kremlin conspiracy outlets & official Kremlin "media" 36. Detailed and regular polling on disinformation impact must be conducted 37. Journalistic associations need to educate & check their members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48. Journalistic schools should teach about disinformation technics 49. Civic & media education should be taught at primary & secondary schools 50. Think-tanks should present scenarios of future development to make their states prepare for them

The list of the suggested counter-measures is outlined in more detail below:

RESPONSE AREA ONE:

Firmly put the subject on the foreign & security policy agenda.

Any state can treat a threat systematically only if it is described precisely and categorized within strategic documents. Only then can state institutions develop systematic procedures and instructions for recalibration of its security system towards such threats. Therefore, this threat needs to be explicitly named and described in national and international strategic security documents.

Disinformation influence is not only a foreign policy issue; it aims to diminish citizens' trust towards the state and its institutions and often manifests itself in the support of extremism (examples). Therefore, it should also be considered as a homeland security threat. Proper and precise data needs to be gathered in order to calibrate targeted policies in specific regions.

Once it is considered as one of the foreign policy priorities, EU member states and the EU should make it a regular issue on the diplomatic agenda as well. Once this becomes the routine of at least several significant member states, the EU will be able to project its diplomatic (soft) power on the issue. Where else should the EU use this multiplying effect of its common foreign policy agenda than during a foreign powers' organized and aggressive policy against cohesion, core principles and domestic affairs?

National institutions are the ones who need to address this issue first. Nothing relevant can be done from an international level without local will, knowledge and outreach. Nevertheless, the EU and NATO can have a significant impact in coordination, knowledge & good practice sharing and applied research. Therefore, both supra-national organizations need to operate robust centers focusing on strategic communication and countering disinformation campaigns. Additionally, a working relationship on the issue between Atlantic security institutions needs to be established. This would include internal information flows among state and selected non-state experts and regular semi-public forums for a wide range of specialists and multipliers.

LEVEL OF EU & NATO INSTITUTIONS:

1. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU/EEAS:

Codify disinformation efforts to European Global Strategy

Targeted disinformation influence by the Russian Federation should be considered a threat to the security and internal cohesion of the EU. It should be precisely described in the new European Global Strategy.

2. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY EEAS:

European diplomacy should address disinformation aggression

EEAS should serve as a multiplier tool of the EU member states and as a spokesman for issues of common interest. Therefore, after carefully coordinating with member states and choosing the platform, aggressiveness of the Kremlin-run disinformation influence campaign which interferes into EU member states' domestic affairs should be put on the agenda on a regular basis by the EEAS when engaging in diplomatic meetings with representatives of the Russian Federation. It needs to be accompanied by specific examples delivered by the member states. For instance, when a phenomenon such as Kremlin-communication channels are running disinformation stories which generate anti-establishment demonstrations appearing in multiple member states, then it would make sense.

3. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY EEAS & NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

EEAS should triple capacity of the East STRATCOM team

EEAS STRATCOM Team is a much needed step in the right direction which now urgently needs a more comprehensive budget to strengthen its personnel and its capabilities, including: analysis, outreach, networking and training. The EEAS should triple the capacity of the East STRATCOM team. Currently serving national seconded experts should be reinforced by a few dozen communication, policy and intelligence experts. Their analysis of trends and measures are highly valuable due to the European perspective. The Commission should already propose this budget for 2017 and the budgetary authority (Council and the EP) should deliver on it. EU member states need to politically push the Commission to do so.

4. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT:

EP should conduct a report and numerous public hearings on disinfo.

EP committee should conduct a report as well as numerous public hearings on the modus operandi of Kremlin-orchestrated disinformation efforts in the member states. This report should come up with a list of good practices in specific states.

5. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT:

Budgetary authority to provide EEAS East Stratcom with a dedicated budget line

The European Parliament has already acknowledged the threat of organized disinformation campaigns by the Russian Federation, which affects internal cohesion, in its Landsbergis Report. It should however, go beyond merely the acknowledgment of this threat. A new resolution should be adopted, addressing the urgency and recommend a selected list of measures to include framework proposals for adjustments within the 2017 EU budget. Deal with the Council needs to be established.

6. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EEAS AND NATO:

NATO STRATCOMCOE & EEAS East STRATCOM need to create common analytical framework for disinfo.

NATO Centre of Excellence for Strategic Communication and the EEAS East STRATCOM need to cooperate on a regular basis. Both teams need to find common projects and ways of sharing knowledge and their plans. Joint trainings & awareness exercises for EU, NATO and national bureaucratic & political staff should be conducted on a systematic basis as well. First of all: Create a common framework for the threat assessment of disinformation campaigns. Such a framework would make it easier to tie together the specific aspects in a holistic fashion and enable a comparative analysis between nations in view of concentrating effort and prioritising resources. It could even provide a basis for public purposes.

7. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND NATO:

Disinfo. must become one of key priorities for EU Representations & Delegations, NATO should speak national languages

The Commission should task its Representations in member states and Delegations in Eastern Partnership countries to have this topic as one of its regular priorities. Local events and activities should be supported and where appropriate, pro-actively hosted. Moreover, NATO should start building similar network of informational offices in member states which would be truly equipped and visible in public advocacy for allied issues.

8. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

Eurostat should conduct polls on vulnerability of European societies

Eurostat should add a new set of questions to its polls among EU citizens. It should measure the support for components of illiberal (anti-Western) narratives. The Fundamental Rights Agency should conduct polls on attitudes to democratic values in member states and majority and minority cultural groups.

LEVEL OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

9. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

Codify disinformation efforts to national security documents

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

10. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY SELECTED NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

Concerned EU governments should make their case.

The dangerousness and even the very existence of organized disinformation campaigns by the Russian Federation are clearly acknowledged by some EU member states. Those states, which have deep knowledge and understanding of this threat, need to present crystal-clear evidence and conduct advocacy trips by their politicians and diplomats to allied states and institutions, which dispose of limited knowledge and interest of the issue. For example, the CEE states should present their evidence jointly to the EEAS, capitals of NATO's Southern flank, or US institutions. It would take those likeminded governments to put it as their intra-institutional agenda priority for its political and bureaucratic leadership. If those likeminded stakeholders do not effectively advocate for the case, they cannot win the support or at least the understanding of the allies.

11. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL:

FAC should task HighRep to conduct a report on disinformation efforts

Foreign ministers of EU member states should task the High Representative to conduct a special report on the status and modus operandi of Kremlin-orchestrated disinformation campaigns in each of the EU member state and EaP countries. It should be delivered within 6 months and should include practical steps to be taken in the coordination of the EEAS East STRATCOM Team.

12. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL INTERIOR MINISTRIES:

Monitor & name connections between Kremlin and extremist groups

The connections between the Kremlin and extremist groups need to be monitored and conceptualized within state counter-extremism strategies. When a hostile foreign power organizes or supports extremist entities in a sovereign state, state security institutions need to effectively track these activities and make them public i.e. financial, material or training support as well as networks. It is a matter of public interest and states should not only monitor and investigate these activities, but should also put them on their foreign policy agendas where appropriate.

13. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY LIKE-MINDED NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

Financial Snap Unit should be established and trained for crisis

As Edward Lucas and Garry Kasparov suggest, a Financial Snap Unit should be established. It is a matter of discussion whether it should reside within the EU or NATO institutions. This idea stands on a "fight with banks, not tanks" approach. This unit could, in close cooperation with allied states, freeze the assets of the Russian state and the transactions of selected individuals or institutions of the Russian Federation in matter of hours, if a strategic crisis were to emerge. On

a more regular note, Russian corruption in EU member states should be targeted with regular legal tools.

14. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

NATO STRATCOMCOE should be supported and used by more member states

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, mainly on the request of the 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 institutions such as the Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry, Foreign Ministry and intelligence services. An intensive STRATCOM training program for (a) national civil and military personnel, and (b) like-minded civil society actors should be boosted in capacities and quantity. Member states should request such training missions.

RESPONSE AREA TWO

Publicly challenge supporters of Kremlin-sponsored disinformation efforts, especially among politicians and public figures.

Almost every EU country has declared and undeclared representatives of Kremlin interests on their national political stage. Most far-right and far-left parties openly play a friendly role towards Russian policies. The Putin versters (apologists for Putin), who can usually be found within the political mainstream, constitute the second group of Russian policy sympathizers. These entities are not publicly supportive to the Kremlin policies but nevertheless they mitigate or try to block defensive actions of allied institutions against aggressive actions of the Russian Federation. Their actions need to be publicly disclosed.

LEVEL OF EU & NATO INSTITUTIONS:

15. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTERINTELLIGENCE AGENCIES:

Financial and personal connections of politicians to Kremlin must be investigated

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.

16. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY MEMBERS OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS:

Special parliamentary committees should investigate & scrutinize

Elected politicians should conduct special parliamentary committees to investigate the pro-Kremlin influence within the state. This exercise would be structurally different from efforts of counterintelligence agencies, while the committee would (almost exclusively, where possible) conduct public hearings with state and non-governmental experts. This would also contribute to raising public awareness of the issue.

17. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY MEMBERS OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS:

Pro-Kremlin politicians should be voted out of posts related to national security

Pro-Kremlin politicians can pose a risk to national security due to their Kremlin connections. They might provide confidential information or sensitive insider knowledge to the Kremlin. Therefore, these politicians obviously cannot be democratically expelled from national parliaments but they can be ousted from sensitive positions such as Security & Defense Committees and especially Intelligence Oversight Committees via regular parliamentary procedures. The only thing needed is the consent of the democratic pro-Atlantic parties to do this with respect to national security.

18. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

Counterintelligence should conduct detailed review reports for their governments

National cabinets should task their counterintelligence agencies to conduct comprehensive reports on pro-Kremlin politicians & influencers and their modus operandi. This does not need to be public, but serve governments to scale the level of infiltration of hostile influence into the national political arena.

19. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS:

Real transparent financing of political parties is a key preventive tool

Fully transparent financing of political parties is a prerogative for any democratic regime. Each member state should have a very strict legal framework, which would not allow (or would effectively penalize) non-transparent funding of activities of political parties or political candidates. The reality is that the Kremlin tries to support radical and extremist political powers in Europe therefore the states need to tighten their legislature to make the transparency legally binding and effectively enforceable.

20. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY ALLIED STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS:

Allies need to cooperate on joined trainings & support of NGOs

Trainings and knowledge-sharing visits shall be organized by allied institutions for national politicians and civil society leaders. Advise-targeted visits of senior strategic communication and intelligence experts of allied nations should be aimed at less experienced state structures and political elites. Already existing informal network of over 450 experts in EU and EaP states put together by the EEAS STRATCOM Team should be widely supported via grants of EEAS and international donors in order to conduct joint research and data-mining activities.

LEVEL OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

21. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS:

Civil society should scrutinize & watchdog politicians & institutions

Reporting and disclosing the political positions and actions of pro-Kremlin political entities need to be transparently followed, reported and put into context 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 need to be put together. If a politician lobbies on behalf of a hostile foreign power, their words should be documented, analyzed and challenged publicly. A list of disinformation shared by any individual politician shall be established if it happens on a regular basis. Trips of pro-Kremlin politicians to Donbas or Crimea need to be followed and scrutinized. Financial and personal connections to the Kremlin and its proxies need to be publicly disclosed. Trends among specific political parties need to be tracked and analyzed within a national context. It needs to be properly sourced and reported through the use of freedom of speech to publicly name & shame. Even politicians at highest national or EU levels need to be put under watchdog scrutiny - so that any time they appear to be lobbying on behalf of the Russian government, a public call to accountability needs to immediately follow by NGOs. Another example would be the creation of a public list of confirmed lies and disinformation published by official Kremlin talking heads, including top governmental officials. Every government needs to be put under public scrutiny for their words and actions.

22. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS:

Public challenging of disinformation narratives must be strong & regular

Counter-measures, outside of reporting and disclosing, need to be taken. Only NGOs and think-tanks can legitimately conduct such actions within the freedom of speech perimeters. Pro-Kremlin politicians and NGOs need to be publicly challenged and called to accountability not only regarding their funding, but moreover their actions. Public campaigns or research & investigative efforts are a way to go. Watchdog organizations need to push individuals from mainstream political parties to stick to their pro-Atlantic program policies and not give interviews or publish opinion editorials with pro-Kremlin conspiracy quasi media outlets.

23. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS:

Debates mainly in regions with citizen need to be conducted

NGOs and think-tanks need to engage with pro-Atlantic political entities. Outreach activities such as multi-partisan debates of politicians in the region should be conducted in order to mitigate the perception of the “establishment against people”. Elected politicians also need to get expertise and training on countering disinformation, which could be delivered by specialized think-tanks.

RESPONSE AREA THREE

Disclose disinformation campaign substance and vehicles.

Dozens of disinformation quasi media projects fill the public space in most EU countries. Their activities are persistently decreasing citizens’ trust in democratic institutions or to any legitimate information source. A clear financial or personal connection to the Kremlin cannot be clearly identified but the current Kremlin narrative is almost always present. If any media outlet or quasi media project publishes disinformation regularly, it should be considered as bias and lose its credibility amongst the wider audience. An ABC test can be conducted³. A lie is not an alternate opinion. A characteristic of the median in the case of publishing untruthful or inaccurate information is to correct the publication and make an excuse. If a media outlet systematically breaches the common basic standards of journalism, then it loses credibility. Civil society must create public pressure to ensure this.

The official communication channels of the Russian Federation often pose as the media, but their reporting remains heavily biased and systematic breaches the basic journalistic standards. States need to thus start using all existing and legitimate legal measures to make organized disinformation impossible on their territory. If a communication channel systematically breaches journalistic ethical standards, it cannot be considered a legitimate media outlet i.e. the Kremlin-run Russia Today (RT) which has been sanctioned for violating broadcasting standards in the UK. In Latvia, legal actions have already been taken against RTR Planeta.

Since institutional actions are required at the national level, policy makers must keep in mind that if intelligence gathering remains merely for military purposes and without real-time engagement with the public, the battle for the hearts and minds of the public will be lost. Therefore, national Disinformation

³ Disinformation can be inferred by using the ABC model, judging accuracy, balance and credibility of sources. See <http://www.ies.be/policy-brief/identifying-disinformation-abc-approach>

Analysis Teams need to be developed. Similar bodies already exist at British or Lithuanian Foreign Ministries, understandably with mostly foreign policy objectives. The proposed body however would have slightly different priorities.

Aggressive actions by the Russian Federation on European countries' soil do not only happen online. There are hundreds of Russian intelligence agents in Europe. Intelligence and counterintelligence operations need to be enhanced. Moreover, in light of successful actions of some EU member state agencies, an adjustment of style is needed. In order to deter and also to illustrate the urgency of Kremlin disinformation influence, captured Russian intelligence agents need to be publicly disclosed and put through public court proceedings where possible and adequate. Nobody is suggesting that agencies should turn their modus operandi upside down. The aim is to select and make specific cases illustrational, which is already a successful model of work i.e. seen in the Estonian counterintelligence KaPo.

LEVEL OF EU & NATO INSTITUTIONS:

24. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EEAS:

EEAS should seriously fund NGO network around its Disinformation Review

Currently, over 450 national NGOs and individuals contribute to the Disinformation Review which is published weekly by the EEAS East STRATCOM Team. They all do it on a volunteer basis, therefore the product and the monitoring coverage cannot have professional and in-depth quality. EEAS should grant at least 2 million EUR annually to its East STRATCOM. It could operate the network for reporting, monitoring, but mainly analytical tasks, which need to be conducted by local entity with knowledge of local environment.

25. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

Do EU comparative study of legal frameworks on quasi-media projects

The Commission should conduct an EU-wide comparative study of existing legal frameworks and best practices and measures against quasi-media projects and disinformation tools. New ways of how to effectively counter systematic violations of journalistic standards should be examined.

LEVEL OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

26. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

National Disinformation Analysis Teams need to be established

National specialized centres - Disinformation Analysis Teams need to be established, because disinformation efforts are primarily a threat to the domestic democratic regime, within the Interior

Ministry. Multi-discipline teams⁴ would be headed by a leader trusted by key members of the cabinet so that the team would not be unbearably tied up by bureaucratic roadblocks and procedures. Foreign policy, national security, communication and media experts need to work alongside homeland security professionals. It is essential to have an appropriate share of trusted professionals from the Foreign Ministry, the Defence Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Army, the Police and all national intelligence services. This mix of different expertise and mindsets would not only contribute practically, but would also serve as a tool for the perceived ownership of aforementioned institutions towards this hybrid body. The sensitive issue is to overcome the usual clash of approaches and use it as an advantage. It takes a very talented and respected bureaucratic leadership to accomplish this. Such an institution must be free of diplomatic self-censorship. It would play at least four key roles with respect to differences in its national discourse.

- First, this team would react in real-time to developing disinformation cases with a potentially significant impact on the public or with regards to national security. One major impediment within European administrations is that different state bureaus and offices often care only about information related to their narrow field of interest. The states lack an overarching entity, which would have an objective to actively seek out potential high-impact disinformation in its national media, within social networks and within the media of selected states. Specific interests would be given to 24/7 trend reports and cases within the Kremlin-run domestic media in Russia. Often, those trends can be used for developing reactions on a policy and messaging level.
- Second, the team would follow regular media coverage and in the case of serious disinformation breaches, would advise respected state bodies to publish more additional information in real time. It would not, in any case, create “its own propaganda” or censorship.
- Thirdly, this team would publish a regular overview of disinformation campaign trends and the way they are perceived by politically neutral state security apparatuses. A nationwide Disinformation Warfare Scale could be deployed similar to that of the terrorist alert scale, which is already in use.
- Fourth, the team would conduct research on this topic and coordinate with other similar allied teams. In light of current documents by the EEAS, it could serve as the National Contact Point on Hybrid Threats. It would cooperate with the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell. The state needs to know which disinformation campaigns are successful and why. At the moment, the issue is being researched by scholars and NGO entities, but practical knowledge among state entities on measures and countermeasures is worryingly lacking.

⁴ For more on what the role of those specialized bodies should be, see Janda (2016), STRATCOM lessons, German Academy for Security Policy (BAKS): https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working_paper_2016_11.pdf

Among other tasks, the team would work within the international network for analytical categorisation of disinformation so that state professionals have a useful framework for live categorisation of reported cases and can distinguish which of them pose potential danger and stronger impact.

27. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

Appoint national governmental coordinator for countering disinformation

National governments firstly need to put this practice to their intelligence and counterintelligence agencies. Only then will those services be pushed to change part of their natural modus operandi. Additional funds for appropriate surveillance capabilities might also be needed. One potential step is to name a governmental coordinator for countering disinformation campaigns who could also serve as the public face of the process.

28. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

Conduct national review of available legal tools against disinfo.

A national review of available legal tools should be conducted. Juristic experts need to be trained with emphasis placed on this specific topic. If an existing case is available (e.g. 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 Media⁵.

29. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL COUNTERINTELLIGENCE AGENCIES:

Prioritize exposing Kremlin influence for domestic counterintelligence

National governments need to set clear priorities for their counterintelligence agencies – i.e. exposing Russian agents & cooperators. Such prioritization will translate into more resources and knowledge into respective departments of intelligence services. Once captured, legal proceedings need to be initiated where possible and doable (f. e. for high-treason such as in several cases run by Estonian Counterintelligence Service KAPO). Those proceedings need to be as public as possible in order to raise awareness for the phenomenon and exert deterrence. It is clear that such modus operandi cannot commence immediately, but precise internal planning and preparation of scenarios and countermeasures against expected Russian reaction against allied assets and interests would be needed and effective. Financial and personal connections of relevant pro-Kremlin journalists and activists need to be carefully investigated. The agencies need to find a comfortable and legally sound way of exposing such information if it would

⁵OSCE Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Non-paper: Propaganda and Freedom of the Media, 2015, WWW: <http://www.osce.org/fom/203926>

constitute a clear and understandable case. The state should not join the game which Russia or Turkey play vis-a-vis labeling a broad scope of individuals as “foreign agents”. A case by case approach is thus needed.

30. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS AND NATIONAL COUNTERINTELLIGENCE AGENCIES:

Transparency of ownership & financing of media is a must

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 for any media outlet project whereby journalistic social peer pressure can only effectively achieve this.

31. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS & GOVERNMENTS:

Definitions & media legal framework should be debated

Each member state should establish a task force of media law experts and conduct analysis on whether the existing legal framework is sufficient and identify which blind spots or discrepancies need to be covered and addresses. Current legal frameworks were established during a time when hostile state-orchestrated disinformation campaigns did not attack the basic values of liberal democracies so aggressively. As such, existing definitions and conditions for licensing media outlets for TV broadcasting and safeguards need to be analyzed and recommendations for adjustments need to be developed. Legal frameworks need to be analyzed widely through a lens of disinformation campaigns i.e. legal measures against hate speech or false alert messaging.

32. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL SECURITY APPARATUS:

Media & civic society need to be protected by national security apparatus

Free media and civil society are the building blocks of democracies. These groups can prospectively get under the disinformation pressure or even intimidation threats by pro-Kremlin proxies or Kremlin entities. State security apparatuses such as the Interior Ministry, Police and Counterintelligence Agencies should create a safeguard framework for non-governmental entities, which challenge disinformation and radicalization and are exposed to online and physical threats. It should be done via cyber-security training, enhanced state surveillance and the protection of prioritized soft targets. Only safe debaters can be free and bold enough in their public actions and thus the state needs to ensure it as a pre-requisition for freedom of speech.

LEVEL OF CIVIL SOCIETY:

33. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY CIVIL SOCIETY ENTITIES:

Daily myth-busting & challenging of disinformation narratives

Watchdog and analytical non-governmental institutions such as activist think-tanks need to engage in daily over disinformation projects. Precise weekly monitoring of specific disinformation campaigns and trends are required. This needs to result into a publicly available map of pro-Kremlin influence and a list of systematic publishers of pro-Kremlin disinformation. No one is calling for censorship – those projects need to be named on the basis of accountability. If somebody systematically publishes pro-Kremlin disinformation and conspiracy theories, it needs to be publicly reported, such entities need to lose their credibility and ultimately be ostracized. Such activities need national-wide media attention with special emphasis placed on the projection of national leaders into Kremlin-run domestic media within Russia. Trends of ‘who’ is portrayed ‘how’ can be valuable in order to understand the pro-Kremlin map of each state, giving the opportunity to publicly discuss the role of specific national leaders in the Russian state media. A good example on the European level is the Disinformation Review, conducted by EEAS East STRATCOM Team on weekly basis. It is analytical product which is weekly being used by hundreds of security, journalistic, or intelligence professionals. National NGOs and think-tanks need to engage in this EU-wide initiative.

34. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY ALLIED STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS:

Disinfo-counteracting NGO initiatives need to be financially supported

Trustworthy and operational NGO projects are urgently needed. The current state of play is that those organizations are heavily underfinanced and therefore it is more or less volunteer activities which cannot yield systematic professional results. Overall, European think-tanks have a hesitant approach to those advocacy and watchdog activities since they are very activist and require a high degree of political engagement. Those projects need to work in national environments with a deep understanding of the national discourse and a high degree of credibility among journalists and security-related institutions. Ukrainian StopFake.org. is a good example of an engaged NGO. Each EU member state needs to have at least one non-governmental institution which would conduct activities in this area on a daily basis with national relevance. National and international

donors need to engage in this field as well by developing a grant mechanism in support of NGO activities while developing measures to ensure the independence of the research.

35. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY CIVIL SOCIETY ENTITIES AND LIKEMINDED BUSINESS COMPANIES OR ASSOCIATIONS:

Public exposure of companies paying to advertise on pro-Kremlin conspiracy websites and official Kremlin “media”

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. The domestic approach works on a different basis and attitude than the following measures targeted at the Kremlin “media”. Those companies should be asked direct questions as to why they are cooperating with entities which are hostile to their home country’s security interests. It is not only advertisement – regular business of Western production companies with RT need to be put under public scrutiny and debated in detail. One recent example is the Slovak project *Konspirátoři.sk* which identifies conspiracy websites and recommends that companies do not advertise on these platforms in order to avoid a potential loss of reputation.

36. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY CIVIL SOCIETY ENTITIES:

Detailed and regular polling on disinformation impact must be conducted

Lack of relevant data on measuring impact of various disinformation techniques and methods is one of key problems for tailoring the counter-measures. Only anecdotal evidence and some polls are available, but it isn’t clearly enough. Comparable national polls on regular and ad-hoc basis need to be conducted to establish the knowledge on what works in which national and local context. Those polls should be sponsored by international institutions and foundations.

37. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY CIVIL SOCIETY ENTITIES:

Journalistic associations need to educate & check their members

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 disinform 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.

RESPONSE AREA FOUR

Systematically build resilience of free societies.

Free societies need to adapt to new environments where weaknesses and grievances are systematically attached to aggressive disinformation campaigns. The political resilience of a free society needs to be built up by goal-oriented policies, otherwise it will only deteriorate and undermine the legitimacy of the democratic regime as a result. The following measures are usually perceived as soft, nevertheless their implementation is needed for long-term national security and stability of the democratic system.

LEVEL OF EU & NATO INSTITUTIONS:

38. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

The Commission should appoint 15 million EUR starting 2017 for NGO projects

The Commission should organize funding for civil society projects. DG COM should reorganize its funds in order to support projects related to the mapping and analyzing of disinformation campaigns targeting the basic principles of the EU. DG JUST should reorganize its funds in order to support projects related to enhancing political resilience of EU societies in the context of supporting the fundamental rights and values of the Union. Multi-member state projects should also be given special priority. 15 million EUR in annual funding would be an appropriate start, beginning with the EU's 2017 budget.

39. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Commission should conduct a study on vulnerabilities of European institutions to hostile foreign influence

There is a serious interest of hostile powers to influence decision and policy-making and information processes within EU institutions. The Commission should conduct an in-depth study on the state of play, possible lessons learnt and internal measures to be taken.

LEVEL OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

40. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL INTERIOR MINISTRIES:

States should conduct regular and detailed sociological research on grievances

The state needs to have precise and up-to-date knowledge on geopolitical attitudes and general vulnerabilities & grievances of its society. Only then can the state tailor specific long-term or urgent measures targeting weak spots. This activity usually lays at the Extremism Department of Interior Ministries who possess 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.

41. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL SECURITY APPARATUS:

Politicians, diplomats & bureaucrats should be trained against influence operations

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 those vulnerable groups and provide them with common standards on information security and protocols.

42. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY PUBLIC BROADCASTERS:

Public broadcasters could dedicate special attention to covering disinformation

Public broadcasters should consider how they can contribute to public awareness and education on the issue of disinformation, either through their programming or through outreach and educational activities. Special programs focusing on the journalistic community and media trends would make great sense, even though it obviously remains a sovereign decision of the broadcaster.

43. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

States need to support university degrees in Eastern/Russian studies

National governments need to analyze and develop long-term strategies on how experts on specific topic issues (i.e. Eastern European or Russian studies) are created. Once states ignore this, university programs often start to deteriorate. Such university programs should be considered strategically important and states should find sustainable long-term plans for its funding and to control the quality outcome. Implementation shall be a task for universities within the scope of educational autonomy.

44. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

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. Those communities are vulnerable to Kremlin influence, its intelligence operations and also are a potential foreign policy tool. Development and implementation of

specific measures to integrate the Russian-language minority are needed especially considering lessons taken from the Baltic region. Special interest must be taken by giving them access to independent and objective Russian-language media. Genuine grievances need to be addressed and no generalization used.

45. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

10 million EUR allied fund should fund disinfo. studies & countering

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.

46. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL DEFENSE MINISTRIES:

States should pay close attention to influence of disinformation to their security forces

One of the aims of disinformation and psychological campaigns is to diminish opponents' will to defend him/herself or his/her allies. It is not only at the political and public levels. Defense personnel of democratic states are also vulnerable with regards to specific kinds of efforts. National Defense Ministries, Military Intelligence Services and Chiefs of Staff need to closely monitor and permanently evaluate the efforts of Kremlin to infiltrate the will of its personnel for performing their duties. For example, if a significant non-state paramilitary group with clear anti-Atlantic agenda influences the mood in the regular military, it becomes a wider problem. For some armies, peer-to-peer connections of ex-military who are not obliged by military duty can become a paralyzing issue. When an Article 5 situation arises, part of the forces can, in the worst-case scenario, internally oppose to defend allies against potential Russian aggression. Therefore, civilian and military leadership needs to work hand in hand to measure geopolitical attitudes of their (wo)men with internal audits and research, establishing a regular rotation of workshops on disinformation & influence measures by hostile regimes even among military personnel at the lowest levels. Employ sociological & psychological knowledge to keep its people on the same value track with the state constitutional order and its allied international obligations. The very same issue and measures needs to be implemented within the police force.

47. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND SELECTED UNIVERISITIES:

Special strategic communication studies programs should be developed

National governments and allied institutions will have a need for well-educated professionals in the field of strategic communications. Currently, such advanced study programs are rare and limited. Strategic communication experts will need to therefore combine knowledge of the law,

international relations, security policy, defense matters, the media environment, social media expertise and political science realities. Governments need to work closely with selected universities to create specific and tailor-made civilian advanced study programs which can produce highly specialized experts who will make-up the core staff of future strategic communications of the state.

LEVEL OF CIVIL SOCIETY:

48. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENTITIES:

Journalistic schools should teach about disinformation technics

Journalists are the gatekeepers of information for the whole society. Media outlets and Journalistic Associations need to develop training programs for journalists on the modus operandi of disinformation campaigns and on the capabilities 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 it their fight against disinformation and a national security priority. International lesson-sharing through OSCE, Council of Europe or non-governmental actions would also be required.

49. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENTITIES:

Civic & media education should be taught at primary & secondary schools

One fragile target of disinformation campaigns is the youth. Such easily influenced targets require lectures on information and media practices which need to be implemented within the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, as a vital part of civic education. National governments need to put this as a priority and provide the appropriate funds and methodological frameworks in order to effectively implement these steps. Teachers also need to be educated on working with information and how to distinguish disinformation. Teachers Unions or Associations need to work alongside specialized NGOs to provide them with methodological frameworks, pedagogical tools and practical trainings in order to address this. Moreover, Pedagogical Faculties need to incorporate special programs to their curriculums, while the state needs to officially support and require this and potentially provide additional funds alongside its national security priority.

50. MEASURE TO BE TAKEN BY CIVIL SOCIETY

Think-tanks should present scenarios of future development to make their states prepare for them

State administrations aren't usually the best visionaries. Therefore, think-tanks and academicians should come up with short-term and long-term possible scenarios of political development,

marking which vulnerabilities of particular states could be exploited. This would expand thinkable developments in particular fields of hostile foreign influence so that the states would be pressured by civil society to adjust for sustainable policies in particular areas.

CONCLUSION

The aforementioned measures are the needed immediate response to avoid disastrous societal and political implications which could irreversibly change European societies as a consequence of targeted foreign policy tactics by outside entities. By skilful manipulation the public will increasingly lose trust in their democratic regimes, in free media and in political parties. Anti-establishment political powers with a pro-Kremlin stance will continue to gain ground, public support and even financial and media boosts from Moscow. Conspiracy theories fabricated by an aggressive actor aiming to undermine the constitutional order of democratic states will gain more traction as long as the European governments are not able to undertake more daring approaches toward this phenomena. The youth and the elderly will become more politically disconnected as a result of exposure to fabricated disinformation stories making it almost impossible for European governments to find constructive policies to deal with migration and minority integration issues. Even more citizens will lose trust in the EU, in NATO and in the membership of their countries within those organizations. Meanwhile, the European response to Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine, and other areas of interest of Russian revanchism, will weaken as its public legitimacy will deteriorate within the current environment of disinformation. This is a course of action, which Europeans cannot afford to take. As history teaches us, appeasement doesn't work. We have no choice between a friendly Kremlin and a hostile Kremlin. We already see that the Russian Federation acts as a hostile state that tries to undermine our society, our states and our alliances. The only choice we have is whether we will let the hostile Russian Federation undermine our democracy, or whether we will stop that and oust the Kremlin's disinformation influence out of European Union.

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The European Values Think-Tank is a non-governmental policy institute defending liberal democracy.

Our vision is that of a free, safe and prosperous Czech Republic within Central Europe that is an integral part of the West.

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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