EU-HYBNET held its 1st Annual Workshop, #AW

On the 13th of April 2021, the EU-HYBNET consortium held its first Annual Workshop #AW that was part of the EU-HYBNET Month. The EU-HYBNET Annual Workshop presented the initial project findings and progress to the project consortium members and pan-European stakeholders; made up of practitioners, industry, academia and NGOs.

The Annual Workshop, organised by project partners Hybrid CoE and LAUREA, included the presentation of the project's results and an overview of each work package and the Innovation Arena. Additionally, the workshop included two keynote speakers, including Mr. Andrea De Candido, acting Head of Unit for DG HOME, European Commission about the Hybrid Threats in the European Security Landscape, and Mr. Lutz Güllner, Head of the EEAS Strategic Communications, Task Forces and Information Analysis Division, who presented on the role of Communication to counter hybrid Threats.

In his keynote speech, Mr. Andrea de Candido highlighted EU-HYBNET's relevance especially as an instrument to implement the strategic approach to security research, especially when it comes to bringing together stakeholders that do not normally collaborate, and by comprehensively mapping the gaps and needs to be addressed. He reminded the audience how the challenge of hybrid threats requires many different actors, a future-looking approach and research factoring the social and economic dimensions.

One hybrid threat, to which EU-HYBNET also seeks solutions, is disinformation. Mr. Lütz Güllner stressed how disinformation should not be understood narrowly as misinformation or conspiracy narratives but as a security threat. He highlighted that disinformation is deliberate, targeted and coordinated in a way to influence public opinions or the information space. It is not so important whether the content is entirely true or false, but that there is a targeted activity behind to manipulate and sometimes even to undermine democratic debate and institutions. Sometimes it comes in the form of suppressing voices.

During the Annual Workshop, EU-HYBNET's results from the first project year were presented. The EU-HYBNET network extension has started well and the network is growing with new members representing pan-European practitioners, industry, academia and NGOs. EU-HYBNET has also developed strong cooperation with other DG HOME funded projects such as I-LEAD, INCLUDING, SPARTA, MEDEA. EU-HYBNET also contributes to DG HOME CERIS Workshop preparations, the objective to strengthen the delivery of policy inputs. EU-HYBNET has successfully recognized and analyzed key gaps and needs of pan-European practitioners and other relevant actors to counter hybrid threats in four project focus areas that are "future trends of hybrid threats", "cyber and future technologies", "Communication and strategic information", "resilient civilians, local level and national administration". Further research is also conducted on the selected gaps and needs. Moreover, training will be arranged to test selected innovations that could support to overcome the gaps and needs.

The innovation mapping to gaps and needs has played an important role in the project activities thus far. Over 20 promising innovations to gaps and needs have currently been identified. The project continues to analyse the innovations and deliver innovation uptake recommendations and innovation standardization recommendations. EU procurement landscape is also under analysis in order to know the possibilities for innovation uptake. During the Annual Workshop, were also highlighted the importance to have sound ethical approach in the project work and to notices the ethicalness of the innovations in order to deliver solutions that are just and will ensure sound societal impact.

The workshop also included the introduction of **innovation ideas to counter hybrid threats**:

1. HYDRATE: A technology-oriented approach to determining the credibility of online media and Open Source Intelligence, by the Austrian Institute for Technology, Dr. Ross King
2. NORSECON: Joint Human and Artificial Capabilities in Edges Operations, Mr. Arne Norlander
3. MALDITA: a WhatsApp chatbot to detect, measure and combat disinformation, Mr. Carlos Hernandez-Echevarria.

Overall, the first EU-HYBNERT Annual Workshop was a successful event and provided a fruitful exchange between the audience, the consortium and the keynote speakers. The event provided a promising platform for future engagements between the growing EU-HYBNET community.

If you are interested in joining EU-HYBNET's network, you can read the associated information and apply on the project's website. For further information on the EU-HYBNET, you can follow the project through Twitter and LinkedIn.