

EU-HYBNET held its 3rd Annual Workshop, #AW2023 and General Assembly

On the 20th of April 2023, the EU-HYBNET consortium successfully held its **3rd Annual Workshop** in Bucharest, Romania. The workshop was attended by approximately 80 representatives of the EU-HYBNET consortium and network, as well as other stakeholders from industry, practitioner and policymaking organisations.

This workshop is EU-HYBNET's annual flagship event; it offers an opportunity for hybrid threats stakeholders not only to learn about the project's research and results and discuss them with the consortium, but also to provide their feedback and share their needs. The consortium also invites providers of innovative security solutions to present them and asks the audience to assess their excellence, impact and potential for successful implementation.



Like every year, the Bucharest Annual Workshop was split in three parts: it began with two high-level keynote speeches that provided the perspective of the European Commission DG CONNECT and the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) on two very common manifestations of hybrid threats:

- **Protecting our societies against cyber-attacks:** participants were called to reflect on the importance of cybersecurity when countering hybrid threats, taking into consideration that once implemented, the recently adopted NIS2 Directive will strengthen the resilience of essential sectors to cyberattacks, thus strengthening the defences of our societies and economies.
- **Bolstering efforts to counter foreign information manipulation:** according to data presented by the EUISS, the spread of foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) takes advantage of cultural differences, emotional elements and societal vulnerabilities to influence societies' perceptions and decisions. The EU must continue to bolster its efforts to analyse and counter such phenomena.

In the second part of the morning, EU-HYBNET partners presented their findings and results from the past 12 months (e.g., the identification of practitioners' gaps and needs, the trainings developed, the selection and the assessment of related innovations and the recommendations for promising innovation uptake and standardisation) and received feedback from representatives of the Europol Innovation Lab and the European External Action Service/SECDEFPOL. In the previous year, the project has identified **four promising innovations** to counter hybrid threats innovations:

- What Information Needs to be Shared between CI entities to detect hybrid threats (WINS) – methodology.
- Enhanced and Extended Supply Chain Management (EESCM) – methodology.
- A Market place for Information Manipulation and Interference Information (MIMI) – technological solution.



- Gatekeeping ECHO chambers (GECHO). A solution that monitors the online environment, identifies where and how interventions are needed, thereafter launching the appropriate actions to build resilience in vulnerable young people against possible entrapment in violent extremism and terrorism.

Roundtable experts called on the consortium to think further on how the innovations identified will respond to the recent advances in generative AI, as well as on the impact of the upcoming regulation of AI technologies and risk through the EU AI Act. EU-HYBNET was also asked for input on how the EU could improve its existing toolkit on countering hybrid threats. In addition to the work already underway and the abovementioned innovations and results, the dialogue with EU agencies and practitioners is being kept open.

To complete the day, six innovative solutions for countering hybrid threats were presented to the audience which was then called to assess their excellence:

- Maltego contributing to OSINT investigations for identifying propaganda and disinformation spreading accounts.
- The TrustServista platform giving a trustworthiness score to articles by checking how much factual information is shared, their sentiment and subjectivity and where the information comes from.
- The CRITERIA, EU Project analysing risk, detecting vulnerabilities and predicting potential violent behaviour, when assessing narratives around the crossing of the Mediterranean sea.
- The CYCLOPES, EU project highlighting the need for further work around the role of police forces in countering hybrid threats - especially when many such activities are not covered by Member States' penal codes.
- The CRESCENT & DOMINOES, EU projects building awareness and resilience to disinformation, fake news and hostile information influencing campaigns through a massive open online course (MOOC).
- The EEAS/Strat.Comm. also demonstrated its FIMI Data Space, which brings all information together in a unified threat analysis platform and knowledge management database.

The presentations and demonstrations delivered in this session tie in with both the keynote speeches and the project results, as the focus of innovative technology solutions providers **heavily falls on identifying factual information, countering disinformation and building resilience** to hostile information influence campaigns. The importance of engaging law enforcement in countering hybrid threats was also brought to the discussion and much underlined.

After the completion of the Annual Workshop, the EU-HYBNET consortium held its General Assembly and discussed how to continue improving the work of the project delivering excellence and value for practitioners and policymakers, as well as how to continue the work through new project topics after EU-HYBNET.

Thanks to our partners 'Mihai Viteazul' National Intelligence Academy, Laurea University of Applied Sciences and European Organization for Security for organising the event, and to all of our EU-HYBNET partners, network members and stakeholders who joined the event and helped fuel the discussions.

The next Annual Workshop will be held in Valencia in Spring 2024.

If you would like to stay updated on the work and conclusions of the project and attend future events, you're welcome to [join the EU-HYBNET network](#); you can read the associated information and apply on our [website](#). For further information on EU-HYBNET, you can follow the project on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

