EU-HYBNET 3rd Innovation and Standardisation Workshop (ISW)

22nd October 2024, Brussels, Belgium

Summary Report

Report developed by PPHS, Laurea University, RISE
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General overview & Keynote Speech

On the **22nd of October 2024**, the EU-HYBNET consortium held its **3rd and final Innovation Standardisation Workshop (ISW**) in Brussels, Belgium, at the **Helsinki EU Office**. The workshop brought together approximately 40 participants, including consortium members, EU-HYBNET network members, industry representatives, practitioners, and policymakers.

The workshop was divided into **four thematic sessions** and each session was dedicated to one of the innovations developed during the 3rd cycle of the EU-HYBNET project:

- Session 1 – **Innovation:** Citizen – Responder Platform for Information Sharing in a case of an Emergency and Crises (CRP)
  EU-HYBNET core theme: Resilient Civilians, Local Level and National Administration
- Session 2 – **Innovation:** Local Media Hybrid Threats Tracker (LMHTT)
  EU-HYBNET core theme: Information and Strategic Communication
- Session 3 – **Innovation:** Citizens Reporting Tool on Suspicious Signs (CiReTo)
  EU-HYBNET core theme: Cyber and future technologies
- Session 4 – **Innovation:** STARLIGHT and Innovation testing best practices
  EU-HYBNET core theme: Future Trends and Hybrid Threats

The event was also accompanied by a keynote speech on innovation implementation and a closing speech on the procurement process.

Prof. Isto Matilla (LAUREA University of Applied Science, coordinator of the EU-HYBNET project) and **Mr. Rashel Talukder** (Polish Platform for Homeland Security, co-organiser of the workshop) opened the event, thanking the EU Helsinki Office for its hospitality and the opportunity to organise the workshop at their premises. **Janne Leino** (Director of the Helsinki EU Office), gave opening remarks, highlighting preparedness strategies and EU standards for crisis management. The event was facilitated by **Tiina Haapanen** (LAUREA).

Mr. Giannis Skiadaresis (DG Home) delivered a keynote underscoring the importance of integrating research and innovation into EU security policies, in line with the workshop's focus. Mr. Skiadaresis highlighted how solutions as presented at the workshop can effectively counter hybrid threats and shape future-proof policies through standardization. Emphasizing civil security, Mr. Skiadaresis discussed the European Commission's commitment to ensuring that R&I outcomes are socially compatible, technologically forward, and resilient, stressing the need for proactive approaches and stakeholder collaboration to enhance standardisation efforts in the EU. The keynote speech was a prelude to interactive discussion and the development of innovative ideas.

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Session 1 – Innovation: Citizen–Responder Platform (CRP)

Prof. Mattila (LAUREA) introduced the Citizen-Responder Platform (CRP), aimed at improving communication during crises through a standardized, pan-European approach. The platform supports emergency responders by providing tools to analyze and verify crisis reports from citizens, supporting authorities (first- and second-line responders, civil protection authorities, intelligence services), SMEs and industry in recognizing hybrid threats.

Next speaker, **Mr. Pertti Woitsch** (Woitsch Consulting) connected CRP innovation to European security standards, discussing how innovation could align with international frameworks. Mr. Woitsch discussed European and international security standards and how they can be helpful for countering hybrid threats, especially in enhancing resilience (ISO/TC 292 Security and resilience), ensuring interoperability and providing hints for detecting and responding to hybrid threats (UNESCO Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy). Additionally, Mr. Woitsch pointed out the multi-sectoral nature of hybrid threats and the need for cooperation between different organisations or even sectors and to establish common security practices (ISO/IES 27001 – Information security management systems). Mr Woitsch also made the link to Risk management (ISO 31000) in the context of crisis situation as a result of hybrid threats.

Mr. Jorge Gomes (European Operations Coordinator VOST EUROPE) added value by demonstrating the effectiveness of crowdsourcing of information in decision-making during complex emergencies, highlighting collaboration as a critical aspect of crisis management, tying directly into CRP's objective of improving information sharing. Mr. Gomes started his presentation with general information about his organisation and their role and mission in disaster risk management. As an example, Jorge Gomes mentioned the FOGOS.PT platform dedicated to the real-time situation awareness for wildfires and Fuel Strike Crowdsourcing Initiative. At the end, Mr. Gomes shared some thoughts about the CRP innovation and highlighted its strengths (pan-European scope, AI, verification of information) and areas for possible improvement (crowdsourcing model, user accessibility, real-time engagement).

Key takeaways from #1 Session

- Standards are essential to ensuring interoperability and verifying authenticity in crises.
- The multi-sectoral nature of hybrid threats requires cross-domain (physical and digital) cooperation and horizontal standardization.
- Building synergy between civil and military standardization frameworks ensures comprehensive preparedness.
- Crowdsourcing enables efficient resource allocation and collaboration during emergencies, which improves information sharing.

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Session 2 – Innovation: Local Media Hybrid Threats Tracker (LMHTT)

To begin session 2, **Mr. Rashel Talukder** (PPHS) presented the LMHTT, designed to track foreign information manipulation (FIMI campaign) at the regional and local level. During a brief presentation of this solution, the importance of regional and local media in supporting and strengthening democracy was highlighted. LMHTT aims to provide security agencies with insights into disinformation and interference risks.

During the next speech, Mrs. Chiara Pacenti (European External Action Service) provided insight into latest FIMI trends, demonstrating LMHTT's relevance in tracking manipulation. Mrs Pacenti also explained how an information laundering operation works. As an example, Mrs. Pacenti mentioned the 2024 European Elections and briefly provided an analysis of these incidents, referring to the Doppelganger Operation that took place during the elections. Ms Pacenti pointed out that standardization work in detecting and analyzing FIMI campaigns is still ongoing and is essential to effectively combat hybrid threats. By establishing a standardized approach to tracking FIMI, tools like LMHTT can facilitate cross-regional collaboration. More information about EEAS findings:

- Operation False Façade: Insight from a FIMI Information Laundering Scheme.
- Doppelganger strikes back: FIMI activities in the context of the EE24

Prof. Karina Stasiuk-Krajewska (SWPS University/CEDMO) explored the role of disinformation in media literacy, aligning with LMHTT's focus on tracking and countering media threats through improved awareness. Prof. Stasiuk-Krajewska presented the researcher point of view on the topic of disinformation, media literacy and journalism, while referring to the Doppelganger Operation, based on the Polish case. Moreover, Prof. Stasiuk-Krajewska highlighted two important factors in the context of the impact of disinformation:

1. psychological and social factors (e.g. restoring a sense of control; cognitive biases; conspiracy theories);
2. media factors (fast and attractive; trust and interest; competencies – European Fact-Checking Standards Network)

Furthermore, the results of the study on Disinformation related to the War in Ukraine were presented. Detailed findings can be found in the CEDMO Report.

Key takeaways from #2 Session

- Continuous development of standardization practices for FIMI data analysis is essential to aligning efforts at different governance levels.
- Building trust and cross-sector collaboration is critical to overcoming fragmented efforts and forming a unified defense against hybrid threats.
- Public awareness and media literacy are crucial in combating disinformation and reducing its societal impact. Training for local media is crucial in the context of disinformation.
- Fact-checkers are not eager to debunk local media, and thus every citizen should feel responsible for verifying the information that reaches them.

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Session 3 – Innovation: Citizens Reporting Tool (CiReTo)

Mr. Rolf Blom (RISE) introduced the Citizens Reporting Tool (CiReTo), an application designed to allow citizens to report incidents such as harassment, violence, and hybrid threats. The tool aims to build a safer society by encouraging active community involvement and providing a platform for reporting online or street-based incidents in real time. This system empowers citizens and encourages a connected community to stand against different forms of harassment and hybrid threats.

Mr. Łukasz Niezabitowski (National Police HQ Poland) discussed Poland's National Security Threat Map, a public reporting platform developed with extensive public consultation at various levels (provincial, township/district, local), demonstrating a similar tool to enhance police-community communication. Mr. Niezabitowski presented insights from the tool, and how it allows users to anonymously report local threats, which are then analysed and verified by law enforcement officers. Moreover, Mr. Niezabitowski explained that the tool optimizes police resource allocation and strengthens communication between the police and local communities. By engaging citizens directly, the National Security Threat Map helps increase citizens' sense of security, optimizes police response times, and enhances police-community collaboration. On the other hand, Mr. Niezabitowski pointed out that such solutions carry the risk of receiving false notifications, which in the case of activities in the area of hybrid threats can have a big impact.

Mr. Tomas Divis's (Police of the Czech Republic) presentation focused on discussing the possible application of the CiReTo solution in practice. Mr. Divis discussed how artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance CiReTo by improving data analysis from citizen reports, allowing for quicker responses and prioritize urgent cases. Mr Divis emphasized the benefits for law enforcement agencies, such as efficient resource allocation and community engagement, while also highlighting challenges like ensuring legal protections for users and measures to prevent misuse of the platform. His recommendations included stronger encryption, user anonymity, and improved collaboration with communities to build trust in the system.

Key takeaways from #3 session

- It is important to encourage Member States to develop a prevention/detection tools with a view to enabling citizens to report on a variety of matters that could assist the police in identifying various types of crimes. On the other hand, it seems that these types of tools are not designed for reporting urgent crimes.
- Public consultation is necessary to ensure such tools are user-friendly and widely adopted.
- Effective engagement with citizens through such solutions enhances public safety and law enforcement response.
- Data security, anonymity, and measures against false reports are essential to ensuring the system's credibility and fostering community trust.

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Session 4 – Innovation: STARLIGHT and Innovation testing best practices

Mr. Edmundas Piesarskas (L3CE) presented STARLIGHT's innovation testing best practices, focusing on law enforcement's use of technology to combat hight priority threats . Key strategies include developing tools in collaboration with end-users, testing them in real environments, and ensuring wide availability through channels like Europol's repositories. This innovation has two sides: technological solutions and development practice.

Mr. Nikolaos Gkalelis (Europol Innovation Lab) discussed the STARLIGHT CODEV model, focusing on its objectives and phases. He highlighted the lessons learned from the initialization phase**,** such as the importance of defining a clear scope, forming small targeted teams, and ensuring early collaboration with relevant activities. In the implementation phase, he recommended face-to-face meetings, real-time updates, and on-premise testing with operational data. He also emphasized continuous supervision and efficient management of the project. The next steps include refining the model through structured interviews, analysis, and sharing knowledge across EC projects. This presentation was a prelude to a panel discussion.

Mr. Pierre Vanbeveren (Brussels Police) provided practical insights during the STARLIGHT session, explaining how innovations developed through the project help law enforcement agencies tackle emerging technological threats. He highlighted that while projects like STARLIGHT facilitate collaboration between LEAs, the workload and complexity of such collaboration can be overwhelming. Therefore, it's essential to plan and manage cooperation wisely, ensuring that LEAs are not overburdened. Mr. Vanbeveren also touched on the challenges related to data sharing and intellectual property rights, which need to be addressed to optimize project outcomes.

Key takeaways from session #4

- STARLIGHT project serves as a promotion of standardized, scalable solutions for security agencies across Europe.
- Early end-user involvement in development and testing is crucial for the effectiveness of developing solutions and meeting the operational requirements.
- Collaborative frameworks such as CODEV enhance project development and information sharing.
- It is important not to overwhelm the LEA's operational experts and only involve them when necessary.

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Procurement perspective on innovation

The presentation on the iProcureNet Project by **Jorge Garzon** (French Ministry of Interior) discussed the role of procurement in driving security innovation. The iProcureNet Project aims to create a European ecosystem for security procurement, fostering collaboration and standardizing practices across borders. This directly links to the workshop's overall theme of innovation and standardization by addressing how effective procurement practices can accelerate the adoption of innovative technologies in the security sector. It highlights how collaboration between EU member states can optimize procurement processes, making it easier to implement cutting-edge solutions such as those presented throughout the workshop. Mr. Garzon mentioned that cross-border procurement needs standardized legal, technical, and economic frameworks to enable wider adoption of security innovations. Standardization can help overcome barriers to joint procurement, particularly by referencing relevant standards in the procurement process. This presentation underscored the critical role of procurement in standardizing and deploying innovations discussed during the workshop, ensuring they reach the market and meet security needs.

The EU-HYBNET workshop demonstrated the crucial role of standardization and collaboration in accelerating the adoption of security innovations across Europe. Overall, the workshop underscored the need for comprehensive, multi-stakeholder collaboration, involving citizens, law enforcement agencies and policymakers to ensure that innovations are both impactful and aligned with standardized practices across Europe and that they enhance Europe's resilience against hybrid threats.

In conclusion, the workshop provided a comprehensive platform for discussing the future of security innovations, emphasizing the importance of standards in ensuring that these solutions can be widely adopted and effectively implemented across the EU. Standardization and procurement remain critical drivers in transforming innovative ideas into impactful, operational tools for security agencies.

The organizers thank all participants for attending and actively participating in the workshop.

The EU-HYBNET final conference is planned for the 12th and 13th of February 2025. For further information on EU-HYBNET events, you can follow the project on X/Twitter and LinkedIn. If you are interested in participating in discussions on hybrid threats we encourage you to visit our website and explore the benefits of the EU-HYBNET network.

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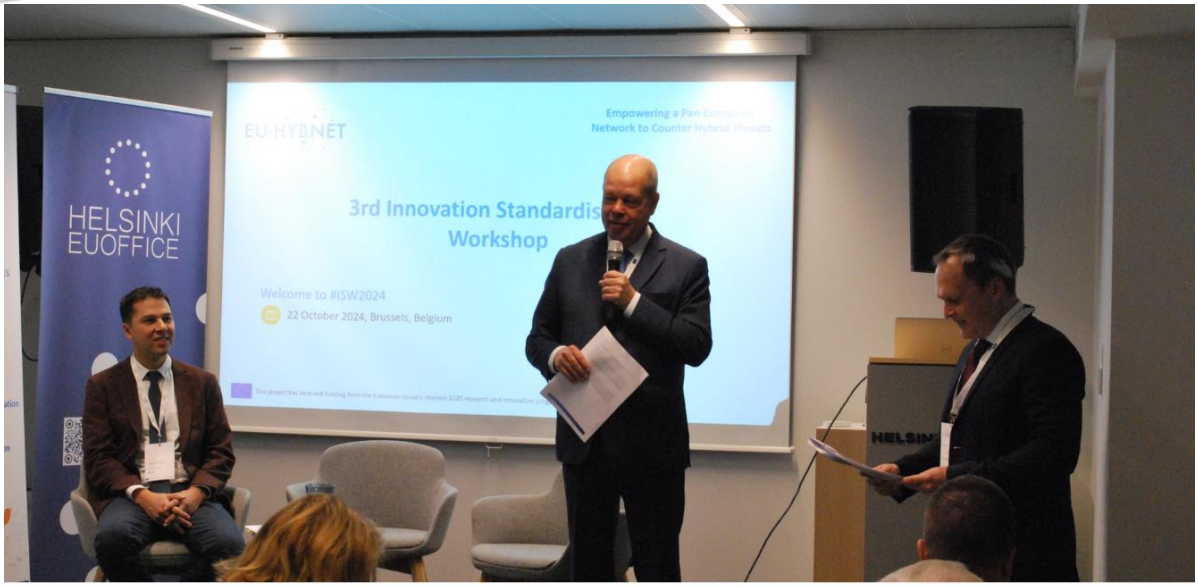

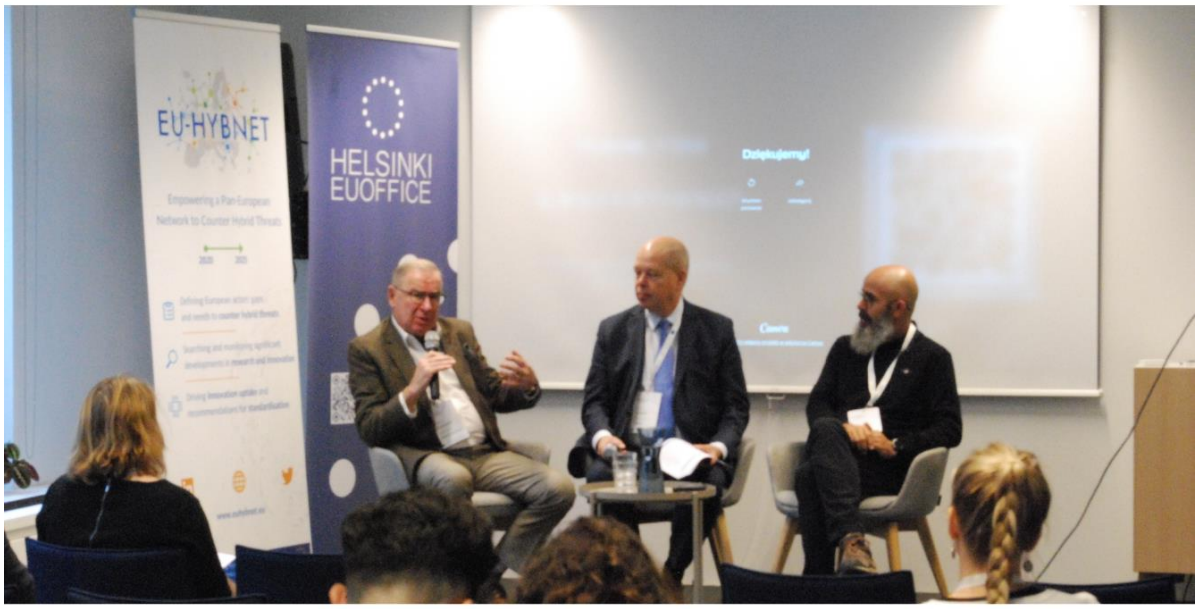

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