



Security: EU strengthens response to hybrid threats

Brussels, 6 April 2016

The European Commission and the High Representative adopted today a Joint Framework to counter hybrid threats and foster the resilience of the EU, its Member States and partner countries while increasing cooperation with NATO on countering these threats.

In recent years, the EU and its Member States have been increasingly exposed to hybrid threats that comprise hostile actions designed to destabilise a region or a state. The European Commission and the High Representative adopted today a Joint Framework to counter hybrid threats and foster the resilience of the EU, its Member States and partner countries while increasing cooperation with NATO on countering these threats.

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy **Federica Mogherini** said: *"In recent years, the security environment has changed dramatically. We have seen the rise of hybrid threats on EU's borders. There has been a strong call for the EU to adapt and increase its capacities as a security provider. The relationship between internal and external security needs to be further strengthened. With these new proposals, we want to enhance our capacity to counter threats of hybrid nature. In this effort, we will also step up cooperation and coordination with NATO."*

Elżbieta Bieńkowska, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *"The EU must become a security provider, able to adapt, anticipate and react to the changing nature of the threats we are facing. This means enhancing our resilience and security from within while increasing our capacity to counter emerging external threats. With this Framework, we act together to counter common hybrid threats. We are presenting concrete proposals for the Union and Member States to increase cooperation in security and defence, improve resilience, address strategic vulnerabilities and prepare a coordinated response."*

The Joint Framework offers a comprehensive approach to improve the common response to the challenges posed by hybrid threats to Member States, citizens and the collective security of Europe. It brings together all relevant actors, policies and instruments to both counter and mitigate the impact of hybrid threats in a more coordinated manner. In particular, it builds on the [European Agenda on Security](#) adopted by the Commission in April 2015, as well as on sectorial strategies such as [EU Cyber Security Strategy](#), the [Energy Security Strategy](#) and the [European Union Maritime Security Strategy](#).

The Joint Framework brings together existing policies and proposes twenty-two operational Actions aimed at:

- **raising awareness** by establishing dedicated mechanisms for the exchange of information between Member States and by coordinating EU actions to deliver strategic communication;
- **building resilience** by addressing potential strategic and critical sectors such as cybersecurity, critical infrastructures (Energy, Transport, Space), protection of the financial system, protection of public health, and supporting efforts to counter violent extremism and radicalisation;
- **preventing, responding to crisis and recovering** by defining effective procedures to follow, but also by examining the applicability and practical implications of the Solidarity Clause (Article 222 TFEU) and the mutual defence clause (Art. 42(7) TEU), in case a wide-ranging and serious hybrid attack occurs;
- **stepping up the cooperation between the EU and NATO as well as other partner organisations**, in a joint effort to counter hybrid threats, while respecting the principles of inclusiveness and autonomy of each organisation's decision making process.

The Framework is designed to provide a robust foundation to support Member States in countering hybrid threats collectively, supported by a wide range of EU instruments and initiatives and using the full potential of the Treaties.

Background

Hybrid threats refer to mixture of activities often combining conventional and unconventional methods that can be used in a coordinated manner by state and non-state actors while remaining below the

threshold of formally declared warfare. The objective is not only to cause direct damage and exploit vulnerabilities, but also to destabilise societies and create ambiguity to hinder decision-making.

Countering hybrid threats is largely a matter of national competence, the primary responsibility lying with the Member States. However, the Joint Framework presented today by the European Commission and High Representative **Mogherini** aims to help EU Member States and their partners counter hybrid threats and improve their resilience when facing them, by combining European and national instruments in a more effective way than in the past. Moreover, many EU Member States face common threats, which can target cross-border networks or infrastructures. The Framework follows the [Political Guidelines](#) of the Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** who called on the need "to work on a stronger Europe when it comes to security and defence". It also delivers on the invitation of the [Foreign Affairs Council](#) of 18 May 2015 to present actionable proposals to counter hybrid threats.

Next Steps

The Framework will be presented to the Council of the European Union.

More information:

- [FAQs; Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats](#)
- [Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats - a European Union response](#)

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