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The Role of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats

The aim of this descriptive chapter is to summarise the tasks and roles of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE). In order to understand the reasons behind the creation of this new tool it is important to describe the process leading to that and the cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). At the beginning of the 2000s ‘hybrid warfare’ was defined by U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel Frank G. Hoffman as a “combination of new technologies and fanatical fighting styles without state structures, uniforms or obedience to the laws of armed conflict”.² Although the definition of this term has been changed since then, the concept of hybrid warfare is closely connected to the concept of hybrid threats.³ The deteriorating security environment in the Southern neighbourhood following the Arab Spring in 2011 and the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in 2014 became decisive factors for policy makers of the EU and NATO regarding hybrid threats to foster stronger cooperation between the two organisations. The member states and EU institutions started to put greater emphasis on the capacity building, identification of hybrid threats, raising awareness and joint responses. The annexation of Crimea was described as one of the first examples of hybrid warfare.⁴ According to the definition of Simon Sweeney and Neil Winn (2022) hybrid threats include manipulation of the information environment, cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, interference in elections, direct and indirect financial support and economic coercion of political actors, and subversion of the civil society.⁵ Robert Johnson uses the term as “protracted forms of warfare, use of proxy forces for coercion and intimidation, terrorism and criminality to manipulate the information environment,

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² JOHNSON 2018: 141; HOFFMAN 2006.

³ JOHNSON 2018; BALCAEN et al. 2022.

⁴ RENZ 2016.

⁵ SWEENEY–WINN 2022.

target energy resources, attack economic vulnerabilities and exploit diplomatic leverage”.⁶ It is not a coincidence that all these factors have created breeding ground for the creation of a new European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, in 2017.

Cooperation between the EU and NATO

Security threats to and within the EU have intensified and acted as an incentive to strengthen the role of the NATO and that of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU. The worsening relationship between the West and Russia since 2014, the migration–refugee crisis in 2015 and the 2016 U.S. presidential election have all acted as a spurs to an improved relationship between the NATO and the EU. During the last decade these two organisations were forced by the weakening of multilateralism and the return to great power politics to bolster their positions as international security actors. After the adoption of the EU Global Strategy (GS) in 2016, this process has been accelerated.⁷ The EU GS emphasises the need to deepen Transatlantic relationships and links with NATO in order to strengthen collective security.⁸ One of the most important and tangible results of the improved cooperation between the EU and NATO was the establishment of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in 2017.⁹ The year 2016 can be considered an important turning point in the relations between the EU and NATO. From that year, an intensified relationship between the two international security organisations has been established in the implementation process following the adoption of the EU Global Strategy (GS). The document stressed that Europeans should take greater responsibility for their own security, ready to deter, respond to and protect themselves against external threats.¹⁰ The text emphasises that while NATO provides the primary framework for collective defence of most Member States, Europeans must be able to protect Europe, addressing internal and external challenges “such as terrorism, hybrid threats, cyber and energy security, and organized crime and external

⁶ JOHNSON 2018: 145.

⁷ MOLNÁR 2019.

⁸ European External Action Service 2016; MOLNÁR 2019.

⁹ Hybrid CoE 2017a.

¹⁰ European External Action Service 2016.

border management. [...] A more credible European defence is essential also for the sake of a healthy transatlantic partnership with the United States.”¹¹ The strategy, taking into consideration also the non-NATO member states, intends to strengthen the relationship between the EU and NATO, primarily based on synergies and complementarity.¹² Immediately after the adoption of the EU GS, the relationship between the two organisations improved. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw on 8 July 2016, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the NATO Secretary General signed a joint declaration on EU–NATO cooperation. This included seven areas of information sharing and concrete cooperation:¹³

- countering hybrid threats
- operational cooperation, including on maritime and migration issues
- cybersecurity and defence capabilities
- defence industry and research
- exercises
- support for the capacity-building efforts
- resilience of the Western Balkan and Eastern and Southern European partners

To enhance staff-to-staff cooperation, points of contact were established in both organisations, and reports monitoring the implementation were published annually, and countering hybrid threats became one of the most significant fields of strengthened cooperation.¹⁴ Although a NATO Permanent Liaison Team was created within the EU Military Staff in 2005 and an EU Cell at SHAPE (NATO’s strategic command for operations in Mons, Belgium) was established in 2006, therefore further improvement of close cooperation was urgently needed. NATO and the EU meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of common interest. Since 2016 the NATO Secretary General meets regularly his EU counterparts and has delivered addresses at the European Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee and the sub-committee on Security and Defence. Meetings have been intensified “at the level of foreign ministers, ambassadors, military representatives and defence advisors”. The staff-to-staff meetings have been organised between

¹¹ European External Action Service 2016: 20.

¹² European External Action Service 2016.

¹³ NATO 2016a.

¹⁴ NATO Watch 2017.

NATO's International Staff and International Military Staff, and the European External Action Service, the European Defence Agency, the EU Commission and the European Parliament. Permanent military liaison positions have been created to exchange ideas and information and to strengthen cooperation.¹⁵ It is worth mentioning that informal meetings of EU and NATO heads of state and government have been organised by “transatlantic dinners” to avoid the conflict between Turkey, Cyprus and Greece.¹⁶

EU strategies and actions

In 2016, the European Commission and the High Representative of the EU prepared the first relevant document regarding hybrid threats of the EU, entitled *Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats*. The policy paper included the definition and several responses to the threats.¹⁷ The document mentioned the need for establishing a Hybrid CoE addressing hybrid threats in order to focus on researching how hybrid strategies have been applied, and to encourage the development of new concepts and technologies within the private sector and industry to help Member States build resilience. It aims to align EU and national policies, doctrines and concepts, and to ensure that decision-making can take into consideration the complexities and ambiguities associated with hybrid threats. According to the proposition of this policy document one of the tasks of the Hybrid CoE will be designing programmes to advance research and exercises to find practical solutions to existing challenges posed by hybrid threats. The activities of the Hybrid CoE will be based on expertise developed by its multi-national and cross-sector participants from the civilian and military, private and academic sectors working together with EU and NATO centres of excellence.¹⁸ The document defined hybrid threats as: “The concept aims to capture the mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. There is

¹⁵ NATO 2016b: 1.

¹⁶ DROIN 2023.

¹⁷ European Commission 2016.

¹⁸ European Commission 2016.

usually an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target and on generating ambiguity to hinder decision-making processes. Massive disinformation campaigns, using social media to control the political narrative or to radicalise, recruit and direct proxy actors can be vehicles for hybrid threats.”¹⁹ In 2016, the Hybrid Fusion Cell was created within the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre of the European External Action Service in order to improve situational awareness and support decision-making of EU institutions and Member States. The Fusion Cell prepares assessments and briefings based on open source information from different stakeholders concerning hybrid threats. The Hybrid Fusion Cell works in close cooperation with the Hybrid CoE in Helsinki.²⁰ In 2018, the Joint Communication on Increasing Resilience and Bolstering Capabilities to Address Hybrid Threats was presented by the European Commission and the High Representative. The document stated: “Hybrid activities by State and non-state actors continue to pose a serious and acute threat to the EU and its Member States. Efforts to destabilise countries by undermining public trust in government institutions and by challenging the core values of societies have become more common. Our societies face a serious challenge from those who seek to damage the EU and its Member States, from cyber-attacks disrupting the economy and public services, through targeted disinformation campaigns to hostile military actions.”²¹ According to the document “hybrid campaigns are multidimensional, combining coercive and subversive measures, using both conventional and unconventional tools and tactics (diplomatic, military, economic, and technological) to destabilise the adversary. They are designed to be difficult to detect or attribute, and can be used by both state and non-state actors. The nerve agent attack in Salisbury on 4 March 2018 further underlined the versatility of hybrid threats and the multitude of tactics now available. In response, the European Council highlighted the need to step up the capacity of the EU and its Member States to detect, prevent and respond to hybrid threats in areas such as cyber, strategic communication and counterintelligence. It also drew particular attention to the need for resilience in the face of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear-related threats.”²² The European Commission published the document *The EU Security Union Strategy 2020–2025* in 2020. The strategy presented

¹⁹ European Commission 2016: 2.

²⁰ European Commission 2018.

²¹ European Commission 2018: 1.

²² European Commission 2018: 4.

a new comprehensive approach to hybrid threats. This new approach proposing the use of the various tools at the disposal of the EU and integrating external and internal dimension aimed to establish stronger intelligence cooperation with Member States' competent services through the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN), in order to better counter hybrid attacks by state and non-state actors, covering the full spectrum of action – from early detection, analysis, awareness, building resilience and prevention through to crisis response and consequence management.²³ Another very important achievement was the fact that the European Parliament established a Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE committee) in 2020. The INGE organises hearings with experts in order to discuss relevant topics. The task of the INGE committee is to assess the level of hybrid threats in different spheres such as:²⁴

- major national and European elections across the EU
- disinformation campaigns on traditional and social media to shape public opinion
- cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure
- direct and indirect financial support and economic coercion of political actors and civil society subversion

In February 2022 (just a few weeks before the unprovoked aggression of Russia in Ukraine), the Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE), together with the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) and the Delegation for relations with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (DNAT), with the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence exchanged ideas about topics related to “Russia’s Strategy in cyberspace, China as a narrative challenge for NATO Member States and the emerging issues in the digital domain”.²⁵ After a two-year process, the Council of the EU adopted the Strategic Compass in 2022, which is an ambitious plan for a stronger EU security and defence policy by 2030. The Strategic Compass aims to create a new Hybrid Toolbox in order to bring together different instruments to detect and respond to a broad range of hybrid threats and to address foreign information manipulation and interference. The document highlights that hybrid

²³ European Commission 2020.

²⁴ Welcome to INGE by Chair Raphaël Glucksmann.

²⁵ European Parliament 2022: 5.

threats are growing in frequency and impact by mentioning China and Russia. The Strategic Compass emphasises that state and non-state actors are using hybrid tactics, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, direct interference in elections and political processes, economic coercion and the instrumentalisation of irregular migration flows. Within the European External Action Service the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), in particular the Hybrid Fusion Cell, provides foresight and situational awareness. The staff of the Hybrid Fusion Cell which is part of the Intelligence and Situation Center (INTCEN) prepares documents, reports and analysis in the framework of the SIAC. This later combines civilian and military intelligence capacities of the EEAS in order to strengthen societal and economic resilience, protect critical infrastructure, democracies and the EU, and national electoral processes. The Strategic Compass plans to create EU Hybrid Rapid Response Teams to support Member States, CSDP missions and operations and partner countries in countering hybrid threats. There is need to further develop counter-hybrid cooperation with NATO.²⁶

Establishing the Hybrid CoE

In 2016, NATO and the EU recognised countering hybrid threats as a priority for cooperation and released the Joint Communication by the European Commission and the High Representative to the European Parliament and the Council entitled *Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats. A European Union Response* which mentioned first the need for establishing the new Hybrid CoE.²⁷ The joint communication stated that “building on the experience of some Member States and partner organisations, one or a network of multinational institutes could act as a Centre of Excellence addressing hybrid threats. Such a Centre could focus on researching how hybrid strategies have been applied, and could encourage the development of new concepts and technologies within the private sector and industry to help Member States build resilience. The research could contribute to aligning EU and national policies, doctrines and concepts, and to ensuring that decision-making can take account of the complexities and ambiguities associated with hybrid threats. Such a Centre should design programmes to advance research and exercises to find practical solutions to existing challenges posed by hybrid

²⁶ Council of the European Union 2022.

²⁷ European Commission 2016.

threats. The strength of such a Centre would rely on the expertise developed by its multinational and cross-sector participants from the civilian and military, private and academic sectors. Such a Centre could work closely with existing EU and NATO centres of excellence in order to benefit from insights into hybrid threats that have been gained from cyber defence, strategic communication, civilian military cooperation, energy and crisis response.”²⁸ EU Member States were invited to create a Centre of Excellence for ‘countering hybrid threats’. The proposal was mentioned in the document on the implementation of the joint EU–NATO Declaration approved by the Council of the EU and the NAC on 6 December 2016.²⁹ The Hybrid CoE was established on 11 April 2017 as one of the key factors of the improved cooperation between NATO and the EU. The new network-based international organisation has domestic legal personality in Finland.³⁰ The Centre was created by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the first nine participating states.³¹ During the first meeting of the Steering Board, the first Chairman was elected and the Hybrid CoE’s role and structure were also discussed.³² According to the MoU, the Hybrid CoE aims to follow a comprehensive, multinational, multidisciplinary and academic-based approach.³³ Although NATO and the EU are not signatories themselves, they play an important part in the activities of the Hybrid CoE. The unique character of it is given by the fact that “it is the only actor having both the EU and NATO work and conduct exercises together, with activities covering a wide range of domains from civil to military, and from hostile influencing to hybrid warfare”.³⁴

Participating states

The Centre was created to operate as a “hub of expertise supporting the participating countries’ individual and collective efforts to enhance their civil-military capabilities, resilience, and preparedness to counter hybrid threats with a special

²⁸ European Commission 2016: 5.

²⁹ Hybrid CoE 2017a.

³⁰ Hybrid CoE s. a.

³¹ The first participating states are Finland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, France, Germany and the United States.

³² Hybrid CoE 2017c.

³³ Hybrid CoE 2017b.

³⁴ Hybrid CoE 2017b: 3.

focus on European security”.³⁵ The Hybrid CoE is an independent international organisation. EU and NATO countries are encouraged to take part in the network-based operation of the organisation in order to promote “whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to countering hybrid threats”.³⁶ Nine countries signed the MOU and nowadays there are 35 Participating States, see table below.³⁷ The cross-governmental, cross-sectoral network-based organisation helps the efficient cooperation between the different independent actors in order to create state-of-art products and services for the whole network to prevent and counter hybrid threats effectively.

Table 2: Participating States of the Hybrid CoE

Year	Participating States
2017 April	Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States
2017 July	Estonia, Norway, Spain
2018	The Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Austria, Canada, Romania, Cyprus
2019	Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey
2020	Slovakia
2021	Croatia, Belgium, Iceland
2022	Malta
2023	Ireland, Bulgaria, North Macedonia

Source: Hybrid CoE 2017c

The Secretariat is located in Helsinki, Finland. It plans and coordinates the activities and general functions of the Hybrid CoE and manages the work of the networks. The first Director of the Secretariat is Teija Tiilikainen, a renowned scholar and former director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. The Secretariat is also in charge of preparing and organising the meetings of the Steering Board, as well as the cooperation with the Participating States, the EU and NATO, and building and maintaining networks. Participating States can provide employees on secondment to the Secretariat. The annual core budget amounts to 3.6 million euros. Half of this is provided by the host nation Finland,

³⁵ NATO Watch 2017: 4.

³⁶ NATO Watch 2017: 2.

³⁷ Hybrid CoE 2017b.

and the other half is covered by participation fees paid by the 35 Participating States.³⁸ The Steering Board of the Hybrid CoE is the main decision-making body. It consists of representatives from the Participating States. The Staff representatives from the EU and NATO are invited to be present at the meetings of the Steering Board. “The Steering Board establishes policies, adopts internal regulations, and approves the work programme, the budget and the accounts, the annual participation fees, and the admission of new Participating States. It also approves such guidance that may be necessary for the functioning of Hybrid CoE and its organs. The Steering Board is led by the Chair, who is currently Mr Jori Arvonon.”³⁹

Table 3: Hybrid CoE organisation

Mission		
is to strengthen its Participating States’ and organisations’ security by providing expertise and training for countering hybrid threats		
Vision		
is a world in which our open, democratic societies operate free of hostile outside interference		
Key tasks		
It is a centre of excellence which promotes the countering of hybrid threats at strategic level through research and training.	It creates multinational networks of experts in comprehensive security.	It serves as a platform for cooperation between the EU and NATO in evaluating societies’ vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience.
Steering Board (Chair)		
Secretariat (Director)		
Three Community of Interest (COI) networks		
Hybrid Influence	Vulnerabilities and Resilience	and Strategy and Defence
Teams		
The Research and Analysis Team		The Training and Exercises team

Source: Compiled by the author based on Hybrid CoE 2017c; NATO Watch 2017

The Hybrid CoE’s key task is to build its Participating States’ capabilities to prevent and counter hybrid threats. This goal is accomplished by multinational and multidisciplinary “sharing best practices, providing recommendations, as well as testing new ideas and approaches. The Centre also builds the operational

³⁸ Hybrid CoE 2017c.

³⁹ Hybrid CoE 2017c.

capacities of the Participating States by training practitioners and organizing hands-on exercises.”⁴⁰ Hybrid CoE has three Community of Interest (COI) networks:⁴¹

- Hybrid Influence
- Vulnerabilities and Resilience
- Strategy and Defence

The networks are managed by the Secretariat. The cross-governmental, cross-sectoral networks of the Hybrid CoE involve more than 1,500 practitioners and experts from the Participating States, the EU and NATO, the private sector and academia. The main task of the Hybrid CoE is to facilitate the conversation on hybrid threats by publishing publications and organising events in order to better understand and counter hybrid threats. The Secretariat provides space to coordinate actions.⁴² “The Research and Analysis team supports the Centre’s work by advancing academic research and debate on relevant topics. It hosts a comprehensive network of academic experts. The COIs participate in the research function’s work by providing input from their activities. The Training and Exercises team plans and facilitates table-top and experimental exercises with different hybrid threat scenarios, acting as an enabler and implementer.”⁴³

Progress reports

All of the seven progress reports on implementing the common set of proposals endorsed by NATO and EU Councils on 6 December 2016 emphasised the key importance of countering hybrid threats in EU–NATO cooperation as 20 out of the 74 proposals concentrated on this field. The first progress report, issued in June 2017, highlighted joint actions against hybrid threats.⁴⁴ One of the most important results of this cooperation was the 2017 establishment of the Hybrid CoE in Helsinki. This stemmed from a Finnish initiative, but was carried out with the support of the EU and NATO. Thus the main task of the new centre

⁴⁰ Hybrid CoE s. a.

⁴¹ Hybrid CoE s. a.

⁴² Hybrid CoE s. a.

⁴³ Hybrid CoE s. a.

⁴⁴ NATO 2017a.

is to “assist member states and institutions in understanding and defending against hybrid threats” by analysing the cybersecurity challenges, disinformation operations and strategic communication.⁴⁵ The Hybrid CoE additionally provides an opportunity to organise informal meetings between the NAC and the EU Political and Security Committee, and thus develop coordinated action against the hybrid threats.⁴⁶ According to the second progress report, 12 EU Member States and NATO Allies, staffs joined the Hybrid CoE’s Steering Board in 2017. The fact that the High Representative – Vice President of the EU and the Secretary General of NATO took part in the official inauguration ceremony of the Hybrid CoE significantly increased the prestige of the event. During the first year, the first classified document of the Parallel and Coordinated Analysis was prepared. The EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and the NATO Hybrid Analytical Branch started discussions about how to best use the capability of the newly created Hybrid CoE. They also maintained consultations on strategic communication support for Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. Staff-to-staff contacts and information exchange went on between NATO and EU resilience experts in critical strategic sectors for further work in the area of critical infrastructure protection. They also continued to exchange information on NATO’s baseline requirements for national resilience and their integration in the NATO Defence Planning Process. In the framework of NATO’s Resilience Advisory Support teams, the EU participated with observer status in NATO’s advisory mission to Romania. Staff-to-staff contacts aimed to ensure that the implications of hybrid threats are addressed in a coherent way in the EU Capability Development Plan (CDP) and the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP).⁴⁷ According to the third progress report on implementing the common set of proposals, published in May 2018, the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, the NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch and the Hybrid CoE continued to work in close cooperation. They also proposed to establish trilateral cooperation using open source material. Two other Parallel and Coordinated Analyses were finalised regarding the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood. The EU and NATO staffs took part in the Hybrid CoE’s activities, participating in workshops, seminars and exercises. In March, EU and NATO staffs meeting focused on improving 1. early warning and situational awareness; 2. strategic communication and

⁴⁵ Hybrid CoE s. a.

⁴⁶ Hybrid CoE 2018; MOLNÁR 2019.

⁴⁷ NATO 2017b.

messaging; 3. crisis response; 4. resilience; and 5. cyber defence and energy security. In May 2018, the Centre of Excellence facilitated a scenario-based workshop *Harbour Protection Under Hybrid Threat Conditions* organised by the EU and attended by staffs of both organisations.⁴⁸ The fourth progress report on implementing the common set of proposals emphasised that “the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki has made impressive progress with a growing membership, consensus approved work programme and a fully functioning budget”.⁴⁹ Several events, including seminars, workshops and conferences were organised. Experts from the Hybrid CoE’s have briefed EU and NATO committees on several occasions.⁵⁰ The fifth progress report in 2020 highlighted that the Hybrid CoE in Helsinki has a crucial role in supporting the NATO and the EU with a growing membership (27 participating states). The Hybrid CoE organised workshops, including one on harbour protection against hybrid threats in October 2019, which included a Table Top exercise, and another on the impact of disruptive technologies in hybrid threats in February 2020, as part of the project called *Hybrid Warfare and Future Technologies*. The effective cooperation between the staffs of the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and the NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch and the Hybrid CoE continued “to develop through monthly staff-to-staff exchanges with the aim of strengthening situational awareness, mutual understanding of respective activities, as well as to explore further potential cooperation avenues”.⁵¹ According to the sixth progress report of 2021, 30 members participated in the work of the Hybrid CoE, which supported various scenario-based discussions, workshops and exercises, with active participation of the staffs of the EU and NATO. The Director of the Hybrid CoE briefed NATO Member States and selected partner countries on Hybrid CoE’s activities in February 2021. Hybrid CoE continued to work in close cooperation with the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and the NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch monthly. The two staffs prepared three new Parallel and Coordinated Assessments.⁵²

According to the seventh progress report on implementing the common set of proposals in 2021 and 2022, the EU and NATO staffs continued to participate in activities organised by the Hybrid CoE. Both staffs participated in its Steering

⁴⁸ NATO 2018.

⁴⁹ Hybrid CoE s. a.

⁵⁰ NATO 2019.

⁵¹ NATO 2020: 2–3.

⁵² NATO 2021.

Board meetings. The Centre had 32 NATO Allies and EU Members States: “The Hybrid CoE hosted the main exercise for the ‘Resilient Civilians’ project, which brought together senior-level government officials and experts from EU Member States and NATO Allies.” The number of staff-to-staff meetings increased, and the exchange of information between the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and the NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch continued. Four new Parallel and Coordinated Assessments were published.⁵³ The eighth progress report emphasised that staff interactions on countering hybrid threats remained in the framework of the Hybrid CoE. Staffs of the EU and NATO participated in the Steering Board meetings and in the third High-Level Retreat, in October 2022. The Hybrid CoE organised a scenario-based discussion on hybrid threats from Russia and China and possible EU and NATO answers. A pilot course on *The Contribution of Cyber in Hybrid Conflict* was organised by the European Defence Agency (EDA) with the support of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. The cooperation between the NATO Joint Intelligence and Security Division Hybrid Analysis Branch and the EU INTCEN Hybrid Fusion Cell further developed preparing assessments on various topics.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The deteriorating security environment created a breeding ground for increased cooperation between the EU and NATO. 2016 marked as a turning point and significant steps have been made since then. As a consequence, effective cooperation between the EU and NATO has become a daily routine, the two organisations are complementing each other in the field of countering hybrid threats. Both member states and the two international organisations put emphasis on the effective implementation of the common guidelines and measures.

⁵³ NATO 2022: 2–3.

⁵⁴ NATO 2023: 3.

Questions

1. Please describe the main reasons behind the closer cooperation between the European Union and NATO.
2. When was the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats established?
3. Please summarise the main roles of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.
4. Which are the participating states of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats?

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