

Report: Countering Fake News and Protecting Cyber Space

ELF Project: Liberals Fighting Disinformation

Venue: Prague, Czech Republic

Date: 15th – 16th November 2018

Organizer: Adéla Klečková, Friedrich Naumann Foundation Prague

Participants: See Attached

Business Breakfast:

Cyber and information security is one of the major challenges faced by states and companies at the time of the expansion of information and communication technologies. This issue was dedicated to the working breakfast organized by the European Liberal Forum on 15 November 2018, in cooperation with the Institute for Politics and Society and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. GLOBSEC expert Katarína Klingová and CyberGym Europe security analyst Jan Šaradin presented the speech as speakers. The discussion was moderated by analyst of the Institute for Politics and Society Roman Máca.

In the area of cyber-security and information security, a number of shortcomings appear in both states. "The Slovak Republic, as compared to the Czech Republic, lacks a national security audit that would point to safety gaps." Katarína Klingová said. She also added that the current legislation, which was created for cyber security in Slovakia, only transposes EU standards. Therefore, they do not have a sufficient level for the public-private cooperation factor or a greater emphasis on transparency issues.

Jan Šaradin considers the low level of awareness and deficiencies in internal communication, among others, for entities operating critical and important information infrastructures as a major problem. "There is no obligation for penetration testing in the Czech Republic and there is also no standardization in the protection of infrastructure in response to threats. The nature of the attackers has changed, relying solely on the software is not enough." Says Šaradin. In this context, the recent cyber attacks on foreign affairs in the Czech and Slovak Republics were also discussed. Jan Šaradin pointed out that it is very challenging to find the attackers after a long time and that the attention should therefore be drawn to the recognition of the techniques and methods of the attacks. The establishment of Security operation and Cyber Defense Centers in a multinational corporations environment as well as the emergence of specialized cyber security professions in universities is considered a positive trend.

Discussion also focused on information security and the fight against misinformation disseminated in the Internet environment. Katarína Klingová pointed to a recent GLOBSEC public opinion poll on fake reports and conspiracy theories. According to a survey of approximately 10 million people in the Central European region, they regularly visit disinformation media. The results also show that the most vulnerable to accepting conspiracy theories are in Slovak V4 space. "53% of Slovaks believe there are secret societies that want to achieve worldview. 55% of Czechs disagree with this statement. 52% of Slovaks also believe that Jews have a great influence on the control of institutions, 67% of Czechs disagree with this claim. When questioned about the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, 74% of young Czechs aged 18-24 disagreed with the assertion that the US government executed this attack, with only 38% of the young Slovaks believing it," Klingova said. It also pointed out that the Czech Republic joined the initiative of the Center for Excellence in Combating Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) and that the Center for Counter Terrorism and Hybrid Threats works at the Ministry of the Interior, while similar projects are missing in Slovakia.

She also said that a number of media and non-governmental organizations have been working in both countries. However, Slovakia's problem is how the public administration responds to the threatened threats.

At the end of the discussion, both speakers named major cyber and information security challenges. According to Katarína Klingová, Slovakia is calling for a comprehensive approach in the area of strategic communication, which would include all components of public administration. Further enhancement of cyber security capabilities and creation of an action plan, including ongoing evaluation, allowing to deal effectively with changes in the environment. Jan Šaradin pointed out the importance of introducing mandatory penetration tests, especially for critical and important information infrastructures. Furthermore, the need to improve organizational measures, including continuing education, as well as the development of cyber security programs.

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Workshop

There were three main reasons behind organizing and hosting the workshop for experts on disinformation in Prague. The first expected outcome was to create a network of security analyst and stakeholders with the focus on countering hybrid warfare.

Second goal was to present best practices on how to build resilience towards cybernetic attacks and hostile propaganda on the case study of the Czech Republic presented by leading Czech Experts from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Security Think Tanks.

Last but definitively not least, presentation of the new ELF manual on countering fake news and opening floor for discussion and gathering of critical feedback on it was the third expected outcome. This expert roundtable which was expected to provide critical yet constructive feedback on the manual was expected to improve the academic relevance as well as overall quality of the final study.

The program started in the morning of Tuesday 15th October with a business breakfast co-organized with the kind support of another ELF member – the Institute for Politics and Society. Experts who gathered in Prague for the main workshop were kind enough to agree to speak at this event as well. As an outcome the FNF was able within one project (and one budget) organize two events and provide speakers for one more international conference taking place in the same time framework in Prague.

Beside the public event meetings among security experts from abroad and Czech journalists were arranged. Participants from Singapur met with two Czech journalists, two members of parliament and one China analyst. Participant from Ukraine has done an interview with Czech journalist (article here) as well as a participant from Austria (article here). It could be claimed that the capacity of the participants during their 2 days stay in Prague was used in the most efficient way.

The official program started by welcome dinner in one of the most popular Czech restaurants. After the formal greeting of the main partner of the event – the ELF represented by Anastasiia Pravedna, the floor was given to the guest of honour. Colonel Luthenant Otakar Foltyn is considered to be one of the most competent experts on hybrid warfare in the country. After his keynote speech the floor for socializing among the participants which, based on the overall length of the welcome dinner, can be considered to be successful.

The main program started in the office of the FNF on Friday morning. As planned, the authors presented their contributions to the manual. After the eloquent presentation a very constructive debate has started. During the moderated debate the authors received critical yet constructive feedback on their work based on which they had promised to rewrite the chapters.

Very fruitful and productive morning debate was followed by join lunch at a local Czech restaurant. After a group photo the participants returned to the office for the second part of the program. IT experts

from one of the biggest world anti-virus company AVAST were asked to present a simulation of a cyber attack to the participant. After this very unique stunt a long debate on the cyber security followed.

During the last session of the workshop the Czech Republic as a leading regional country in building the hybrid resilience was presented. First part was executed by the director of the Czech Center against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats within the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Mr. Benedikt Vangeli. Second speech was given by leading expert security expert, director of the think tank European Values Mr. Jakub Janda.

The participants were informed about the further development of the product and kindly encouraged to continue in the cooperation on the manual. The overall feedback given to the organizer was by all participants positive. Hence it could be claimed that all set goals were fulfilled. The workshop was organized and moderated by the project manager of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Ms. Adéla Klečková.