



CEDC STRATCOM EXPERT WORKSHOP

**“COMBATING FAKE NEWS AND DISINFORMATION
CAMPAIGNS”**

Zagreb, VTC, 13 October 2021



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“COMBATING FAKE NEWS AND DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS”

Virtual expert workshop organized by the Croatian Presidency of the CEDC

Wednesday, 13 October 2021, 10:00 AM – 2:15 PM (CET)

Format/Participants:

High-level representatives of CEDC and Western Balkan countries

Representatives of EEAS & NATO-accredited international military organizations

International & national experts

Since the beginning of the last year, we have seen a surge in fake news exploiting public fear and uncertainty around the COVID-19 pandemic. Both state and non-state actors have exploited the pandemic to spread disinformation and fake news, seeking to destabilise national and regional security. Coordinated disinformation efforts, linking the coronavirus pandemic with the already existing disinformation themes, seek to fuel distrust in the ability of our institutions to deliver effective responses, often by directly challenging the credibility of the European Union and its partners.

Under these circumstances, tackling disinformation, as a driving force that can increase the risk of wider regional instability, becomes even more paramount. In the long run, if our states are to become more resilient against disinformation, this requires continuous and sustained efforts, including through regional cooperation.

By comparing policy actions, communication strategies and country-specific communication activities taken, as well as by exploring the CEDC specific toolbox, the aim of this Workshop is to identify best practices and actions taken during different crisis situations (COVID-19 pandemic, earthquake, etc) and to consolidate the CEDC states defence systems' efforts in building wider regional resilience to challenges posed by the current “infodemic”.

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Welcome addresses (10:00 AM – 10:15 AM)

Dunja BUJAN ŠUJSTER

Defence policy Director of the Ministry of Defence of Croatia

PRESENTATION (10:15 AM – 11:15 AM)

“THE ROLE OF STRATCOM IN CRISIS FROM THE DEFENCE SYSTEMS’ PERSPECTIVE”

Gordan AKRAP, president of the Hybrid Warfare Research Institute, Croatia

PRESENTATION (12:00 AM – 12:30 AM)

„INFODEMIC IN THE NEW MEDIA SYSTEM: THE CASE OF CROATIA”

Tomislav LEVAK, Lecturer at Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek,

Department of Culture, Media and Management, Croatia

PANEL DISCUSSION: „COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE MASS AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN RESPONSE TO DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS” (12:30 – 02:00 PM)

- **Milan JOVANOVIĆ**, Senior analyst at Digital Forensic Centre, Atlantic Council of Montenegro
- **Zoran TRAJCHEVSKI**, Director of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, North Macedonia
- **Darko BRKAN**, president of CA „Why not“, Raskrinkavanje, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Sanda SVETOKA**, senior expert at NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence

Moderated by Jasna JELISIĆ,

Head of Western Balkans Task Force, Strategic Communications and Information Analysis Division, European

External Action Service

Gordan Akrap, president of the Hybrid Warfare Research Institute, Croatia



Born 1966, graduated at Zagreb Faculty of Electronics and Computing in 1994. In 2011 he received a PhD at the University of Zagreb, in the field of Information and Communication sciences. The title of his PhD was “Informational strategies and operations in public knowledge shaping”.

He had an active role in Homeland war. During his career in diplomatic and security structures of Croatia he completed a number of professional courses, including Diplomatic Academy. He is active in research of national and regional security, intelligence and history of Homeland War.

He published a number of books, and papers in journals and proceedings.

Tomislav Levak, Lecturer at Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek, Department of Culture, Media and Management, Croatia



Tomislav Levak received a double Master of Arts degree from the Department of Culture at the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek in two study fields - Media Culture and Cultural Management in 2014.

He worked as a successful journalist from 1996 to 2015 in a number of national and regional print media and has practical experience in television, radio and internet journalism. He enrolled in the Postgraduate Interdisciplinary University Doctoral Program in Communication Studies at the Doctoral School of Josip Juraj

Strossmayer University of Osijek in 2015, and is just finishing his doctoral dissertation on the topic of spreading disinformation and fake news via social networks and communication platforms. He was a teaching assistant at the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of Osijek, at the Sub-department of Media Culture and a teaching assistant at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek, at the Department of Culture, Media and Management from June 2018. He now works at that Department as a lecturer.

Mr Levak fields of interest include new media, communication studies, media literacy, media and public relations, disinformation and fake news, public speaking etc. He is the co-author of curricula and methodological materials in the international project of media literacy development, The Implementation of Media Education in Schools (iMES), which was implemented from September 2018 to February 2021 in Lithuania, Greece and Croatia. He is the leader or participant of several international, national or local projects and programs related to media or media literacy. He has participated in over 20 national and international scientific and professional symposiums and conferences, and has published over 15 scientific papers.

Jasna Jelisić, Head of Western Balkan Task Force, Strategic Communications and Information Analysis Division, European External Action Service



Dr. Jasna Jelisić is Head of Western Balkans Task Force in the Strategic communication division of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in Brussels. She has been working for the EU since 2006 in the posts entailing deep knowledge of the region within its geopolitical setting and the EU and has had a wide range of responsibilities.

Dr Jelisić also lectures regularly on public and cultural diplomacy at graduate and postgraduate level and trains professional diplomats. She has engaged in public and cultural diplomacy, and successfully initiated many stakeholder engagements.

In 2012 Dr. Jelisić published 'Public Diplomacy: Towards a European Voice in Global Dialogue' arguing for a more systematic public diplomacy engagement of the EU as well as of the Western Balkans. She is known in diplomatic circles for her insistence on innovative and fresh approaches in pursuit of resourceful diplomacy.

Before involving herself in diplomacy, Dr. Jelisić was a prominent, award-winning journalist. She has studied at the University of Oxford, City University of New York, University of Belgrade and University of Sarajevo and has worked as a consultant and researcher for the European Commission, the World Bank, Freedom House and Princeton University.

Milan Jovanović, Senior analyst at Digital Forensic Centre, Atlantic Council of Montenegro



Milan Jovanović is a senior researcher at the Digital Forensic Center (DFC) which is a first digital hub of its kind in the Western Balkans devoted to countering disinformation, fake news, and propaganda campaigns that have had a goal of destabilizing democratic processes in both Montenegro and wider region.

Milan is at the forefront of open-source research in Montenegro, focusing on the intersection of governance, technology, security, and digital information environments. He specializes in transatlantic security with a focus on foreign influence and social media activities. Since 2018, he has been doing briefings, workshops and trainings on disinformation, media and digital literacy in more than ten countries.

Apart from his formal education, he participated in various types of specialized training, domestic and international courses and conferences mostly related to security, foreign malign influence and open-source investigation.

He regularly publishes articles in Montenegrin and foreign media on his fields of expertise. Milan co-authored Russia's footprint in the Western Balkans information environment research published by NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence. Among his fields of interests are Euro-Atlantic relations and languages.

He has graduated from the Montenegrin University for International Relations and Diplomacy and is fluent in English and proficient in German.

Zoran Trajchevski, Director of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of the Republic of North Macedonia



Dr. Zoran Trajchevski, has been the Director of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services since October 2014.

He started his career back in 1995 in the private-business sector, to continue, in 1998 and 1999, with the “Makedonski Telekomunikcii” mobile service operator as Head of the Technology Department and as Deputy Head of the Executive Board of Macedonian Postal Services, until 2002. In the period 2000-2002 he was Member of the Managing Board of the EUTELSAT S.A. satellite communications company in Paris; simultaneously performing the duties of Manager of the National Telecommunications Directorate.

In the period 2006-2007, he was Advisor to the Minister of Transport and Communications in the sphere of Telecommunications. From 2006 until 2011, he was Representative of the Macedonian Government to the “AD Makedonski Telekomunikacii” and Head of the Shareholders’ Assembly, while from 2007 to 2009, he worked as Deputy Director of the “Macedonian Broadcasting” public enterprise. Following a few-years long engagement in the private sector, in 2011, he became Member of the Broadcasting Council of the Republic of Macedonia, to be elected as President of the same Broadcasting Council a year later.

Dr. Trajchevski holds two M.A. degrees in mechanical engineering and energy efficiency (obtained in 2008 from the SS Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering), and in economic sciences (obtained from the Business Academy, National and International Commerce Department, in Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia, in 2010). In 2013, he defended his doctoral thesis titled “Liberalization of the Electronic Communications Market and Company Management” at the Business Academy in Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia, obtaining a Ph.D. degree in Economics. In October 2017, Mr. Trajchevski was appointed as Lecturer in business and international economy at the Faculty of Economics and Engineering Management in Novi Sad. His educational background also includes specialization in efficient liberalization management in telecommunications and broadcasting at FCC, Washington, D.C., USA, back in 1994, and a specialist course on interconnection expenses assessment based on LRIC methodology, in London.

As a former Director of the Agency for Electronic Communications, and current Director of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, he has an extensive knowledge of the legislation related to media and electronic communications.

Darko Brkan, Raskrinkavanje.ba, president of CA „Why not“, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Darko Brkan is the Executive Director of CA „Why not“, one of the most prominent Bosnian NGOs that promotes civic activism, government accountability, and the use of technology and digital media in deepening democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He also acts as the president of the board of the regional network Action SEE (Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in the Sout-East Europe region), member of the Board of TransparenCEE network in CEE, as well as a member of the International Advisory Board of ePanstwo Foundation from Poland.

A leading civil society activist, Darko began his career in civic activism more than 20 years ago as coordinator of the Campaign for Conscientious Objection, a network of organizations that promoted peace and conscientious objection to military service in BiH.

He holds degrees from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Department for Computer Science, University of Sarajevo and Faculty of Economics, Strategic Management of Information, University of Sarajevo and University of Zagreb. His professional interests are mainly in the sphere of technology and social impacts of technology, government accountability and transparency, digital and social media, media accountability and fight agains disinformation, elections and political processes, civic activism and participation, international relations, etc.

He was a Draper-Hills Summer fellow at the Center for Democracy, Development and Rule of Law (CDDRL) at Stanford University in 2013 and a Reagan-Fascell fellow in 2012 at the Forum for International Democratic Studies in Washington, where he researched how technologies can assist the efforts of civil society organizations. He was also the Marshal Memorial Fellow of the German Marshal Fund for 2018/19 and the Facebook International Fellow at the Personal Democracy Forum in 2018. He is also an Alumni of Stanford Leadership Academy for Development from 2016 and Stanford Alumni Ambassador for the Balkans region, the Council of Europe Academy of Political Excellence from the 2008 generation, Fletcher Summer Institute for Advanced Studies for Non-Violent Conflict from 2010, and is also a member of the US Alumni after attending the IVLP program in 2009 and has been the Advisory Board Member of the US Alumni Association in BiH. In addition, he was a founding member of Dosta! (Enough!), one of Bosnia's most prominent citizens' movements for social justice and government accountability.

Darko is the member of the Advisory Board for the Open Government Partnership for BiH. He is also a member of the Board of the Human Rights Foundation of BiH and Foundation „Ekipa“, as well as a founding board member of the Center for Election Studies in BiH. He was also a member of the board of the US Alumni Association in BiH in the term 2011-2014, member of the ACIPS political council (POLIS) during the 2010 – 2011 mandate and a member of the board of the Center for Policy and Governance (CPU) from 2012 to 2017.

He is a regular contributor to many local and international media like BBC, CNN, AlJazeera, PBS, CBC, NPR, DeutscheWelle and a speaker at a number of prominent organizations, institutions and events like Personal Democracy Forum, International Open Data Conference, World Movement for Democracy Assembly, International Anti-corruption Conference, International Civil Society Week, US Institute of Peace, National Endowment for Democracy, German Marshal Fund of the US, Harriman Institute at Columbia University, CCDRL center at Stanford University or Humboldt University Berlin.

Sanda Svetoka, senior expert , NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence



Sanda Svetoka is a communications professional with more than 15 years experience in communications and international relations. Since 2014 she is a senior expert at the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE) in Riga, Latvia.

At the StratCom COE Sanda is leading the research projects related to the role of social media in hybrid warfare, Russia's strategy in the cyberspace, its influence activities in the Baltic and Western Balkan regions.

From 2004 to 2005, Sanda worked as a news reporter at the Latvian information agency LETA. In 2005, she joined the Latvian Ministry of Defence, where she coordinated defence cooperation and assistance to NATO partner countries. In 2010-2011, Sanda was a public relations advisor to the NATO Advisory Team (NAT) in Kosovo. From 2011 to 2014 she was a press officer at the Military Public Relations Department of the Latvian Ministry of Defence.

Sanda holds MA in Political Science from the University of Latvia.

Dunja Bujan Šujster, Defence Policy Director, Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia



Ms Dunja Bujan Šujster holds the position of the Defence Policy Director of the Ministry of Defence of Croatia.

Professional career of Ms Bujan Šujster in the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia started in 2005 at the Croatian Military Academy at the position of an English language teacher and language training coordinator. In 2007 she began to work at the Military Security Intelligence Agency where she held several positions until 2016 when she took over the position of the Head of Bilateral Defence Cooperation Department at the Defence Policy Directorate of the Ministry of Defence. In November 2019 she was appointed Acting Defence Policy Director of the Ministry of Defence, and on 14 April 2021 she was appointed Defence Policy Director.

Ms Bujan Šujster holds the Bachelor's Degree in English and Spanish Language and Literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb. She also holds the degree of Additional Study of Portuguese Language and Literature from the same Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Apart from her formal education, during her career in the Ministry of Defence she participated in various types of specialized training, domestic and international courses and conferences in the field of security and defence, mostly related to NATO and EU security and defence policy, strategic and defence planning, intelligence, counterterrorism, regional and international relations.