



CLUB OF VENICE

VILNIUS CHARTER

on

SOCIETAL RESILIENCE TO DISINFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA IN A CHALLENGING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

(Plenary meeting - Vilnius, 7-8 June 2018)

Communication directors and senior communication specialists from the EU Member States, institutions and candidate countries,

convened to the session "Hybrid threats: focus on countering disinformation, propaganda and fake news - a common endeavour" of the plenary meeting of the Club of Venice co-organised in Vilnius by the Club of Venice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lithuanian Government, Communication and Cultural Diplomacy Department,

in line with the principles subscribed by the London Charter of 17 March 2017, which stressed the need for reinforced cooperation to safeguard objective communication values, assure impartiality and promote transparency,

conscious of the challenging scenario for public communication generated by the new digital landscape, and in particular:

- that the digital media operates under minimal regulatory or self-regulatory frameworks
 - that, in absence of adequate monitoring and analysis mechanisms and without a proper trans-national and inter-institutional cooperation, the information provision can be significantly hampered by the vulnerability of media technology and the distorted use of digital interactive networks and platforms
 - of the risks that disinformation and digital propaganda can increasingly breach and destabilise the political and information environments in the European Union and its member states, thus generating misperceptions in the public opinion
 - of the need for building resilience capacity through an intense and continuous cooperative approach, creating and reinforcing ties with civil society and news organizations and industries,
- welcome the recent efforts of the EU institutions and its member states to explore grounds for common strategies, in the light of the international dimension of the phenomenon, with the view to defend citizens' right to quality information
 - confirm their commitment to cooperating in this field, multiplying their efforts and seeking synergies in countering disinformation and fake news and enhancing capacity to communicate effectively about common policies and values

- stress the need for an objective and balanced approach that safeguards the freedom of expression and media pluralism and fosters citizens' credibility in the public authorities, continuing to engage in communication activities liaising with all sectors of society
- agree that the only effective way to increasing European societies' resilience to disinformation is by strengthening structured cross-border and cross-sector cooperation among governmental and institutional stakeholders, with communicators playing a key role
- acknowledge the importance of strategic communications in strengthening resilience of our societies and stress the need to address hostile influences, increasing their efforts to address disinformation threats by constant bolstering of capacities and capabilities to counter them shared with the public
- recognise the progress in cooperation among the EU, NATO and other international organisations, based on shared values, in exchanging knowledge and understanding of hostile information activities, with a view to enabling more effective communications strategies to tackle this challenge
- agree on:
 - building on the work of the EEAS East Stratcom Task Force and on the multi-dimensional approach recommended in the report of the High-Level Expert Group on fake news adopted on 12 March 2018 and in the communication on tackling disinformation on line, adopted by the European Commission on 25 April 2018
 - enhancing the transparency of online news
 - cooperating in the promotion and enhancement of media and information literacy
 - developing tools of digital citizenship by empowering users and journalists to tackle disinformation and foster a positive engagement
 - safeguard the diversity, independence and sustainability of the European news media ecosystem, also by continuing to cooperate with the EU initiatives in this field
 - promoting continued research on the impact of disinformation in Europe, especially by developing platforms for monitoring social streams, undertaking source-checking and content provenance and forensically analyse images and videos, in line with data protection, and exchanging results (the creation of a network of independent European Centres for research on disinformation could be an enriching powerful initiative in this regard)
 - continuing to explore cross-collaboration in training activities, visits' programmes and on line interconnections
 - developing parameters to help measure each country's and competent organizations capacity in terms of overall resilience to disinformation, in order to elaborate a comparative map to facilitate the identification of imbalances and priority actions
 - continuing to use the Club of Venice network as a permanent platform for joint analysis of strategic communication capacities and further reflection on common communication initiatives.