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European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats starts operating in Helsinki

Ministry of the Interior

1.9.2017 12.53 NEWS ITEM

Press Release of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats on September 1st, 2017

The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats has reached initial operational capability on 1 September 2017. The Act on the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats entered into force on 1 July 2017, following which **Matti Saarelainen**, Doctor of Social Science, was appointed Director of the Centre. The Centre has now acquired premises in Helsinki, established a secretariat consisting of seven experts and made the operational plans for this year.

"Hybrid threats have become a permanent part of the Finnish and European security environment, and the establishment of the Centre responds well to this current challenge. Since early July, rapid progress has been made to allow the Centre to begin its operations. The Steering Board will be briefed on the progress at its meeting next week," says **Jori Arvonen**, Chair of the Steering Board of the Centre.

The Centre will launch its activities at a high-level seminar to be held in Helsinki on 6 September. The seminar will bring together representatives of the 12 participating countries, the EU and NATO. Approximately 100 participants will take part in the seminar. The Centre's communication channel (www.hybridcoe.fi) will also be opened at the seminar. Minister for Foreign Affairs **Timo Soini** and Minister of the Interior **Paula Risikko** will speak at the seminar as representatives of the host country. The official inauguration of the Centre will be held on 2 October.

The Centre is faced with many expectations or images. For example, the Centre is not an 'operational centre for anti-hybrid warfare' or a 'cyber bomb disposal unit'. Instead, its aim is to contribute to a better understanding of hybrid influencing by state and non-state actors and how to counter hybrid threats. The Centre has three key roles, according to the Director of the Centre.

"First of all, the Centre is a centre of excellence which promotes the countering of hybrid threats at strategic level through research and training, for example. Secondly, the Centre aims to create multinational networks of experts in comprehensive security. These networks can, for instance, relate to situation awareness activities. Thirdly, the Centre serves as a platform for cooperation between the EU and NATO in evaluating societies' vulnerabilities and enhancing resilience," says Director Matti Saarelainen.

The EU and NATO take an active part in the Centre's Steering Board meetings and other activities. As a signal of the EU and NATO's commitment to cooperation, Julian King, EU Commissioner for the Security Union, and Arndt Freytag von Loringhoven, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security, will participate in the high-level seminar on 6 September.

Currently, the 12 participating countries to the Centre are Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. EU and NATO countries have the possibility of joining as participant countries.

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