[MD] Statute on StratCom enforced

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Andrei Richter
Comenius University (Bratislava)

Following the recent introduction by the President of Moldova, Maia Sandu, of a draft statute to establish an institution that would counter propaganda harmful to the Republic of Moldova and defend its citizens from information threats (see IRIS 2023-7:1/18), the statute on the proposed institution – the Centre for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation – was adopted by the parliament on 31 July and came into force on 18 August 2023.

The national StratCom, still to be established, is to be named the Centre for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation. It will be empowered by the statute to do the following:

a) elaborate and develop a cooperation and coordination model between public authorities and institutions for the achievement of strategic communication, as well as managing and supporting the implementation of that model;

b) elaborate, develop and coordinate mechanisms for the dissemination of national narratives and communication guidelines, including for the purpose of strengthening the security of the information space;

c) recommend and coordinate the development and implementation of communication strategies and campaigns;

d) elaborate and develop a centralised capacity for monitoring and analysing the information space, including regarding “information manipulation actions and foreign interference” (hereafter referred to as “alien actions”);

e) elaborate and develop inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms to identify, prevent and counter alien actions and to strengthen the resilience of state institutions and society;

f) recommend to national and international public authorities and institutions, media institutions, social network companies and platforms that they take steps to eliminate the causes and conditions that contribute to disinformation and alien actions that threaten national security;

g) establish and develop cooperation on this with social network companies and content-sharing platforms;

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h) provide training and develop other measures to strengthen the state's capabilities for strategic communication and countering alien actions;

i) provide support in the process of strategic communication in crisis situations;

j) elaborate and develop cooperation mechanisms between the authorities and public institutions, civil society and media institutions in order to strengthen their capacities and counter alien actions;

k) develop international cooperation and represent Moldova in bilateral and multilateral formats in the field;

l) elaborate, implement and adjust instructions, guidelines, methodologies and procedures in order to coordinate and plan strategic communication processes and to prevent, identify and counter alien actions.

The Centre’s functions are quite vague and fail to focus on analytical and consultative work for the authorities. The statute also fails to identify the aims of possible or actual “information manipulation actions and foreign interference” or the source of such activity – i.e. the aggressor state.

Even though the statute is designed to follow EU policies, the new Centre does not seem to fit well into the existing system of StratComs and/or focus on European cooperation and integration in this regard, nor does it note the relevant activities of the European institutions. It has failed to follow the definitions provided by European law and uses terms that have been found problematic by the European institutions, such as “impeccable reputation” in defining the qualities of the candidates to lead the Centre. Still, at least partially, the Centre's activity is to be financed by foreign “cooperation and development partners, including through external financial assistance programmes”.

Privind Centrul pentru Comunicare Strategică și Combatere a Dezinformării și privind modificarea unor acte normative; publicat în Monitorul Oficial Nr. 318-321 art. 566

https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=138661&lang=ro

Statute No. 242 of 31 July 2023 regarding the Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation and regarding the modification of some normative acts; published in in Monitorul Oficial No. 318-321 art. 566

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