Securing Elections in the Digital Era

Concept Note for Conference and Table-Top Exercise

24 November 2020 at 10:00 -14:30 (GMT+2)
ega.ee/cyberconf2020

What?	Conference and Table Top Exercise
Where?	ONLINE
Who?	Target audience includes representatives of Electoral Management Bodies and Central Election Committees (CEC), donor organisations and other key stakeholders

WHY?

Elections are crucial to the functioning of representative democracy. By compromising the integrity of the central tool of democracy – free and fair elections – whole societies can be put out of balance. The new digital threats will keep challenging countries, especially in times of greater uncertainty of the election cycle. Democratic processes across the world are relying more and more on various digital systems that are prime targets for various state-sponsored activities, hacking-and-doxing campaigns and advanced persistent threat-type of attacks. As recent years have shown, these issues are not just a mere technical matter, but a more fundamental strategic problem that can determine the fate of our societies for decades to come. This tendency puts stress on institutions that have a traditional role in organising democratic elections and informing about the results of the elections. Spreading misinformation and undermining the reliability of institutions can seriously affect the stability of societies. In Estonia, we believe that there is great potential in avoiding risks and taking measures to build the resilience of the democratic election processes. The event is organised by e-Governance Academy and CybExer Technologies OÜ, and supported by the Estonian Election Committee.

TARGET AUDIENCE

We expect the conference and the cyber security exercise to be beneficial for CEC representatives of different countries and friendly think tanks, that can share the gained experience among their cooperation partners and prevent risks in organizing elections, therefore protecting the fundamental institution of the democracies.

EVENT SET-UP

The event will be organised online and it includes two parts - Conference and the Table-Top Exercise. The Conference and the Strategic Exercise provide you with an unique opportunity to **discuss and learn online** the topics that reflect the **challenges of conducting secure elections in the digital era.**

CONFERENCE

The panel discussions provide overview of the complexity of elections and introduce the main cyber threats to the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs). Moreover, the discussion focuses on the role of the government, political parties and private sector – in terms of accountability or taking responsibility about various issues related with election interference. Discussions target the expert level of core election organisers, and personnel from political think tanks who are monitoring elections and helping political parties - therefore they comprehensively cover elections as an integral mechanism of democratic society.

SPEAKERS

Conference speakers include former President of Estonia **Toomas Hendrik Ilves**, Director of International Policy at the Cyber Policy Centre at Stanford University **Marietje Schaake**, Member of European Parliament **Marina Kaljurand**, Head of the National Electoral Committee of Estonia **Oliver Kask**, Director for Europe and Eurasia at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems **Beata Martin-Rozumiłowicz**, Professor of e-Governance at the University of Tartu **Robert Krimmer**, Senior Cyber Security Expert at

e-Governance Academy **Merle Maigre** and cyber and strategic leadership experts from CybExer Technologies - **Lauri Almann** and **Kari-Pekka Rannikko.**

THE TABLE-TOP EXERCISE

The exercise is aimed at strengthening and building awareness about countering elections-related cyber threats. The representatives of Electoral Management Bodies and Central Election Committees are welcome to participate in the exercise. Other participants can also register to the exercise and take part in the simulation of the strategic decision-making process.

CybExer's election interference exercise content is drawn from the experience of the prior engagement in Ukraine in 2019 with the European Union project "Countering Elections-related Cyber Threats and Disinformation Campaigns in Ukraine". It reflects a comprehensive set of up-to-date cyber threats against a democratic election process. The discussion results of the table-top exercise are immediately visualized, presenting the diverging opinions, decision-making trends and difficulties. This method helps to encourage discussion and has proven successful in identifying gaps in crisis management procedures and preparedness in a non-intrusive way. At the end of the exercise, the organisers will summarise key takeaways of the exercise and produce recommendations to improve the awareness and resilience of key actors affected by election interference. What sets this event apart from other table-top exercises is CybExer's software platform called STRATEX, that takes such exercises to a new level.

The Exercise is designed to offer the participants a simulated environment for playing out a fictional cyber crisis by taking concrete crisis management decisions and exploring the (in)formal frameworks that govern decision-making processes.

Participants of the exercise go through a simulated threat scenario where the scenario injects exercise questions, and the participants' answers are all managed via our proprietary STRATEX platform. STRATEX is a unique software platform that facilitates the process of carrying out strategic decision-making exercises including a collection of threat scenarios based on past real-life incidents and on the vast experience in managing cyber exercises at a very high level.

Training type: Strategic decision-making
Objectives:
1) Develop cyber crisis management skills
2) Raise awareness of cyber threats in election processes
3) Explore decision-making frameworks in cyber crisis management
4) Inform risk mitigation strategies and action plans

Method: Table-top exercise of a cyber crisis, facilitated by CybExer's proprietary STRATEX software platform

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In general, the **STRATEX exercise supports and informs on the following processes:**
- Increases awareness and contributes to a better understanding of the emerging challenges and threats in cyberspace;
- Enhances knowledge-sharing and increase cooperation in cyber crisis management;
- Identifies shortcomings in doctrine, authority and organization; additionally, test the efficacy of regulations, contingency and cooperation plans.
- Develops strategic leaders' analysis capability by applying new concepts and methodologies to manage cyber crises (in an exercise context) that may lead to the adoption of more effective organizational strategies;
- Promotes a culture of cyber security and cyber defence that may stimulate national synergies and foster international cooperation;

- Enables participants (potential strategic decision-makers) to make decisions on basis of situational awareness of cyber crisis, their nature and likelihood and also the impact of the options to be chosen.

REQUIREMENTS

- Participants of the exercise are not requested to have special technological skills.
- The number of attendees for the strategic exercise **is limited, requiring prior registration.**
- Every participant will have individual access to the STRATEX platform **via their personal device.**
- **High-speed internet connection** is required.

DRAFT PROGRAMME

PART 1
10.00 - 11.00 Opening and Key Note
- Hannes Astok, Executive Director at e-Governance Academy (eGA)
- Oliver Kask, Head of the National Electoral Committee of Estonia

10.15 - 11.15 Panel Discussion -- What Scope, what responsibilities?
- H.E. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Former President of Estonia
- Marietje Schaake, Director of International Policy at Cyber Policy Centre at Stanford University
- Moderator: Merle Maigre, Senior Expert on Cyber Security at e-Governance Academy (eGA)

11.15 - 12.05 Panel Discussion Case Studies and Best Practices
- Marina Kaljurand, Member of European Parliament
- Dr. Beata Martin-Rozumiłowicz, Director for Europe and Eurasia at International Foundation for Electoral Systems
- Jan Neutze, Senior Director for Digital Diplomacy at Microsoft
- Moderator: Robert Krimmer, Professor of e-Governance at the University of Tartu

12.05 - 12.15 Discussion Conclusions and Way Forward

12.15 - 12.30 Break

PART 2
12.30 - 14.10 Table-Top Exercise
- Lauri Almann, Co-founder of CybExer Technologies
- Kari-Pekka Rannikko, Senior Strategy Advisor at CybExer Technologies

14.10 - 14.30 Wrap-up of the event

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

E-GOVERNANCE ACADEMY
eGA is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan organization, founded for the creation and transfer of knowledge concerning e-governance, e-democracy and the development of civil society. To date, eGA has cooperated with more than 200 organisations and trained more than 6,500 officials in 130 countries and regions. Our experts are playing key roles in e-government and digital transformation policy planning and implementation, including developing secure nation's digital transformation and cyberspace. E-Governance Academy (eGA) has the experience to provide e-governance and change management related consultancy services, study tours, training and conferences from 2002, both in Estonia and abroad. eGA's team of experts has hands-on experience in the e-government organizations building, legislation development, change management, digital democratic processes and ICT architecture planning.

CYBEXER

CybExer Technologies OÜ is a NATO-awarded Estonian cybersecurity company with the mission to empower organisations in ensuring their cyber security. Together with its delivery partners, CybExer offers a comprehensive roadmap towards ever increasing robustness and continuity in the face of evolving cyber threats. CybExer's risk-based approach helps organisations to priorities their investments and efforts to improve readiness and effectiveness within their budget constraints. CybExer's STRATEX platform has been employed to organise complex, large-scale and high-visibility exercises, such as EU CYBRID2017 for all EU Ministers of Defence during the Estonian EU Council Presidency in September 2017, NATO Military Committee Cyber Away Day in June 2018, and the hybrid table-top exercise for EU Ministers of Internal Affairs exercises during the Finnish EU Council Presidency in July 2019.

STATE ELECTORAL OFFICE OF ESTONIA

The State Electoral Office is the top-level election management body in Estonia. The Office ensures that the elections are held in accordance with the law, and organizes and ascertains the results of Internet Voting. In addition, it exercises supervision over the activities of the electoral managers and organizes the development and management of the technical solutions necessary for the performance of the duties arising from the electoral acts. The State Electoral Office is institutionally independent although it has been formed within the Chancellery of the Riigikogu (Parliament).

MICROSOFT

Microsoft enables digital transformation for the era of an intelligent cloud and an intelligent edge. The company mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

KONRAD ADENAUER FOUNDATION

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. In Germany, 16 regional offices offer a wide variety of civic education conferences and events. KAS offices abroad are in charge of over 200 projects in more than 120 countries. As a think-tank and consulting agency, KAS soundly researched scientific fundamental concepts and current analyses are meant to offer a basis for possible political action. The Berlin Academy is the national forum of dialogue between the spheres of politics, economy, science, and society. KAS conferences and events attract people who 'have something to say'. In Germany, KAS offers more than 2,500 events per year which attract 145,000 participants.