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The position of the Committee on Defence

The Committee on Defence of the Swedish Parliament (the Riksdag) continues to share the view of hybrid threats as expressed in the direction of Swedish defence policy for 2016–2020 (Govt Bill 2014/15:109, Committee Report 2014/15:FöU11, Riksdag Communication 2014/15:251) in the light of Russian aggression towards Ukraine and particularly actions in connection with the Russian annexation of Crimea. In common with the Swedish Government, the Committee therefore considers that hybrid threats are not only a reality that must be taken extremely seriously in a wider perspective, but that addressing and dealing with hybrid threats is also a national responsibility, as is also argued by the Committees on Justice and Foreign Affairs.

However, many EU member states are facing common threats that can be directed at cross-border networks or infrastructures. Here, the EU can supplement measures of member states by helping to bring about an increase in awareness and resilience. The Committee agrees with the Commission that coordinated initiatives at EU level, with EU policies and instruments being used on the basis of European solidarity, by means of mutual assistance and exploitation of the full potential of the Lisbon Treaty, can help deal with such threats more effectively. Such measures should be based on existing strategies and existing sectoral policies which help to achieve increased security. EU policies and instruments can thus play a central role as regards helping to raise awareness, something that can be strengthened through collaboration with other international actors such as NATO, as is also argued by the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The Committee on Defence agrees with the view of the Committee on the Constitution and the Committee on Justice on how important it is in this connection to protect personal privacy and freedom of information and freedom of expression as regulated in the Constitution.

The proposed framework also contains a number of proposals in the area of defence. These should correlate with the future action plan in just this area. The Committee intends to monitor developments as regards the action plan.

Generally speaking, the Committee wishes to stress the importance of ensuring that measures to meet hybrid threats are concentrated, confined and prioritised in

order to achieve the greatest possible effect. The Committee considers that the measures as far as the EU is concerned should be funded from within the existing budgetary framework. Nor is creating new structures always the best way of solving a problem. Future measures should thus be included within already existing organisational structures.

The European Defence Agency (EDA) could very well work as a catalyst for the development of military capacity for example to counteract hybrid threats towards EU member states, but in this connection the Committee would also like to emphasise that any new activities should also take into account national security interests. Developing exercise activities and the preparation of joint operative protocols can also produce results that are just as good as developing new equipment.

According to the communication, the concept of hybrid threat aims to identify and make use of the mixture of coercive measures and subversive activities as well as conventional and unconventional methods (that is diplomatic, military, economic and technical methods) that governmental or non-governmental actors can use in a coordinated manner to achieve special objectives, while at the same time keeping themselves below the threshold of a formal declaration of war. In other words, there are points of contact with many policy areas and thus areas of responsibility of several committees of the Swedish Parliament. The opinions of other committees show that there is basic consensus among the above-mentioned committees on this matter. However, the Committee on Defence has noted that the subject is a complex one and would like to encourage the formulation of a clearer definition of the concept of hybrid threat to enable us to better meet the challenges of the future.

The Committee proposed on the 27th of October 2016 that the Parliament should file the statement, which was done on the 9th of November 2016.