

Cybersecurity and the European Union — Threat Perception and Countermeasures

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Following-up on its previous efforts —notably its 2013 cybersecurity strategy—, the European Union incorporated cybersecurity as a key aspect of its broad security strategy summed up in its Global Strategy for the European Union document published in 2017. As a parallel effort, the European Commission adopted a new cybersecurity package in September, 2017 aiming to improve ‘EU cyber resilience and response’.

The European Union also established the EU Agency for Network Information Security (ENISA) whose mandate was broadened in several proposals in 2016 and 2017 with the goal to transform the Agency into an operational task force of the EU. The ENISA is also envisaged to play a key role in the introduction of the EU ‘cybersecurity certification framework for ICT products’, another tool providing certificates on safe IT-products.

One can therefore see that the European Union is developing a coordinated response to cybersecurity — while it is also true that up to now results are quite limited. A nucleus of organizational and doctrinal/procedural system is put in place involving a myriad units, agencies and decision-making bodies. This is complemented by Member State capabilities and responsibilities — in a substantial crisis situation it is possible that several Member State would fall back to national response (on national security grounds that is MS prerogative). Also quite important to point out that the military aspects of cybersecurity are also in total flux; Member States, EU nucleus and quite not least the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are all in play in such contexts.

On the other hand, it is also worth mentioning that the European Union became a world leader in a closely related field. The introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation seems to be an outstanding success in that it is a unique, sophisticated regulatory framework that is setting the world standard today.

Cybersecurity is a new realm and the EU stepped up its efforts and, in some aspects, became a leading force. However it needs to must speed up its strategic adjustment to avoid future surprises and to ensure stability in the European cyberspace.