



## Protecting Europe's critical infrastructure from Russian hybrid threats

by Helmi Pillai, 25 April 2023

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, European policy-makers have become increasingly concerned about Moscow's use of hybrid attacks and the threat these pose to critical infrastructure. Suspicious incidents, such as the disruption of railways in Germany, sabotage of communication cables in France, and GPS disturbances in Finland have all increased concerns about the dangers posed by Russia's hybrid attacks. Reports of Russian surveillance of energy infrastructure in Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium have further added to these concerns.

In this CER policy brief '[Protecting Europe's critical infrastructure from Russian hybrid threats](#)', Helmi Pillai examines how Europe's critical infrastructure could be better protected from the hybrid threat posed by Moscow. The brief warns that hybrid tactics, which exploit political, economic, social, and military vulnerabilities, pose a significant threat to critical infrastructure across Europe. By launching hybrid attacks against Europe, Moscow could destabilise the West, undermine public support for Ukraine or disrupt Western efforts to supply weapons and munitions to Ukraine, without triggering a direct response from NATO. The policy brief highlights the importance of safeguarding national critical infrastructure to ensure European countries' security and stability.

While protecting critical infrastructure is primarily a national responsibility, the EU and NATO have stepped up efforts to counter hybrid threats and protect critical infrastructure. The policy brief recommends that the EU and NATO further increase co-operation in this area through more extensive intelligence sharing and intensifying joint training and exercises to better counter hybrid threats.

The policy brief also notes that countering hybrid threats requires greater collaboration at all levels, including the EU, NATO, national and local governments, and civil society. The EU should look to the Finnish and Swedish whole-of-society approaches to increase resilience against hybrid threats.

Pillai argues that protecting Europe’s critical infrastructure from Russian hybrid threats should be a top priority for European policy-makers. The policy brief recommends that European countries take action to improve the resilience of national critical infrastructure by investing in protection and boosting security, particularly around vital energy and communications infrastructure.

Helmi Pillai, author of the policy brief said *“Hybrid threats are, by design, complex, multifaceted, and unpredictable. To boost resilience against such threats, greater collaboration is required at all levels, including the EU, NATO, national and local governments, private sector, and civil society. While important steps have already been taken, more extensive co-operation is necessary.”*

**Notes for editors:**

For further information on the new research and to request an interview with Helmi Pillai, CER Clara Marina O’Donnell fellow (2022-2023) [@HelmiPillai](https://twitter.com/HelmiPillai) please contact Octavia Hughes in the CER press office on [pressoffice@cer.eu](mailto:pressoffice@cer.eu) or +44 (0) 20 7233 1199.

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