CounteR

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the summer edition of the **CounteR Project's** Newsletter!

Issue #3 will bring us to Paris, Brussels, Hannover, and Bucharest with exciting project updates about interaction with stakeholders and decision makers that work on detecting and preventing radicalisation, violent extremism, and citizen protection. Notably, CounteR took part in the world's leading fair for industrial technology, the Hannover Messe. From our partner CINI, we will learn how CounteR has inspired university students in Milano and Bari for their Master's projects and theses. We are also excited to present INDEED – one of CounteR's sister projects that focuses on an evidence-based model for evaluation of radicalisation, prevention, and mitigation.

Enjoy the full content of the CounteR Newsletter and do send us your feedback – in particular, the editorial team would welcome suggestions by readers for the content of Issue #4, which is due to be released in the fall.

IN FOCUS: CounteR attended the annual Projects to Policy Seminar, hosted by REA and DG HOME

In July, CounteR Project representatives from EI and AST took part in the annual Projects to Policy Seminar, co-organised by the European Research Executive Agency (REA) and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME).

*REA is the funding body that manages the EU Commission's programmes on science and innovation. Staff members of AST as the CounteR Project coordinator and of EI as the leader of WP9 – **Dissemination and Communication** – attended the seminar, which took place in Brussels.*

Every year, DG HOME and REA co-organise the *Projects to Policy Seminar,* to which all the newly launched projects are invited. The aim is to raise awareness among the relevant policy DGs on the new projects that have been launched, as well as to provide guidance to these new projects regarding the policy-related outputs the policy DGs are interested in.

The event was structured into thematic breakout sessions and participants discussed in groups topics such as: fighting crime and terrorism, including Artificial Intelligence; infrastructure;

ISSUE #3 HIGHLIGHTS

CounteR's second general meeting in Paris: consortium partners shared updates on progress and project results, p. 2

Presenting INDEED – CounteR's sister project
INDEED is a three-year project that aims at strengthening a comprehensive approach to preventing, mitigating and counteracting radicalisation, p. 5

CounteR Partners' Updates

In July, ELTE representatives participated in t**wo scientific events:** the Communities in Networks conference, and the Networks2021 conference – a joint initiative by the International Network for Social Network Analysis (Sunbelt) and the Network Science Society (NetSci). At these events, ELTE presented leading-edge findings with regard to the communities that form important structural units in complex networks at the mesoscopic scale.

In April, EI conducted CounteR's **first public webinar**, which was attended by more than 55 participants, representing industry and commercial actors, end-users, suppliers, service-providers, CSOs, sister projects, academia, and institutions. This webinar sought to share project updates, and also experiences, and get to know the insights and perspectives of industry colleagues. The webinar featured representatives of INSIKT, the leader of Work Package (WP) 1, who shared updates about the completion of one of CounteR's milestones: the user requirements for the creation of CounteR's Platform. Senior researchers from UCSC presented insights about the social and psychological

factors of the radicalisation process. More information about the webinar's takeaways, as well as the presentations by participants, can be found here. In the following period, two more industry webinars will be organised to both inform CounteR's commercial strategy and to provide exposure to project results and messages to specialised audiences.

In June, CounteR's consortium partners gathered in Paris for the project's **second general meeting**, hosted by INRIA. The meeting's purpose was to review the status of the work, discuss the current tasks, and plan ahead in terms of upcoming project deliverables and activities. For most partners, this is the first in-person meeting. It was conducted in a hybrid format to allow for flexible participation of the whole CounteR consortium.

At the beginning, UCSC presented the status of the work performed and the tasks to be completed on WP2 – Social and Psychological Factors in the Radicalisation process. Next, CINI, INS and INRIA focused on WP3 – Data Acquisition & Management, stressing in particular on data collection from social media, blogs, forums, and websites. The meeting's next modules featured other consortium members presenting updated on the rest

of the work packages. The presentations and discussions included themes such as data analytics for detecting radical content, social network analysis, image analysis, data privacy and anonymization, social impact assessment, and ethics. INS, NOVA and SPP focused on the simulation of datasets for the pilot use cases and LEA training, while MITLA presented updates about the end-user training and knowledge empowerment, the training materials, sessions, and field demonstrations.

More details about the event can be found here. The next consortium meeting is planned to take place in Malta in September. ᏬᏬ

In June, the CounteR project was featured at the **Hannover Messe** – one of the world's largest trade fairs, dedicated to industry development, which took place in Germany. AST used the opportunity of its participation in the fair to promote the EU-funded projects the company is working on, including CounteR. "By far, CounteR was the project that drew the most attention from our visitors. The Romanian ambassador to Germany also displayed

a keen interest in the CounteR Project, because its features are of utmost importance given the current state of affairs throughout Europe regarding radicalisation and terrorism", AST representatives commented. In their words, CounteR's participation in the Hannover fair provided an opportunity for gaining a better understanding of its potential competition, and for networking with partners and industry colleagues. This year's central theme of the Hannover Messe was climate neutrality and sustainability, which was an opportunity for companies to showcase their environmentally friendly technologies. ᏬᏬ

In May, the CounteR Project got exposure to the **Black Sea Defence, Aerospace and Security International Exhibition** (BSDA) in Bucharest, Romania. This is the largest exhibition of its kind in the Black Sea region that brings together decision makers from across the world. Organized with the

support of the Romanian Government and the US Embassy in Bucharest, BSDA2022 is the only exhibition in Romania, which is officially certified by the US Department of Commerce. This year's exhibition themes included land, air, and sea defence, homeland security, and space and cyber defence. AST representatives had the opportunity to showcase CounteR to an audience of hundreds of companies from around the world, attending BSDA's 8-th edition. "BSDA is more than a showcase. Here we found a space where we can see demos and accumulate experience through workshops. Of course, we also discussed potential partnerships. We aimed at expanding our knowledge of potential clients of the CounteR system and, at the same time, discover the challenges faced by companies and competitors from the same field of activity", AST representatives commented. ᏬᏬ

In May, CINI academic experts conducted project presentations about CounteR for students at third and fifth year from Università degli Studi di Milano, Dipartimento di Informatica, and the University of Bari. CINI's Donato Malerba, who is a Professor of Computer Science, commented that CounteR, and specifically, social media connectors and ingestion engine, were proposed as potential topics for Master's thesis and for Bachelor's thesis. "We presented the CounteR-related thesis opportunities with a focus on the research problem of ingesting data, and keeping a fine-grained control on the data". Donato Malerba will personally supervise the students who will start working on data ingestion architecture. "The students are very interested in the generic problem of advanced data analytics involving sensible data and in the idea of using such data to prevent radicalisation. They perceived the societal importance of this work but as students they were also worried about the complexity of the research objectives and of the technologies adopted," Malerba said. ᏬᏬ

IN FOCUS

CounteR attended the annual Projects to Policy Seminar, hosted by REA and DG HOME

(from p. 1) disaster-resilient societies; border and external security; and digital security. On the second day, a plenary session featured presentations of general interest, addressing communication in security research, exploitation and dissemination issues.

The CounteR consortium representatives attending the seminar established relationships with #h2020 projects similar to CounteR in the domains of fighting crime and terrorism, and digital security. *"We established new fruitful connections. More specifically, the MED1stMR project and the pop AI project published information about CounteR on their websites' sections, dedicated to similar projects,"* EI's **Apostol Apostolov** said.

"The event's main goal was to build awareness of the Commission's policy units of the potential evidence-based inputs from projects useful for further shaping the EU regulations. We briefed the participants about CounteR's technical and practical objec-tives, and its exploitation strategy," AST's **Adrian Onu** commented.

The seminar also offered an opportunity for the participants to learn about the new repositories, tools, and training services, offered by EUROPOL and CEPOL. One of the ideas discussed with participants was about joining the European Cluster for Securing Critical Infrastructures, which brings together LEAs, researchers, and other types of stakeholders.

The key takeaway from the seminar was that EU policymakers would like to learn from the innovations, results, and challenges faced by ongoing #h2020 projects, so that they can potentially integrate these insights into future policies. At the same time, project coordinators were briefed about the expected content of the policy deliverable, due at the end of each project. Further details and useful links can be found in AST's readout of the seminar, published on AST's website.

CounteR's sister project

Issue #3 of CounteR's newsletter is excited to present the H2020's INDEED – working on a more efficient evidence-based model for evaluation of radicalisation prevention and mitigation. INDEED is one of CounteR's sister projects and recently featured CounteR in its newsletter and its Twitter account. It is coordinated by the Polish Platform for Homeland Security (PPHS) and its consortium consists of 19 organisations representing 15 European countries.

INDEED is a three-year project that aims at strengthening a comprehensive approach to preventing, mitigating and counteracting radicalisation, based on a universal evidence-based model for evaluation of radicalisation.

The project's key objective is to use evidence-based approaches to strengthen first-line practitioners' and policymakers' knowledge, capabilities and skills for designing, planning, implementing and evaluating PVE/CVE and de-radicalisation initiatives, such as policies and strategies, long-term programmes, short-term actions and ad-hoc interventions, in an effective and proven manner.

The INDEED consortium is convinced that striving to strengthen the sense of security of EU citizens requires designing evidence-based remedies for the diagnosed security concerns. It also recognises the need for competent and knowledgeable first-line practitioners and capacity-building tools enabling an evidence-based evaluation for all parties involved in dealing with radicalisation leading to terrorism or violent extremism.

Stay Tuned to Newsletter's Issue #4!

CounteR Consortium

ASSIST Software SRL, Romania

ETICAS Research and Consulting, Spain

INSIKT Intelligence, Spain

Elliniki Etairia Tilepoikinonion kai Tilematikon Efarmogon A.E.-Forthnet S.A., Greece

Imagga Technologies LtD., Bulgaria

Ministério da Justiça, Portugal

ICON Studios Ltd., Malta

Hochschule für den öffentlichen Dienst in Bayern, Germany

Consorzio Interuniversitario Nazionale per l'Informatica, Italy

Institut national de Recherche en Informatique et Automatique, France

State Police Latvia, Latvia

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Academia, Italy

Serviciul de Protectie si Paza, Romania

Malta Information Technology Law Association, Malta

National Police General Directorate at the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria

European Institute Foundation, Bulgaria

Association les Militants du Savoir, France

Ministère de l'intérieur/ direction générale de la sécurité intérieure, France

YOUR COUNTER POINTS OF CONTACT ARE:

Mr. Catalin Trufin, Project Coordinator
ASSIST Software SRL
catalin.trufin@assist.ro

Mr. Borislav Mavrov, Dissemination manager
European Institute
bmavrov@europe.bg

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