

THE EURO-ATLANTIC CENTER FOR RESILIENCE IN BUCHAREST. OPINIONS ON ITS ROLE IN STRENGTHENING REGIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract: *Resilience refers to the multidimensional, essential capacity of the subject or collectivity to survive and thrive in the face of various challenges. The paradigm of resilience encompasses the idea, mechanism or approach of returning the affected state of the subject, large social group, society and the state to the initial level, with surprising level increases that may be present in the future.*

The security of the nation or belonging to alliances cannot be conferred only by the military dimension. Aspects of political stability and predictability, economic well-being and equilibrium, social cohesion, financial stability, the provision of diverse resources, as well as the robustness of infrastructure must be considered. The causes of a fall in standards must be identified together with the moments and possibilities for recovery and the acceptance of recovery policies as well as strategies.

The establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience in Bucharest came to support the two security organizations, NATO and the European Union, member and partner states, to anticipate, monitor, prepare and respond effectively to the diversity of crises and threats of today's world. The Center has a major role for NATO and the European Union's crisis resolution capabilities, intervening by promoting resilience, innovation and cooperation. The Center considers multidisciplinary modalities, with an emphasis on building collaboration, sharing knowledge and best practices - which are essential in preparing for and responding adequately to threats and crises.

Keywords: *Center of resilience, resilience, hub, pivot, empowerment, cooperation, collective security, de-escalation, societal resilience, state resilience.*

Formation and Inauguration

The Euro-Atlantic Center for Resilience in Bucharest, hereafter referred to as the *Center*, was inaugurated on May 31st 2021, as an administrative part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Center represents a structure of high level, interest and openness, with interest in the expertise and research in complex fields - such as the political, social, military, diplomatic and cooperation domains, in terms of cooperating with various institutions throughout the world.¹

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¹ Gabriela-Elena Sîrbu, Viorel-Cătălin Mihalcea, Vasile Bogdan, *Problematica rezilienței în secolul al XXI-lea. Curs*, CTEA Publishing House, Bucharest, 2023. (transl. *Resilience Issues in the 21st Century. Course*)

The participants in the major political event of the Center's inauguration, top personalities, were widely and selectively represented. In this particular respect, there were present the President of Romania, the Head of the Romanian Executive and the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs - who acted as the host of the event. The Romanian representatives welcomed the high dignitaries present at the event - Mr. Mircea Geoană, NATO Deputy Secretary General and Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič, European Commission Vice-President for Inter-institutional Relations and Forecasting. High-level officials from national security institutions were also present. The establishment of the Center was decided by the Heads of State and Government at the Brussels Summit on June 14th, 2021: *"We will continue to take a whole-of-government approach to enhancing the resilience of our societies. [...] We welcome the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience in Romania."*²

The establishment of the Centre, as a highly professional and rigorously specialized structure of the central public administration, designates Romania's role and importance as a pillar of stability for the two well-known security organizations - NATO and the European Union. As commonly known, Romania's location on the eastern external border, a border of heightened sensitivity, puts our country in direct contact with the flow of multiple and continuous challenges coming from the East.

Role and Importance

Resilience can be appreciated as the emblem of today's society, the process of daily survival has to be harmonized and optimized permanently. It should be borne in mind that after every fall in the level or standard, individuals, society and the state have to make efforts and find solutions to regain the damaged level and increase the possibility of moving forward.³

Resilience is the recovery of the damaged, abandoned level, which can be installed after stabilization or stopping the decrease. The social factor subjected to aggression will carry out stabilization and refortification efforts, by initiating synchronized measures and actions aimed at overcoming the difficult situation. Thus, the sequence of recovery (refortification), resilience in itself, will contain predominantly dynamic, active efforts (diametrically opposed to the sequence of resistance, which in the past has been predominantly static).⁴

² Misiunea Centrului Euro-Atlantic pentru Reziliență, available at <https://e-arc.ro/-2023/04/05/misiunea-centrului-euro-atlantic-pentru-rezilienta/>, accessed on 03.09.2024

³ Viorel-Cătălin Mihalcea, Gabriela- Elena Sirbu, Vasile Bogdan, *Aspecte reziliente în crizele de securitate internă*, „Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House”, Bucharest, 2021. (transl. *Resilient Aspects in Internal Security Crises*), p.20.

⁴ Gheorghe Minculete, *Abordări relaționale ale rezilienței logisticii operaționale*, în *Lucrările Conferinței Științifice Internaționale Gândirea Militară Românească*, GMR

The Center is a major pillar of NATO's security efforts, significantly enhancing the Alliance's capabilities to anticipate, monitor, prepare and respond effectively to the diversity of crises and threats facing the world today. The actions and initiatives undertaken by the institution can support real, effective and lasting cooperation among international actors, which is essential for building real collective security in the face of the challenges of the 21st century.⁵

The Euro-Atlantic Resilience Center plays a major role in enhancing NATO's and the European Union's crisis-resolution capacity, made possible through the broad promotion of resilience, innovation and cooperation, achieved between Member States and partners. The institution envisages multidisciplinary modalities, with an emphasis on building collaboration, sharing knowledge and best practices, which are critical for crisis preparedness and response. The Center is not a national resilience authority and has no operational responsibilities. GD no. 565 of May 19th 2021 stipulates that it is intended to serve as a platform for the transfer of expertise between the governmental, private, civil society and academic sectors.⁶

The fundamental requirement of the Center's activities is to build feasible analytical tools that can be used by different agencies and organizations to assess, address and resolve resilience threats. The standardization of procedures will facilitate communication and cooperation between government institutions and partners, maximizing the effectiveness of crisis response and shortening response time.⁷

The importance of the Center derives from the fact that security, the essential paradigm of stability in today's world, defines, analyzes and decisively marks the issue of establishing, enhancing and completing resilience as a factor of critical importance for the existence of international actors. It is obvious that the collapse, the destruction of societal and state resilience will lead to the disappearance of states from the world map.⁸

November 2020. (transl. *Relational Approaches to the Resilience of Operational Logistics, in Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference on Romanian Military Thought*), pp. 266-268.

⁵ Gabriela-Elena Sirbu, Viorel-Cătălin Mihalcea, Vasile Bogdan, *Aspecte reziliente ale instituțiilor Uniunii Europene de securitate internă*, CTEA Publishing House, Bucharest, 2021. (transl. *Resilient Aspects of European Union Internal Security Institutions*). p.76.

⁶ „Misiunea Centrului Euro-Atlantic pentru Reziliență”, available at <https://e-arc.ro/2023/-04/05/misiunea-centrului-euro-atlantic-pentru-rezienta/>, accessed on 04.09.2024.

⁷ Euro-Atlantic Resilience Forum, available at <https://resilienceforum.e-arc.ro/>, accessed on 04.09.2024.

⁸ Administrația Prezidențială. *Strategia Națională de Apărare a Țării pentru perioada 2020-2024*. București, 2020.(transl. Presidential Administration. *National Defense Strategy for 2020-2024*. Bucharest, 2020), pp. 18-19.

The Center carries out complex activities, designed in line with the objectives of the European Union and NATO in the field of resilience, without direct subordination to any of these institutions. The status and functioning of the Center are relatively similar to the existence and functioning of the *Helsinki Hybrid Center of Excellence*. Through its existence and location, the Center is able to offer expertise and consultancy to the Black Sea states, international actors that are not members of the European Union or NATO (Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, etc.).

Mission of the Center

The Center brings together multiple involvements, structured in the fields of conception, analysis, forecasting, consultancy and expertise, and is a solid bridge for future extended collaboration.

The Center's major effort is focused on three directions:

- a). Reduction/ de-escalation and elimination of security challenges, intervened through prevention, monitoring and resilient corrective effort;
- b). Knowledge, thinking, integration, and resilient action, provided at high value levels;
- c). Extensive cooperation in the areas of education, initial and ongoing training, and complex exercises designed to enhance resilience.

The above-mentioned effort directions comprise multiple component elements, which synergistically integrate the Center's own complex vision of operation, work and international relations.⁹

The Center conducts specialized courses that address major resilience issues, with a focus on transportation infrastructure and communications systems. The range of courses is conceived, designed and implemented by resilience experts. The courses are targeted at professionals from relevant domains and sectors (government, NGOs, private), all of whom are familiar with the essential roles of crisis notification, monitoring, resolution and response. Skilled mentors disseminate essential knowledge, lessons learned, and best practices.

The curriculum range is varied, innovative and wide-ranging, encompassing highly relevant subjects. The range of subjects starts from the basics of resilience to the presentation of advanced level strategies recommended for use in dealing with emergencies. Training formats, scenarios, courses and practical aspects are key to optimizing professional skills and preparing participants for effective crisis responses. The delivery of the courses is a significant investment in building resilience at both national and international levels.¹⁰

⁹ Official Page of the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Center, available at <https://e-arc.ro/>, accessed on 04.09.2024.

¹⁰ Gabriela-Elena Sirbu, Viorel-Cătălin Mihalcea, Vasile Bogdan, *Op.cit.*,p. 42.

The pro-active and output-oriented approach to achieve feasible, measurable results in international missions make known the organization's commitment to improving resilience capabilities and to building a secure, stable, sustainable and predictable future. Through its engagement, the Center establishes itself as a trusted, reference partner in the fields of resilience and security.¹¹

The Center also provides Romanian diplomats, foreign diplomats and government officials from EU Member States and partner states with initial and advanced resilience-building training sessions. The Resilience Centre has also carried out projects of interest and value to the European Union and funded by the organization, aimed at strengthening resilience in the context of disinformation, information warfare and hybrid threats, and the necessary steps to standardize analytical tools of government institutions. The projects aimed at increasing interoperability and reducing response times to security challenges.¹²

Gradual Activation

The Centre has been put into operation in a phased manner, in a logical sequence, growing in scale. In practical terms, the succession was achieved by increasing the degree of workload, emphasizing its own analytical capacity and amplifying its functional dimension. In the first stage, the individual effort specific to the beginning was instituted, thus carried out in a national context. In the subsequent stage, the Center was staffed with international representatives (specialists and experts), making possible the effort of extended collaboration. Towards the achievement of the Center's objectives, a set of Working Groups was established. The Working Groups aimed at expanding the knowledge of feasible ways and means, the effort being driven by the requirement for resilience of NATO and European Union neighboring states. Priority was given to the theoretical preventive requirements and to stopping anti-Western pressures, stopping interference with the continuity of governance and functioning of essential services. The approaches of societal resilience, resilience of essential transportation infrastructure, emerging and disruptive technologies, crises and emergencies, on communication and self-sustainable systems, etc. have been effectively promoted.

International Impact

At the NATO seminar in Riga in April 2023, the Center presented the Euro-Atlantic vision on societal resilience. In coordination with NATO,

¹¹ Euro-Atlantic Resilience Forum, available at <https://resilienceforum.e-arc.ro/>, accessed on 05.09.2024.

¹² Idem.

the Center is working to assess and support resilience for Black Sea states. The Centre periodically publishes the *Euro-Atlantic Resilience Journal*, constantly organizing relevant public events (conferences, seminars, round tables, etc.), bringing together the most relevant actors in the field of resilience and raising public awareness on resilience.¹³

The institution demonstrates the willingness, capacity and commitment to disseminate expertise and resources with international partners, transmitting the impact of its efforts beyond local and national borders, towards strengthening regional and global security and resilience. The Center's contributions have supported the development of professional skills, training, adaptation and strengthening of security institutions to counter various types of threats. Efforts promote zonal, regional and global stability, support the protection of communities and help preserve social order in the face of current uncertainties.¹⁴

The Centre is engaged in international missions, fruitfully collaborating with high-level organizations such as the EU Partnership Mission. The Centre's main role is to strengthen security systems, improve resilience and prevent crises around the world, particularly in states that are at the receiving end of hybrid threats. The role and importance of resilience are becoming more and more critical when addressing the extant diverse threats, such as cyber and hybrid threats, climate changes or geopolitical pressures. Increasing reliance on technology and digitization will grow more evident, leading to an increased number of cyber vulnerabilities. As a result, digital equipment and networks will play an increased role, with the functioning of critical infrastructures amplifying the need for cyber resilience.¹⁵

Efficiency of the Euro-Atlantic Institution

Effectiveness in managing geopolitical challenges is grounded on the necessity to develop and apply resilience strategies at the societal level, made possible by involving citizens, promoting key competences and supporting international cooperation. Romania, through the Center for Resilience, acts as a regional pivot for promoting and implementing resilience policies, initiatives, approaches, projects, courses, themed on civil resilience, cooperation in crisis management issues and countering hybrid threats. These efforts place Romania in the position of a dynamic actor,

¹³ Misiunea Centrului Euro-Atlantic pentru Reziliență, available at <https://e-arc.ro/2023/04/05/misiunea-centrului-euro-atlantic-pentru-rezilienta/>, accessed on 05.09.2024.

¹⁴ Official Page of the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Center, available at <https://e-arc.ro/>, accessed on 05.09.2024.

¹⁵ Euro-Atlantic Resilience Forum, available at <https://resilienceforum.e-arc.ro/>, accessed on 05.09.2024.

relevant for promoting resilience at the regional level and in the NATO and EU context.

The implementation of measures to strengthen state, societal and individual resilience, carried out in the context of the broad challenges of the 21st century is a critical condition for ensuring the national and collective security of the states of the two organizations. The renewed importance of resilience in the context of security policy makes visible the Alliance's commitment to provide an adequate response to emerging threats, strengthening the ways in which Member States and partners work together through forms of cooperation and sharing of knowledge, capabilities and resources.

Thus, ensuring Euro-Atlantic resilience in the world of the future requires multilateral approaches, structured on cooperation and innovation, to counter evolving security challenges. Resilience should not only be seen as the ability to survive threats, but also to adapt and make people stronger in the face of tomorrow's challenges.

The Centre has been involved in projects funded by the European Union, demonstrating its ability to mobilize resources and expertise in areas critical to the security of today's world. The institution is concerned with developing and testing innovative strategies and effective working tools, supporting improved interoperability and reduced crisis response time, essential for synchronized and efficient response to security challenges.¹⁶

Conclusions

The Euro-Atlantic Resilience Center is an eloquent example of NATO's mode of engagement in shaping the response to emerging international security challenges.¹⁷ The achievements of the Centre are due to the synergistic effort with the objectives of NATO and the European Union, without any direct subordination to any structure of those organizations. Romania, as host of the Center, found itself in the position of a key actor in defining, promoting and achieving resilience in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Center developed the “*NATO Resilience Civil Experts course*”, promoted under the aegis of the NATO Defense Policy and Planning Division. The course emphasized, once again, Romania's major role in building and supporting the international resilience agenda. In 2024, three iterations of the course have been scheduled in March, May and October in Bucharest. The courses open to the involvement of resilience experts represent a special participation of Romania in the setting up and

¹⁶ Gabriela-Elena Sirbu, Viorel-Cătălin Mihalcea, Vasile Bogdan, 2023, *Op.cit.* p.44.

¹⁷ Euro-Atlantic Resilience Forum, available at <https://resilienceforum.e-arc.ro/>, accessed on 05.09.2024.

promotion of the concept of resilience, both in the Black Sea area and for all NATO member states.¹⁸

The Euro-Atlantic Resilience Center enhances NATO's commitment to strengthening its knowledge, skills, resilience, establishment procedures and adaptability in the face of new security realities and challenges. NATO's willingness to continually adapt in the face of a wide range of emerging threats is certain, proving its continued flexibility and relevance in ensuring world peace and stability.

The Euro-Atlantic Resilience Center is a strong pillar in NATO's security policy and approaches, enhancing the Alliance's ability to anticipate, prepare for and respond effectively to threats and crises. The Center strengthens cooperation among member states and partners - a critical step in building sustainable collective security in the face of 21st century challenges.



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¹⁸ Gabriela-Elena Sîrbu, Viorel-Cătălin Mihalcea, Vasile Bogdan, 2021, *Op.cit.*, p.77.

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