

The Resilience Imperative: building strength in uncertain times

March 12th, 2025
Club Prince Albert, Brussels

*A conference organized by the Belgian Intelligence Studies Centre (BISC),
in collaboration with the Royal Union of Intelligence and Action Services
(RUSRA-KUIAD)*



The Resilience Imperative: building strength in uncertain times

In an increasingly uncertain world, resilience has emerged as a critical concept for ensuring societal, economic, and national security. Resilience is not just about responding to crises but proactively building systems, structures, and communities that can withstand and adapt to challenges, including military conflicts, natural, technological or manmade disasters, disinformation, cyberattacks, and geopolitical tensions.

In December 2021, the National Security Council approved the first-ever National Security Strategy. Central to this framework is the concept of resilience, which acts as the core pillar around which the national security strategy is built. The implementation and optimization of a national resilience strategy require the integration of various projects and initiatives, such as the Belgian National Risk Analysis, the Framework Memorandum Integral Security, the STAR-plan of the Belgian Defence, etc. These range from bolstering critical infrastructure to enhancing cybersecurity defenses, preparing communities for all kinds of risks, and fostering public-private partnerships to ensure the seamless delivery of essential services under any circumstances.

Therefore, it is essential to point out that resilience is a shared responsibility that extends beyond government and security agencies to include businesses, civil society, and individuals. This "all-society approach" underscores the necessity of collaboration across sectors and levels of society to address vulnerabilities and build adaptive capacities. This requires a comprehensive plan, one that involves long-term investments in infrastructure, technology, and human resources. Such efforts demand commitment and funding from current and future governments.

Intelligence and security services play a crucial role in enhancing resilience by anticipating and mitigating threats. Their work in identifying emerging risks - be it geopolitical instability, terrorism, cyber threats, or supply chain disruptions - provides the foundation for effective decision-making and resource allocation. By fostering collaboration between intelligence agencies, government bodies, and civil society, resilience strategies can be more targeted, timely, and impactful.

This conference is critical for addressing the urgent need to bridge the gap between government and society in the pursuit of resilience. By bringing together experts from academia, government, security services, and civil society, we aim to foster an open dialogue about the shared responsibilities and practical steps required to build trust, strengthen resilience, and ensure vigilance.

The event highlights how an "all-society approach" can transform resilience from a theoretical framework into a practical strategy for the challenges we face today and tomorrow.

PROGRAM

- 09.00 – 09.30: Arrival of the guests
- 09.30 – 09.45: *Opening conference*
Prof. dr. Marc Cools (Founder-Honorary President BISC – Ghent University)
- 09.45 – 10.15: *“Resilience in governance to counter hybrid threats; a coordinated whole-of-society approach.”*
Johan Schalin (Hybrid Centre of Excellence)
- 10.15 – 10.45: *“NATO’s Approach to Counter Information Threats and Enhancing Societal Resilience.”*
Beaudine Verhoek (NATO)
- 10.45 – 11.15: Coffee break
- 11.15 – 11.45: *“Protect, Strengthen, Prepare: the achievements of the Belgian EU Presidency in deterring FIMI and hybrid threats.”*
Peter Booms (Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU)
- 11.45 – 12.15: *“Reflections on resilience and take aways from the Zagreb Security Forum 2024.”*
Gordan Akrap (Hybrid Warfare Research Institute)
- 12.15 – 13.15: Lunch
- 13.15 – 13.45: *“Resilience and Defence of Belgium, a military perspective.”*
Bart Hubrechtsen (Belgian Defence)
- 13.45 – 14.15: *“Is a little bit of war kicking us out of our peaceful comfort zone? The need for and the development of national resilience in Belgium.”*
Jorn Bronselaer (National Crisis Centre)
- 14.15 – 14.45: *“How to improve cyber resilience? The Belgian approach”*
Phédra Clouner (Centre for Cyber Security Belgium)
- 14.45 – 15.15: Break
- 15.15 – 15.45: *“A Port in a storm, the role of the port authority within today’s geopolitical context.”*
Niels Vanlaer (Harbour Master’s Office)
- 15.45 – 16.15: *“Critical infrastructure within the STIE (Security Technology & Innovation Ecosystem).”*
Chris Bombeke (BISC)

- 16.15 – 16.45: *“Reflections on resilience from a Belgian political perspective.”*
Koen Metsu (Member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives)
- 16.45 – 17.00: *Closing remarks*
Prof. dr. Marc Cools (Founder-Honorary President BISC – Ghent University)

Presidents of the conference:

Kathleen Van Acker (ADIV – BISC)
Robin Libert (BISC – RUSRA-KUIAD)

MEETING DATE & PLACE

Wednesday, 12 March 2025
Club Prince Albert
Karmelietenstraat 20, 1000 Brussel
Rue des Petits Carmes 20, 1000 Bruxelles

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Cost and registration: 145 Euro.

Included: drinks, lunch and scientific journal ‘Cahiers Inlichtingenstudies – Cahiers d’Etudes du Renseignement – Journal of Intelligence Studies nr. 14’.

Price for students and alumni Intelligence Studies UGent-ULiège: 45 Euro without the journal, 85 Euro with the journal.

Registration: people who are interested must register at the following website:

<https://congrezzo.ugent.be/bisc-conference-032025/re23-bisc-2025-registration>

You will receive a confirmation e-mail. The subscription is definite after payment.

Please, subscribe quickly as seats are limited. **Participants need to be able to present their proof of payment at the entrance.**

Language: The presentations will be given in English.

Dress code ‘Prince Albert Club’: city attire or uniform. Not allowed: jeans, sports shoes, T-shirts...

During this conference the “Chatham House Rule” applies!