



Although terrorism and the migrant crisis have, until recently, attracted most of the headlines, in Europe today one of the most serious threats to the democratic order comes from Vladimir Putin's Kremlin. Across the continent, Russia is in the process of expanding its military and political options by polarizing attitudes among the public in target states. It spreads false information regarding United States and European Union (EU) policies and intentions in order to corrode trust in democratic institutions and support for closer ties with the Euro-Atlantic community.

This soft-power campaign demands a coordinated response by both the European governments and civil society to improve communication, strengthen advocacy, and build relationships within the transatlantic community. The Beacon Project fills this space.

Through the Beacon Project, IRI seeks to accomplish four goals:

1. **Support** a strong transatlantic dialogue
2. **Defend** pluralistic democracy as a core value of Western democracies
3. **Counter** internal and external threats to democracy
4. **Re-engage** Europe's vulnerable regions inside and outside the EU

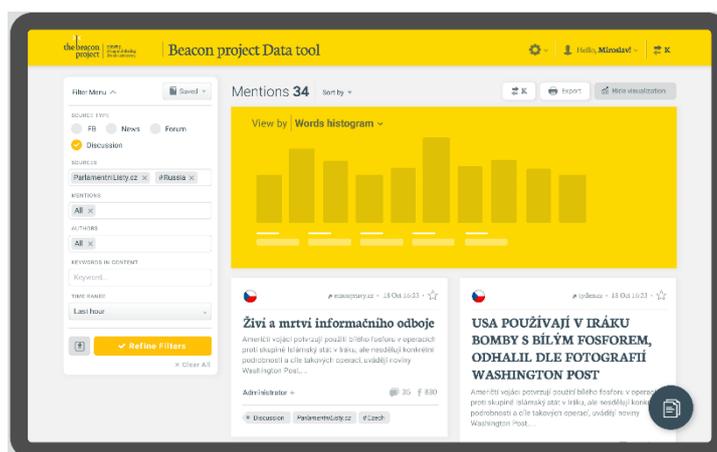
The Steering Committee

Jeffrey Gedmin, Senior Fellow, Georgetown University;
Sandra Kalniete, Member of the European Parliament, former Foreign Minister of Latvia;
Petr Kolář, Chairman, European Values Initiative; former Czech Ambassador to U.S. and Russia;
David J. Kramer, Senior Director for Human Rights and Human Freedoms, McCain Institute; former President, Freedom House;
Günter Krings, Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry of the Interior (Germany);
Mike Rogers, Distinguished Fellow, Hudson Institute; former Member of Congress; former Chairman, House Intelligence Committee;
Gary Schmitt, Resident Scholar, Co-Director of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies and Director of the Program on American Citizenship, American Enterprise Institute; and
Lucinda Creighton, Former Irish Minister of State for European Affairs;
Martin Bútorá, Member, Slovak Atlantic Commission, former Slovak Ambassador to the US.

Until recently, Moscow’s campaign to influence public and elite opinion in Europe in favor of its positions had gone largely unnoticed. The Beacon Project’s **>versus<** ICT tool, together with IRI’s sophisticated public opinion research, sheds light on these tactics through data-driven analysis of the connections between disinformation and illiberal movements, as well as the political weaknesses that allow leave European societies vulnerable to exploitation.



The *Beacon Project’s* ICT data collection tool, **>versus<**, is being developed to aid local media monitors and researchers to obtain qualitative and quantitative data from a wider range of sources. This database will be built by developing a collaborative standardized methodology to provide quality data on the scale and effectiveness of disinformation for the first time. In addition, this data will be further supported by new national polling initiatives.



By providing data and building alliances across the continent and on both sides of the Atlantic, the Beacon Project is helping close the space for Kremlin exploitation. With Russia’s continuing military effort to destabilize the governments and states of the Eastern Partnership, the need to develop a strong, transatlantic response to the Russian soft-power effort has become even more acute. In order to support this counter strategy, the Beacon Project has created two standing roundtables: one for political parties and a second comprised of civil society representatives from across Europe.



Through the discussions of the two standing round tables and the data provided by the **>versus<** tool, the project will work toward drafting specific policy suggestions to close the democracy gaps present in our societies, that can be exploited by hostile influence and disinformation. It is only through reducing the democracy deficit on local, national, and European levels that the gains of anti-liberal political movements can be reversed.



For more information:

- **IRI Washington** – Jan Surotchak, Europe Director, jsurotchak@iri.org, 202-572-1561
- **IRI Brussels** – Miriam Lexmann, Regional Program Director, mlexmann@iri.org, +421 905 492 170