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RESILIENCE

TO

DISINFORMATION



LUBLIN TRIANGLE PERSPECTIVE

детектор медіа



Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 opened a new chapter for Russian propaganda and disinformation targeting Lublin Triangle countries. Ukraine is at the epicentre of Russian disinformation and propaganda that directly supports the events on the battlefield. Lithuania and Poland supporting Ukraine politically and militarily, are also under constant information attacks from Kremlin. Despite that, all three countries are showing vital signs of resilience to Russian propaganda.

Despite that, all three countries are showing vital signs of resilience to Russian propaganda. Thus, the Civic Resilience Initiative, Detector Media and Kosciuszko Institute joint efforts to identify the building blocks of resilience to Russian disinformation in Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. To outline the best case practices in combating disinformation, first, they looked into the similarities and differences of the main narratives and messages targeting Lublin Triangle countries. Second, they explore the main sources of disinformation and its patterns. Third, they evaluate measures taken to combat disinformation.

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Executive Summary

Russian propaganda and disinformation are neither new nor unique. Analysing it from the perspective of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, we see the same narratives, messages and tactics exploited by the Russian propaganda machine. Within the analysis, we identify several goals of Russian propaganda and disinformation in the Lublin Triangle: target citizens' beliefs in future, undermine trust within groups and between groups, and discredit international cooperation.

- To target citizens' beliefs in future, the Russian propaganda machine undermines the state's capacity to function, claiming that the **"country is not a sovereign state", "government is unstable and incompetent", and "country is struggling economically"**. It explains it by saying that **"Lithuania/Poland/Ukraine is under external governance"** allegedly **"being used by the West/elites/world secret government"** with **"CSOs, independent media and their representative being puppets of Soros/ "the West"**. Along this, Russian propaganda tried to persuade citizens that they have no prospects in their country: **"people are fleeing the country looking for a better life", "most citizens believe that the situation in the country is deteriorating", "the amount of population is constantly decreasing"**. Starting with full-scale invasion, Lublin Triangle countries are targeted with a narrative about "governments being incapable of providing citizens with accessible

energy resources". Russian energy blackmail is being converted by Russian propaganda in claims that **"the inflation & energy crises are caused by the West's misguided political approach"** and that **"citizens are the one paying for mistakes of the government"**. While overall spreading panic and threatening Europeans with "cold and hunger during upcoming winter".

- The second goal of Russian information manipulations is to destroy intergroup and intragroup relations. Overall, Russian information manipulations are effective at targeting communities. Thus, in all three countries, they are identifying different communities (based on language, sexuality, religion etc.) and pushing narratives, bringing distrust within the community and pitting communities against each other. For instance, blaming countries for being Russophobic. In particular, Russian propaganda claims that Lublin Triangle countries **"discriminate against/terrorise Russian speakers", "attack Russian culture", and "ignore the voice of those with pro-Russian views in the debate, imposing the censorship of political correctness"**. Russian propaganda tries to position so-called "Russophobia" as Nazism, claiming that Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine **"persecute people for their political views" and "control the information environment"**. Thus any decommunisation is considered **"an act of Nazism and/or Russophobia"**.

Refugees are also being weaponised by Russian propaganda and disinformation to undermine intergroup and intragroup relations. Russia is behind such messages as **“refugees are spoiled/ungrateful”, “refugees are prioritised over the host country citizens/inhabitants”, “refugees destroy the national identity”, “refugees pose an epidemic danger”, “white/“European looking” refugees are prioritized over others”**.

For the same goals, Russia weaponizes history to pit one community against each other. For instance, in Poland, it heavily exploits the Volhynia Massacre (ethnic Poles being murdered in Nazi-occupied parts of eastern Poland (now part of Ukraine) by Ukrainian nationalists). This troubled history between Poland and Ukraine has been part of anti-Ukrainian disinformation in Poland since 2014. Currently, Russian propaganda is exploiting it trying to persuade Polish society that **“Ukrainian refugees do not deserve help as they allegedly support the Massacre”**.

- The third goal of Russian information manipulations and interference is undermining international cooperation and unity. Most of the efforts are targeting NATO and the EU with Russian propaganda claiming that they “are weak and are going to collapse”. It persistently fuels the message of “NATO/EU membership is not beneficial for the country”. Russian propaganda tries to claim that overall international organisations are powerless. For instance, it heavily

promotes the narrative of **“sanctions on Russia being ineffective”**. In particular, **“sanctions hurt the West more than Russia”, “the West is secretly trading with Russia”, “sanctions are making Russia stronger”, “European citizens do not support sanctions against Russia” and “sanctions are being imposed on innocent people”**.

Amid Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian propaganda and disinformation intensified the narrative about **“the West”/NATO being at war with Russia**¹. Noteworthy, Russian propaganda claims that “the West” is weak and at the same time explains its failures in Ukraine by saying that “the West is the one at war with Russia” spreading stories about “foreign mercenaries”. Also, claiming that, **“supplying weapons means direct involvement in the war”**.

Russian propaganda and disinformation tries to depict “The West” as hypocritical for caring about Ukraine so much and at the same time blames it for “causing the global food crisis”. Using information manipulations and interference, Russia tries to discredit democratic societies at all costs. For instance, weaponize gender and sexuality to justify its war against Ukraine and the whole democratic world¹.

When it comes to sources of Russian propaganda and disinformation in Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, there are a lot of similarities as well. Parties and personas spreading pro-Russian rhetoric, YouTube bloggers sharing

¹Detector Media, [“«You Are Either Russian or Gay.» Exploring Russian LGBTIQ+ Disinformation on Social Media”](#) (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, November 2022).

conspiracies, coordinated campaigns on Facebook and anonymous Telegram channels. However, some slight differences in quality and diversity are dictated by media consumption in the country.

Not only does disinformation share a lot of similarities attacking the countries. Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine have several things in common that contributed largely to their resilience to malign information campaigns. First, there is a clear understanding that Russian malign information activity threatens national security. Understanding, acknowledging and analysing the threat worked as the first shield against Russian information manipulations and interference. Thus, mapping the sources and their connection to the Kremlin is crucial. Moreover, holding those responsible to account sends a clear signal that no one has the right to exploit the freedom of speech to incite hatred, call for violence or spread genocidal rhetoric.

Second, a multi-dimensional approach when it comes to combating Russian propaganda and disinformation is highly practised within Lublin Triangle countries. Countering disinformation is a complex process that should not be limited to only information and communication challenges. It is essential to view disinformation from the standpoint of cyber and digital security, information and communication, and cognitive security.

Third, multi-stakeholder perspectives. Lublin Triangle countries have some outstanding cooperation practices between the state, business, media, and civil society. It showcases how essential synergy and multi-stakeholder perspective is when solving complex crises enabled by propaganda and disinformation. Synergy should reside simultaneously on several levels and within several topics: horizontal, cross-sectoral and cross-institutional cooperation. The more multifaceted the measures are, the higher their effectiveness in building resilience to Russia's hostile information operations.

Fourth, if we focus only on the analysis of Russian propaganda and disinformation targeting Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, the quantity and diversity of it may be impossible to address. Therefore, it is more effective to become more engaged with a problem than a solution. However, it is essential to view disinformation from the perspective of actual impact on citizens' decision-making. Russian propaganda is indeed dangerous, but not almighty. There are numerous examples of when it failed in L3 countries. Thus, it is crucial to have measurable indicators to evaluate whether the specific propaganda messages could make it to discourse and must be addressed. At the same time, incorporate measurable indicators of societal resilience that will show the overall dynamic and provide a data-driven understanding of the actual effectiveness of Russian propaganda.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following suggestions are proposed to various stakeholders at the international, national and local levels.



For all stakeholders:

- Threat awareness is the cornerstone of resilience to Russian malign information campaigns. It is crucial to understand the source of the threat and its peculiarities and clearly facilitate and address it. Therefore, further strengthening situational awareness is vital.

- Combatting disinformation is a complex phenomenon that should not be limited to only information and communication challenges (meaning the sources and messages of malign information campaigns), a holistic approach addressing the threat is needed. It is essential to view disinformation from the standpoint of cyber and digital security, information and communication, and cognitive security.

- Information manipulation and interference are becoming increasingly complex, thus, synergy and multi-stakeholder perspective are needed in the work of all stakeholders: international partners, government institutions, business, media and civil society organisations. Synergy should reside simultaneously on several levels and within several topics: horizontal, cross-sectoral and cross-institutional cooperation. The more multifaceted the measures are, the higher their effectiveness in building resilience to Russia's hostile

information manipulation and interference.

- Make a shift from a problem to a solution. There are numerous studies on the diversity of disinformation and its techniques, which are of utmost importance. At the same time, there is a substantial lack of analysis showcasing the effectiveness of measures to combat disinformation. It is vital in terms of allocating resources to combat it, as not all disinformation is effective. However, deciding whether to react to a specific message is challenging without this knowledge.

- View the information environment comprehensively by looking at disinformations and truthful narratives and messages. Most efforts focus on combating disinformation by flagging and debunking it. However, various productive messages, tactics and formats naturally emerge in the information environment. Thus, one can amplify them by increasing their share in the information environment.



For governments and public institutions:

- Nominate a critical coordinating body responsible for strategic communication both in the country and abroad. The practice here varies as it could be one body with several mandates or two bodies cooperating. The responsible body must establish synergies within public institutions, coordinating efforts to build resilience and align the long-term vision. Besides, most of the measures in terms

of coordination are focused on the national level. However, with decentralisation and the nature of Russia's malign information campaign, the same level of coordination is needed from the regional and local perspectives (depending on the country's administrative structure).

- Develop or strengthen a comprehensive real-time monitoring system. It is often the case that each institution has its own monitoring system, some use ready-on-the-market solutions, and some use custom ones. However, lack of synergy, protocols on data exchange and often complicated output format decrease the capacity to react and, more importantly, to forecast information attacks.

- Implement and practice a protocol for cooperation between the various authority bodies involved in countering disinformation domestically and internationally.

- Develop or apply legislative measures to punish those violating national legislation regarding spreading propaganda and disinformation. Imposing costs on perpetrators is an important step to deter, prevent or/and disrupt information manipulation and interference. However, it is essential to develop mechanisms based on the rule of law. Civil society acting as a watchdog is essential for observing and safeguarding such processes independent of the state.

- Design a measurable, result-oriented system for evaluating efforts to combat disinformation and build societal resilience.

- Design a methodology for collecting systematic evidence of foreign information manipulation and interference in the country's information space.

- Establish and facilitate an ongoing dialogue with civil society, independent media, business representatives, online platforms and other stakeholders to monitor and counter hybrid threats. Utilise their expertise and stimulate with grants the development of expertise within academia and civil society. The state needs to be able to delegate some scope of tasks to civil society and academia about combating disinformation.

- Foster media and information literacy skills through formal and non-formal education. Strengthen resilience to disinformation by raising awareness and increasing media literacy through encouraging and facilitating educational events accessible to the broader public.

- Imbed result-oriented training (from the perspective of cyber, digital, information, communication and cognitive security) for public servants. As well as adapt the education system to the current challenges understanding the need for flexibility and readiness for constant self-improvement.

- Use legislation and tax instruments when advocating measures to combat disinformation to Big Tech companies. Create regional and multi-stakeholder platforms to advocate profound changes in content moderation and algorithms. Together with civil society and academia, advocate for data access to enable exploration of algorithms to formulate policy towards them.

- Start adapting the EU's Digital Markets Act that will enter into force from 1 January 2024 and substantially change how the online environment works regarding combating propaganda and disinformation. Even though the EU's Digital Markets Act

is compulsory for EU member states, it is a valuable document outlining powerful tools for combating disinformation that can be applied by other countries.

- Engage in practice and know-how sharing with other countries and partners that are highly exposed to Russian disinformation and need capacity-building to counter foreign information manipulation and interference.



For international organisations and donors:

- Increase the visibility of the threat, keeping the topic of countering disinformation high on the agenda.
- Encourage international and multi-lateral political dialogue on uniting efforts to combat disinformation and protect information space from malign information manipulation and interference.
- Elaborate on relevant international rules, norms and regulations for countering disinformation and protecting democratic processes.
- Constantly synchronise understanding of the challenges posed by propaganda and disinformation and a vision to combat them using local knowledge of various stakeholders in the field. It is necessary to avoid duplication.
- Support the capacity building of the authorities, independent media and civil society to detect and respond to disinformation and foreign influence operations.
- Provide institutional support to in-

dependent media and NGOs to strengthen their capacity to be flexible, which is essential in combating disinformation. Second, produce content that is challenging in terms of monetisation (analytical reports, investigations). Continue grant support for testing new business models, digitalisation of newsrooms' work, development of editorial standards, training and mobility of professionals and exchange of best practices.

- Provide institutional and financial support to the creative industry products to combat disinformation and increase media and information literacy worldwide.
- Encourage participant-driven multi-stakeholder and multi-country networks, platforms and forums (events)
- Allocate budgets for comprehensive and ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures taken to combat disinformation by grantees.
- Support innovative projects aimed at combating disinformation and projects initiated by civil society organisations and educational institutions.
- Foster initiatives of civil society organisations, governmental institutions and creative industry aimed at increasing citizens' media and information literacy and helping them understand the existence of disinformation and develop skills to distinguish it.
- Support the strengthening of independent media and quality journalism.
- Help production companies, TV channels, and independent online media to produce socially important entertainment content.



For civil society:

- Continue monitoring disinformation's impact, prebunk and debunk it, create and disseminate explanatory materials, and implement media and information literacy projects targeting average citizens.
- Continue cooperation with various stakeholders: from state to business. The more horizontal connections established, the more effective coordination, particularly in times of crisis.
- Work on reducing economic incentives to spread disinformation, as well as help with developing containing measures by shifting costs to actors involved in influence and foreign interference operations.
- Amplify the productive discussions and voices in the information environment through projects based on multi-stakeholder cooperation.
- Imply a transparent and measurable evaluation system to track the effectiveness of the efforts to build resilience to disinformation.
- Engage in a dialogue with the Big Tech companies, advocating for changes and more transparency in the Big Tech companies' approach towards combating disinformation and misinformation and seeking efficient solutions in cooperation with the governments and public institutions. Advocate for data access for research purposes.



For media:

- Foster media self- and co-regulation to prevent the manipulative distribution of malicious content by increasing transparency and developing common rules and regulations. Advertisers should also be involved in the dialogue on self- and co-regulation to reduce economic incentives to spread disinformation.
- Preserve the notion and status of independent media and journalism. Be the ones who name and shame those exploiting freedom of speech to spread propaganda and disinformation.
- Raise public awareness about the principles and ethics of quality journalism and the role of independent media in democratic societies.
- Include the dimension of propaganda and disinformation into daily work: have regular briefings on the latest narratives, messages and tactics of disinformation and propaganda; plan content that will not unintentionally amplify propaganda or actor spreading it.
- Support government and civil society-led initiatives in disseminating media and information literacy campaigns, stories about positive change, success in reforms, etc. Also, to join efforts in equipping citizens with tools to identify manipulations.
- Increase attention to coverage of regional and local events, and develop regional offices.
- Invest in the digitalisation of the newsroom from one side and human capital from another one.

Introduction

Propaganda and disinformation are instrumental for Russia to achieve its goals, both in the domestic and foreign domains. They are essential tools for Russia to promote its vision of the world, which contradicts the values and principles of democracy worldwide. Potential consequences of limited awareness about and under-reaction to such foreign-led information manipulation and interference include the projected superiority of Russia in the public sphere, on the media landscape and in the cognitive domain of the targeted countries in the long term. It is of utmost importance to acknowledge the threat and improve countries' capabilities to identify, expose and mitigate Russian malign information campaigns. Thus, on 28 July 2020, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania, Dmytro Kuleba, Jacek Czaputowicz, and Linas Linkevičius, established the Lublin Triangle as a format, one of the goals of which was precise to counter the threats emanating from Russia². The tripartite format is based on the traditions and historical ties of the three countries. It is an essential mechanism for strengthening Central Europe and promoting Ukraine's European and Euroatlantic integration.

Moreover, the countries have joined efforts in building resilience to malign information campaigns. Lithuania, Ukraine, and Poland confirmed these intentions by signing a Roadmap for development that points out the main directions of expanding trilateral cooperation, including the present, current, and future initiatives of Lithuania, Ukraine, and Poland aimed at strategic activities to counteract hybrid threats and disinformation³.

The consequence of these agreements was the signing in December 2021 by the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine of the Plan of Joint Actions of the L3 Countries to Combat Disinformation for 2022-2023, which provides for joint actions by Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine — aimed at strengthening their resilience and ensuring a common response to the threats posed by disinformation⁴. Thus, countering disinformation and hybrid threats was identified as one of the priorities in the format of the Lublin Triangle.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022 opened a new chapter for Russian propaganda and disinformation targeting Lublin Triangle countries. The quanti-

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "[Kuleba, Czaputowicz and Linkevičius launched the Lublin Triangle - a new format of Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania](#)" (Kyiv: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, July 2020).

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, "[Declaration of the Lublin Triangle Foreign Ministers of joint European heritage and common values](#)" (Warsaw: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, July 2021).

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, "[Representatives of the Lublin Triangle agree to strengthen cooperation to tackle disinformation](#)" (Lutsk: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, December 2021).

ty and diversity of disinformation are striving: in the first weeks of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Detector Media NGO (Ukraine) was identifying over 30 unique pieces of disinformation targeting Ukrainians in the Ukrainian information environment per day. Ukraine is at the epicentre of Russian disinformation and propaganda that directly supports the events on the battlefield. Lithuania and Poland supporting Ukraine politically and militarily, are also under constant information attacks from Kremlin. Despite that, all three countries are showing vital signs of resilience to Russian propaganda. According to nationwide polling as of August 2022, 93% of Ukrainians believe in Ukraine's victory; 74% support the country's course⁵. 72% of Lithuanians are satisfied with the government's response to the Russian invasion of

Ukraine⁶. As of April 2022, 59% of Lithuanians believe Ukraine will win the ongoing Russia-launched war, according to a new Kantar survey, "War Barometer"⁷. The same study states that 95% of Poles think that Russia's current attack against Ukraine cannot be justified.

Thus, **the main objective** of the policy paper is to identify the building blocks of resilience to Russian disinformation in Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine. To outline the best case practices in combating disinformation, first, we look into the similarities and differences of the main narratives and messages targeting Lublin Triangle countries. Second, we explore the main sources of disinformation and its patterns. Third, we evaluate measures taken to combat disinformation.

⁵ Sociological Group "Rating", "[Seventeenth National Survey: Identity. Patriotism. Values \(August 17-18, 2022\)](#)" (Kyiv: Sociological Group "Rating", August 2022).

⁶ Augustas Stankevičius and BNS, "[Fewer Lithuanians satisfied with response to Russia's war in Ukraine – survey](#)" (Vilnius: Lithuanian National Radio and Television, September 2022).

⁷ Austėja Masiokaitė-Liubinienė and BNS, "[Most Lithuanians believe Ukraine will win war – survey](#)" (Vilnius: Lithuanian National Radio and Television, April 2022).

Methodology

There are three pillars of the paper: narratives and messages targeting Lublin Triangle countries; key actors and sources of Russian propaganda and disinformation; measures (including legislative, industry, and civilian responses to these phenomena) contributing to building resilience to malign information operations.

While the paper focuses on the most recent developments in the context of Russian information influence, the analysis encompasses the period of January 2021–August 2022. It is desk research that implies collecting and systemising knowledge of civil society organizations analysing disinformation campaigns in Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine. Mainly providing insights from analysis of propaganda and disinformation within the country's information environment:

- nationwide online media;
- nationwide online versions of printed media and websites of TV channels;
- nationwide TV channels;
- regional and local online media;
- regional TV channels;
- public pages, groups and/or channels on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Telegram, Instagram, Viber.



How do we identify hostile information activity?

Approach 1. Comparing messages to sound in accord with/similar to the Kremlin's propaganda disinformation narratives.

Approach 2. Establishing the relationship and connection analysis between actors, media, social media users, groups, and channels.

Approach 3. Labelling sources. For example, the Security Service of Ukraine has published a list of Telegram channels administered by the General Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

Approach 4. Verifying the allegations for veracity.

Approach 5. Detecting the activity of inauthentic coordinated behaviour, i.e., bots that promote consonant messages.

Such approaches are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. The combination of approaches helps us more effectively to identify Russian disinformation in the information environment.



Key terms

Within the policy paper, the term “**propaganda**” is mainly used to describe strategic information campaigns organised by the Kremlin to influence and disrupt democratic procedures⁸. It is a set of manipula-

⁸ Judit Bayer et al., “[Disinformation and propaganda – impact on the functioning of the rule of law in the EU and its Member States](#)” (Brussels: European Parliament, February 2019).

tive actions that aim at cultivating a set of beliefs shaping the behaviour of target groups. **Disinformation** could reside within propaganda. It is a set of false and/or manipulative information characterised by malign intent and systematic execution. Within the policy paper, there are terms like **malign information campaigns** or **influence operation**. Both could imply propaganda and disinformation but are not limited to them as they also utilise other illegitimate and deceptive means, in support of the objectives of an adversary.

When describing the content of propaganda and disinformation, policy paper utilizes terms such as narrative, message, fake and manipulation. **Narratives** are compelling stories through which state and non-state actors explain specific events and processes⁹. They operate strategically and require resources to be formulated, shaped and maintained. **Messages** fuel narratives as they are points targeting specific audiences. **Fakes and manipulations** fuel the messages. They refer to not genuine or manipulated pieces of content.

⁹ Ilan Manor, "[NATO'S Digital Narrative- "What We Are", Not "Who We Are"](#)" (Tel Aviv: Exploring Digital Diplomacy, October 2018).

Narratives and messages of Russian propaganda and disinformation aiming at Lublin Triangle Countries

Common narratives and messages of Russian propaganda and disinformation in information space of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine

TARGET



BELIEVES AND TRUST OF CITIZENS

CLUSTER



State capacity

NARRATIVES AND MESSAGES

Country is a failed state

- Country is not a sovereign state
- Government is unstable and incompetent
- Country is struggling economically

Country is under the external governance

- Country is being used by the West/elites/world secret government
- CSOs, independent media and their representative are puppets of Soros/ "the West"
- Country will be sacrificed if the war spills over



Citizens' prospects

Country is a failed state

- People are fleeing the country looking for a better life
- Most citizens believe that the situation in the country is deteriorating
- The amount of population is constantly decreasing



Energy crisis and inflation

The government is incapable of providing citizens with accessible resources

- Citizens will die of cold and hunger during upcoming winter
- Citizens are the one paying for mistakes of the government
- The inflation & energy crises are caused by the West's misguided political approach

TARGET

CLUSTER

NARRATIVES AND MESSAGES



INTERGROUP
AND
INTRAGROUP
RELATIONS



Russophobia

Country is Russophobic

- Country discriminate against/terrorize Russian-speakers
- Russian culture is being attacked
- Country ignores the voice of those with pro-Russian views in the debate, imposing the censorship of political correctness



Nazism

Country is a Nazi state

- People are being persecuted for their political views
- Information environment is being controlled by the state
- Any decommunisation is an act of Nazism and/or Russophobia



Refugees

- Refugees undermine host countries' internal stability
- Refugees are spoiled/ungrateful
- Refugees are prioritized over the host country citizens/inhabitants
- Refugees destroy the national identity
- Refugees pose an epidemic danger
- White/"European looking" refugees are prioritized over others



Propaganda and disinformation targeting belief and trust of citizens

One of the critical building blocks of Russian propaganda in foreign states is the narrative of the **“country being a failed state”**. This narrative aims to undermine citizens' trust in their state, its leaders and national and personal prospects

within the country. In Lithuania and Ukraine, the narrative is primarily built on Russian imperialism, claiming that the Soviet Union was the “only legitimate state” and that all state entities after it is allegedly illegal, incapable, ineffective etc¹⁰.

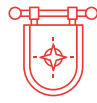
¹⁰ Novaya Gazeta, “[Песков назвал Украину «несамостоятельным» государством](#)” (Moscow: Novaya Gazeta, June 2021).

TARGET



INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION
AND UNITY

CLUSTER



NATO
and EU



NARRATIVES AND MESSAGES

NATO and EU are weak and are going to collapse

- NATO/EU membership is not beneficial for the country

“The West”/NATO is at war with Russia

- “The West” forced Russia to attack Ukraine
- “The West” is using Ukraine to wage war against Russia
- Supplying weapons means direct involvement in the war
- “The West” is hypocritical for caring about Ukraine so much
- “The West” is causing the global food crisis



Historical
past



Countries should not cooperate because of their historical past



Sanctions
on Russia



Sanctions are not effective:

- Sanctions hurt “the West” more than Russia
- The West is secretly trading with Russia
- Sanctions are making Russia stronger
- European citizens do not support sanctions against Russia
- Sanctions are being imposed on innocent people

Since Poland has never been a part of the Soviet Union, disinformation and propaganda activities in that area are focused on a different set of narratives and tools. From at least mid-2021, the emails of Polish politicians, mainly of Michał Dworczyk, former head of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland, began to leak. They have consisted of politically sensitive information which has been used to undermine the Polish

Government and manipulate public opinion. As proven by at least two digital investigations, this leak was a part of a more extensive operation dubbed Ghostwriter, a cyber-enabled influence campaign targeting audiences in Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, aimed at promoting anti-NATO sentiments and undermining governments. The campaign has been attributed by Mandiant to Belarusian and Russian services, including

¹¹ Zosia Wanat, “[Leaked email scandal engulfs Poland’s political elite](#)” (Brussels: POLITICO, June 2021).

the KGB¹¹. One of the meta-goals of this campaign was to present Poland as a failed state and the Polish Government as non-functioning.

Discrediting political leadership is typical for Russian propaganda and disinformation in all three countries. Mainly claiming that **“governments are unstable and incompetent”**. While in Poland and Lithuania, it focuses more on their activities as officials, in Ukraine, Russian disinformation often attacks officials as personalities. For instance, Russian propagandists spread various fakes about Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy being a drug addict¹².

Along with discrediting the country's leaders, the Russian propaganda and disinformation machine focuses on discrediting any positive developments in the country. It claims that countries are suffering in most areas. For instance, in Lithuania, the peculiarities of this narrative are the sharpening of attention to what is alleged **“Lithuania is leading in suicide and emigration rates due to poor living conditions” and “most citizens allegedly believe that the situation in the country is deteriorating”**.

In Lithuania and Poland, authorities were heavily attacked by propaganda regarding COVID-19. For example, in August 2021, there was an information attack launched against Lithuania, trying to emphasise the message that the government is hiding the actual situation about COVID-19 in Lithuania. In Poland, Kremlin-aligned institutions and media pushed messages that, because of the pandemic, Poland has abandoned the development of nuclear energy and the

country is in chaos, which has caused, among other things, the cancellation of the visit of the Polish delegation to Katyn in 2020. These messages also accused the Polish government of using the pandemic to introduce dictatorship. According to these narratives, the political processes and the rule of law are fully controlled by the EU, weakening Poland's position on the international stage.

The narrative about a “failed state” reinforces the narrative about **“external governance”** in Lublin Triangle countries. Propagandists claim that the “collective West” governs in these countries through its “agents”. Russian propaganda machine uses an extensive list of actors that embody the idea of the “collective West”: from the US to businessman and philanthropist George Soros. In Ukraine, the figure of George Soros is heavily exploited in Russian information activities. Civil society and independent media that are crucial for democratic development are often attacked by Kremlin propaganda and disinformation within the **“external governance”** narrative, claiming them to be “executors of West's interests”. Various labels are applied by propaganda to discredit them: **“clientele”, “foreign agents”, “Western agencies”, “foreign agencies”, “Western reptiloids”, “grant suckers”, and “grant eaters”**. However, the most popular of them are still derived from the name of George Soros: **“sorosMedia”, “sorosyata”, “proteges of Soros”, “adherents of Soros”, “sect of Soros witnesses”, “mouthpieces of Soros”, “sorosobots”**. Noteworthy, the “Soros” messages have almost vanished from Ukraine's information environment as of August 2022.

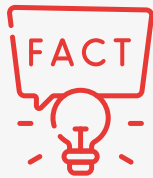
¹² Marina Sovina, [“Зеленского заподозрили в употреблении наркотиков”](#) (Moscow: Lenta.ru).

For Lithuanian and Polish citizens, Russian propaganda claims that the **“country is an American/NATO puppet state”**. It has various dimensions, but all with the goal of making citizens feel powerless, fooled and exploited by “western elites”. For example, in Poland, there is a disinformation message that **“Poland is “covering up” facts about the work of US researchers on biological weapons on Ukrainian territory”**.

Overall, various conspiracies within “external governance” and war in Ukraine are shared in all three countries. In particular, messages about **“NATO provoking Russia into attacking Ukraine”**. In Ukraine, Russian propaganda claims that **“the West is using Ukraine to destroy Russia”**. It means allegedly, all the decisions of the Ukrainian authorities are dictated by the leaders of Western countries,

and Ukraine is used exclusively as a bridgehead for the war between Russia and the West. In this way, Russia’s propaganda machine reiterates that Ukraine is allegedly not an independent actor but rather a pawn.

Narratives on “external governance” and “country being a failed state” blended in for numerous messages concerning the upcoming winter of 2022 and potential issues about energy and prices. Russia has been using power to blackmail European countries. However, amid Russia’s war against Ukraine, the blackmail worsens, being amplified by Kremlin propaganda threatening citizens with cold and hunger. It claims that **“the inflation and energy crises are caused by the West’s misguided political approach”** and that **“average citizens now are forced to pay for it out of their own pockets”**.



Claims that Ukraine is failed state or a Nazi state are just one of the Kremlin’s most common disinformation narratives to justify its aggression against Ukraine and to undermine Kyiv’s credibility. In reality, Ukraine is not a Nazi state and has no Nazi ruling elite, and Nazism is not Ukraine’s ideology. Claims about Ukraine’s financing support and “puppet-like statehood” are intended to question the viability of Ukrainian state. Whereas in reality, Ukrainian people demonstrate strong support for Ukrainian state-

hood and a resolute will to defend it (91% approval rate for president Zelenskyy in June 2022¹³). Needless to say that since 1991 Ukraine has had six presidents and numerous prime ministers from different parties, and the continuity of power has been preserved even during political and economic hardships.

Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania are sovereign and independent states with democratically-elected presidents and parliaments. Narratives on external governance tend to ignore this fact to discredit targeted countries, offering no evidence to back these false claims.

¹³ <https://www.iri.org/news/iri-ukraine-poll-shows-strong-confidence-in-victory-over-russia-overwhelming-approval-for-zelensky-little-desire-for-territorial-concessions-and-a-spike-for-nato-membership/>



Propaganda and disinformation targeting international cooperation and unity

Discrediting any format of productive cooperation between other democratic countries is typical behaviour for Russian propaganda and disinformation. Expectedly, the EU and NATO are targeted by most of the attacks. In the case of Lithuania and Poland, it focuses on creating an illusion of membership being counterproductive. For instance, Kremlin-aligned media were spreading messages allegedly proving that Poland is losing financially from its membership of the European Union and is being exploited by **“Eurocrats from Brussels”**, by whom the conservative and Catholic values held by Polish society and “Slavic identity” are also being suppressed. This was backed by Polish pro-Kremlin sources and channels, promoting the idea of **“Polexit – Poland leaving the EU”**. The message that “Lithuania is an instigator of strife in the EU and/or NATO” was widely spread in Lithuania.

In Ukraine, as a country on its way to Euroatlantic integration, messages are quite similar, but in the format of a warning. Any kind of support from the EU or NATO has been heavily criticised by propagandists claiming that either the help is fake or that it makes Ukraine **“a slave to Westerners”**. Also, numerous allegations about support being **“stolen by corrupt politicians in Ukraine”** were shared. When Ukraine got the official status of the candidate to the European Union on the 23rd of

June, Russian propaganda speculated that **“candidacy has no real impact”**, referring to Turkey being a candidate for over 20 years. At the same time, pro-Russian anonymous Telegram channels promoted a conspiracy about **“Ukraine giving part of its territory to Russia in exchange for candidacy status”**.

Mostly, both the EU and NATO are often portrayed by Russian propaganda as weak and about to collapse. For instance, in Poland, messages focused on highlighting the disagreements between the European Union and Western countries, presenting Poland as an isolated country on the European stage and attacked in particular by Germany and France. Overall, the EU and NATO are often portrayed as rivals. For instance, propagandists claim that **“Europe has become a battleground for the US power game”**.

However, at the same time, Russian propaganda portrays “the West” as strong and cruel. In particular, “NATO being a threat to Russia”. Russian propaganda spreads the narrative that **“The West”/NATO is at war with Russia**. The more success Ukraine had on the battlefield, the more propagandists explained it with the alleged involvement of NATO in the war. In all three countries, propaganda claims that Ukrainian Armed Forces are destroyed and now **“foreign mercenaries/NATO/USA army is fighting in Ukraine against Russia”**. There are various fakes about Eng-

lish-speaking militants liberating the territories from Russia. In Poland, propagandists claim that **“there are foreign mercenaries as all Ukrainian escape to Poland”**. Also, pro-Russian sources manipulate old photos, for example, of the US plane as alleged proof of **“Americans being directly at war with Russia”**.

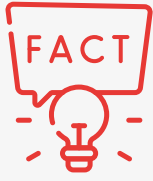
Spreading the narrative that the **“country is abandoned by its allies”**, Russian propaganda uses “divide et impera” (divide and conquer) approach. The main purpose of this narrative is to raise doubts about the integrity and unity of partner countries in countering Russian aggression. In Ukraine, this narrative is mostly connected with military aid and Ukrainian refugees. Propagandists share rumours that **“Western countries are tired of Ukraine”** and **“don’t want to give more weapons to Ukraine”**. Also, they write that the West **“is no longer welcoming Ukrainian refugees”**.

Since Russia fully invaded Ukraine and as a response to Lithuanian and Polish support of Ukraine, Russia focused on claiming that **“military aid to Ukraine weakens the state that provides this aid”**. Not all foreign citizens may support their government’s aid to Ukraine. Therefore, Russian propaganda tries to reinforce these sentiments with such messages. In Ukraine, it is mirrored in the message that **“foreign countries will eventually stop helping Ukraine at the cost of their own security”**. This is how the propagandists incite that **Ukrainians must prepare for a significant reduction in military aid or perhaps even a complete absence of help from international partners**. If one looks at

the overall context, this message is combined with threats of future Russian attacks on other countries, so the effect of fear is amplified. Propagandists also appealed to the ethics of Lithuanians, saying that **“donating for military aid is immoral”** or **“those who help Ukraine are ridiculous”**. For Polish people, propaganda appeals to history, claiming that Poland should not help Ukraine due to its historical past.

The longer Ukraine resists Russia, the more it damages Russia’s image as an “invincible country.” Therefore, Russian agitprop spreads the message that **“military aid prolongs the war”**. The longer Ukraine fights, the greater the losses among its military and civilians, losses in the economy and infrastructure, and so on. Thus, Russia is manipulating the thesis that **it is worth stopping providing weapons to Ukraine - and then the war will quickly end**. These messages are reinforced by statements about the **“uselessness of aid”**, meaning that Russia will win sooner or later anyway.

Russian propaganda works to devalue, discredit, and stop the world’s aid to Ukraine and, to achieve this, propagandists spread the message that **“Western military aid is being stolen”** or is not being used for the intended purposes. It is also one of the most significant messages by its number. In Ukraine, propagandists are trying to convince that **“the West gives Ukraine bad weapons”**, **“the Ukrainian military refuses to fight with it”**, and that the **“West uses Ukraine as a testing ground for developing the latest weapons”**.



While Russia uses narratives portraying EU and NATO as quarrelling and thus internally unstable and weak, dialogue is a normal practice within these organisations and is the only way to reach a compromise. The Kremlin is trying to convince the wider public that NATO is threatening its security by initiating a military build-up. In reality, NATO only merely responded to aggressive steps taken by Russia. Its intention was never to carry out an aggressive policy against other countries, as it is a solely defensive alliance.

Russian propaganda pushed narratives claiming the EU's volatility,

such as false claims that Poland is preparing to leave the bloc. This topic was never on the political agenda of any ruling party since Poland's EU accession in 2004. Polesis was never more than a false narrative intended to sow discord within the EU.

Despite Russia's propaganda narratives that the West is supporting Kyiv with somehow "flawed" military equipment and that support for such deliveries is melting, the support for sending military equipment to Ukraine is steadily growing. At the same time, Kyiv obtains new types of modern weapons, which help it to roll the Russian territorial advances back.



Russian propaganda and disinformation targeting inter and intragroup relationships

Russian disinformation is hyperlocal¹⁴. It manages to exploit all the social cracks it can find. Some of these cracks had been discovered by Russia a long time ago, so it was regularly investing resources to expand and deepen them. In other words, Kremlin propaganda is trying to divide communities. It pits one community against another and simultaneously makes communities fall apart.

The most dominant narrative con-

cerns so-called "**Russophobia**", when Russia is trying to pit, for instance, Russian-speaking citizens of the country against national language speakers. Accusations of Russophobia are common not only for Lublin Triangle countries. Propagandists claim that "**the West and its proteges are inciting Russophobia**" practically worldwide. They claim that "**Russians are discriminated against**", "**Russian culture/sports are being discriminated**", and that it is a part of a global

¹⁴ Iryna Riaboshtan et al., "[Ukrainian Nazis for the Czech Republic, bio laboratories for North Macedonia, and Russophobia for Georgia. Analysis of Russian propaganda in 11 European countries](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media, September 2022).

conspiracy to defeat Russia. In Lithuania, citizens are threatened with consequences for “Russophobia”: the rising cost of living is due to Lithuania’s anti-Russian policies¹⁵.

According to Russian propaganda, all Lublin Triangle countries **“are Russophobic”**. In fact, Russia used the propaganda narrative of **“Ukrainians discriminate/terrorise Russian speakers”** as a pretext to occupy Crimea and invade Ukraine in 2014. In February 2022, the Russian president mentioned it, among other reasons, “justifying” the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In all three countries, Russian propaganda claims that **“every sign of Russia is demolished and suppressed”**: from the toppling of monuments to the Red Army to the closing of Russian-language schools. Propaganda also claims that **pro-Russian voices of those with ‘politically incorrect views on the “Ukraine issue” are ignored**.

Another group that is being pitted against countries’ citizens are refugees. Anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric in Poland was fueled by Russian propaganda in 2015 when the migration crisis hit the EU’s external borders. One of the biggest malign information campaigns that targeted Poland and also Lithuania was around **the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border** - a state-sponsored hybrid operation against the EU which resulted in almost 40,000 attempts to illegally cross the Polish border in 2021 alone (300 times more than in 2020). This narrative has been created and

promoted by government-aligned media from Belarus and Russia. Then, crafted information was distributed and amplified in different languages, including Polish, using Russian disinformation media and websites (RT, Sputnik Polska, RuBaltic, BaltNews). To magnify propaganda, the Belarusian regime invited western media to the border, including American and British TV, to present Minsk’s point of view and manipulate the situation on the border. Then, the western coverage was manipulated and used by Belarusian media to attack Poland. The narrative included many different disinformation messages accusing the Polish military and authorities of atrocities against migrants. The Belarusian services (KGB) disinformation activities on this subject have also been confirmed. In one of its quarterly reports on disinformation, Meta confirmed the identification and removal of a Belarusian information operation on Facebook directed against Poland, which had focused on disinformation on the migration crisis orchestrated by the Belarusian regime before changing its focus to pro-Russian content after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine¹⁶.

Lithuania in this situation was attacked by Russian propaganda and disinformation as a country that allegedly **“violates human rights at their border”**. This message tries to show alleged Lithuania’s inhumane attitude towards migrants near the Lithuanian border. At first, only stories appeared about allegedly beaten Iraqi migrants who were chased away to the Belarusian side by Lithuanian officials. Finally, the

¹⁵ RuBaltic.Ru, [“Политолог рассказал, что ждет Литву в случае отключения от БРЭЛЛ”](#) (Kaliningrad: RuBaltic.Ru, June 2022).

¹⁶ Ben Nimmo et al., [“Adversarial Threat Report”](#) (Menlo Park: Meta, April 2022).

news about an Iraqi migrant who allegedly died in the vicinity of the Benekainai settlement on the border with Lithuania was spread - Minsk quickly [reclassified](#) this story into the incident of a “brutally murdered Iraqi” and organised a picket at the Lithuanian Embassy in Minsk¹⁷.

The rhetoric in these disinformation messages aims at calling Lithuanians, brutal fascists. The propaganda channels’ news feeds are being filled up with regular posts or articles about how Lithuanian border police allegedly beat up migrants at the border.

ANTI-POLISH NARRATIVES REGARDING THE BELARUSIAN STATE-SPONSORED MIGRATION CRISIS ON THE POLISH BORDER



Polish soldiers have committed atrocities and genocide on middle-eastern refugees on the Polish-Belarusian border



Polish authorities and Poles are racists, and because of that they refuse entry to Poland for the middle-eastern migrants



Western countries are responsible for bringing immigrants on the Polish-Belarusian border



Poland is bringing immigrants to the border and artificially creating the crisis



Poland is responsible for instrumentalising and using immigrants against Belarus



Accusing Poland of not complying with international law and of not being humane



Polish soldiers are forcing immigrants back onto Belarusian soil, after they crossed the Polish border



Polish services and the army are blocking humanitarian aid for immigrants

Russian propaganda heavily focuses on discrediting Ukrainian refugees fleeing Russia’s full-scale invasion. Since 24 February, more than 8.1 million refugees from Ukraine have crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border, they are mainly women and children. Meanwhile, at the same time, a total

of more than 6.1 million people have returned to Ukraine. It means that at the moment, more than 2 million Ukrainian refugees live in Poland. According to the OECD, the cost of Polish help in 2022 alone will exceed €8.36 billion (almost 1% of the total GDP) - the highest in Europe.

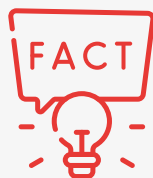
¹⁷ Vaidas Saldžiūnas, “[Kiek toli gali žengti Lukašenka: po kraupių vaizdų iš pasienio laukia nauja provokacijų banga](#)” (Vilnius: Delfi, August 2021).

Most propaganda efforts were aimed at convincing Lithuanians and Poles that **“Ukrainian refugees are undermining the internal stability of the host countries”**. Here, various cases of gender disinformation were recorded, claiming that **“all Ukrainian women entering foreign countries will become prostitutes there”** and **“will spread infectious diseases”**. Propagandists are also trying to persuade citizens of other countries that **“for their governments helping Ukrainians is a higher priority than helping the vulnerable population of their own countries.”** The largest number of such messages was recorded in the Polish infospace.

The third most widely used message concerning Ukrainian refugees was that **“Ukrainian refugees are corrupt and ungrateful”**. Additionally, Ukrain-

ians were targeted with the message that **“they are no longer welcomed abroad”** and it is time to return home. Hence, according to Russian propaganda and disinformation to “stimulate” Ukrainians to return to their homeland, **“it is necessary to reduce the aid for Ukrainian refugees.”** One more important disinformation message is that **“Ukrainians started the Ukrainization of Poland”**.

In the Ukrainian segment, propaganda claimed that **“the rights of Ukrainians abroad are being violated.”** Probably, such tactics were used so that Ukrainians would not seek help abroad. Propagandists mentioned that reportedly Ukrainian women were forced to provide sex services abroad as there was no other acceptable work for them.



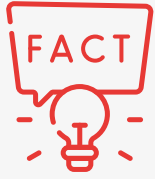
Russophobia

The Kremlin is trying hard to convince the rest of the world that Lublin Triangle countries are Russophobic and discriminative against Russian minorities, language and culture. The truth is that Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine are democratic countries which respect the rights of minorities and human rights and do not discriminate or oppress any individuals because of their citizenship, political opinions or mother tongue.

It is also true that Lublin Triangle countries have clear security con-

cerns linked to Russia. The source of concern is Russia's aggression toward neighbouring countries, first of all against Ukraine – one of the countries within the format. Given how it affected the security situation in the region in general, one could hardly describe it as “Russophobia”.

In the context of false accusations of Russophobia, it is also worth mentioning that the West has been trying to establish good-neighbourly relations with Moscow since the collapse of the Soviet Union, but Russia's increasingly hostile policy has made a continuation of such efforts impossible.



Hybrid operation on the Polish-Belarusian border

While accusing Poland of curbing allegedly spontaneous migrant inflow from the Middle East to the EU, Belarus employed a new concept of im-

porting people to create a security and humanitarian crisis. Minsk went as far as resorting to the instrumentalisation of innocent third-country migrants to achieve political goals by deliberately luring potential migrants to Minsk and promising them an easy passage to Europe.



Historical narratives and messages exploited by Russian propaganda

History have been weaponised by Russian propaganda and disinformation. By rewriting and reconceptualising the past, Russia justifies the present. To give sense to Russian aggressive claims and actions and make them understandable, the Kremlin tells those people stories about history. Being the one who rewrites history, Russian propaganda claims that it is preserving history that the so-called “West” wants to change. In 2015, Russia’s National Security Strategy contended that one of the threats to national security within the cultural sphere is the “attempt to falsify Russian and World history”. Kremlin propaganda and disinformation used history to manipulate people into believing that Ukraine has no historical background as an independent state, that allegedly it was created as an artificial project with Ukrainian language and culture mimicking and shadowing Russia and that Donbas and Crimea

have always been Russian. All these statements have nothing to do with history; however, they continue being pushed by Kremlin sources. Manipulating history, Kremlin spread the narrative about **“Poland planning to invade Ukraine to take over its historical territories”**. In this way, propagandists fueled the narrative of “Ukraine being a failed state”, meaning that historically it is not a country as it was divided among many other countries, so it is time for Poland and other neighbours to take what is “historically theirs”.

Lithuania’s statehood is also attacked by Russian propaganda and disinformation. The regime of Belarus, amplified by Kremlin media outlets, spread some disinformation messages about **“the exclusivity to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania’s history”**¹⁸. This propaganda message implies potential territorial claims on Vilnius by Belarus.

¹⁸ Dmitri Teperik et al., [“Resilience Against Disinformation: A New Baltic Way to Follow?”](#) (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, October 2022).

One of the most frequent narratives about Nazism weaponises history and distorts the present. Russian propaganda and disinformation claim that all “countries of Lublin Triangle are Nazis”. The narrative exploits the events of World War II. First, it claims that Russia is the sole victor of World War II. Second, claiming that country nationalists were collaborating with Nazis, thus countries allegedly preserved it and reinforced it in the current. Third, it discredits any anti-Soviet resistance during that time. For instance, demonising Ukrainian and Lithuanian partisans. The latter, the Freedom Fighters, were the longest resistance movement in Europe¹⁹.

Interestingly, that “nazism” and “fascism” are quite interchangeable concepts for Kremlin’s hostile information campaigns. Moreover, propagandists portray any type of patriotism as nationalism which in the Russian propaganda language means “Nazism”. In the case of Ukraine, the disinformation narrative of Nazism was used by Russia as one of the key reasons for waging the full-scale war. Allegedly, Ukraine needed to be denazified in the eyes of the Russian propaganda machine, which continues fueling the “Nazism narrative”. Before that, Russia has invested vast resources in this narrative, especially for foreign audiences. It exploited the images of Ukrainian nationalists fighting for Ukraine’s independence during the Second World War as the faces of alleged Nazism in Ukraine²⁰. Russian propagandists were rewriting history so vigorously that some Russians thought that

Ukrainian nationalists who fought for Ukraine’s independence during the Second World War were alive and were the ones in power in Ukraine. Ramzan Kadyrov, Head of the Chechen Republic, even announced a cash prize for Bandera’s head, who, according to Russian propaganda, is the essence of “Ukrainian neonazism”²¹. However, Stepan Bandera died in 1959. Within the narrative, propagandists also promote messages about **“Russian forces saving Ukrainian kids from Nazis”, “protecting the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine”, and “defending traditional and conservative values that are under attack from the “rotten west”**. During the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Kremlin continued claiming that **“Ukrainians attack civilians and commit other war crimes”, “Ukraine commits terrorist attacks against peaceful Russians”, “Ukraine is preparing a nuclear strike”** to fuel narrative on Nazism and overall demonise Ukrainians.

In Poland and Lithuania, alleged Nazism is often combined with Russophobia. In Lithuania, Kremlin continuously spreads the message that **“people are being persecuted for their political views”**. In fact, any decisions that are not in the interests of Russia are framed as **“political persecution as an indicator of Nazism”**.

Using the Volhynia Massacre (ethnic Poles being murdered in Nazi-occupied parts of eastern Poland (now part of Ukraine) by Ukrainian nationalists) and the troubled history between Poland and Ukraine has been

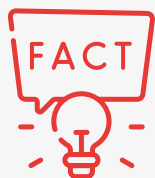
¹⁹ Dmitri Teperik et al., [“Resilience Against Disinformation: A New Baltic Way to Follow?”](#) (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, October 2022).

²⁰ Gala Skiarevska, [“Why Azov is not a “neo-nazi battalion”](#) (Kyiv: Detector Media, June 2022).

²¹ 5.ua, [“Степан Бандера не проти зустрітися з Кадировим – ВРУ”](#) (Kyiv: 5.ua, March 2022).

part of anti-Ukrainian disinformation in Poland since 2014. According to them, the Russian invasion constitutes ‘avenging’ the victims of the Volhynia Massacre or has been provoked by crimes of “**modern Banderists**” against Russia. But most of the messages using the Volhynia Massacre are targeted against Ukrainian refugees in Poland. Ukrainian refugees are portrayed as Banderists that are celebrating murders of Poles. Also, Russian propaganda claims that Ukrainians do not want to acknowledge the crimes perpetrated by Ukrainians against Polish people. Therefore, according to the pushed messages, Ukrainian refugees are

not worthy of the help that they are getting from the Polish society and the Polish government. This narrative is disseminated and amplified by right-wing extremist politicians, pro-Kremlin activists and bloggers. The aim is to create a negative sentiment towards Ukrainians. In extreme cases, the disinformation pieces, based on this narrative, are advocating for a closing of the Polish border for Ukrainians and for stopping any help towards Kyiv. But the meta-objective here remains to create a negative image of Ukrainians and to undermine the support for the Polish government in its proactive attitude towards Ukraine.



Russian propaganda tries to promote the theory that Ukraine is an artificially established country. The truth is that Ukraine is a well-defined nation with a long history and its own strong identity. The history of Ukrainian statehood dates back to the era of the Kyivan Rus' in the Middle Ages. A fully independent contemporary Ukrainian state emerged in the 20th century. More on Russian historical propaganda about Ukraine can be found in “Re-vision of history. Russian Historical Propaganda and Ukraine”²².

By promoting its imperial ideology of the “all-Russian big nation”, the Kremlin intends to weaken the national identity of Ukrainians and undermine Ukraine’s

state sovereignty.

At the same time, Russian propaganda is trying to convince the world that Poland has territorial claims on Ukraine. Still, the fact is that it was historically the first country in the world to recognise Ukraine’s independence in 1991. Since then, Warsaw has been one of the strongest advocates of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As far as false accusations of Nazism are concerned it is worth remembering that all three Lublin Triangle countries prohibit the use of Nazi symbols and are dedicated to the promotion of historical remembrance of WWII and condemnation of totalitarian ideologies.

²² Yaroslav Hrytsak et al., “[Re-Vision of history. Russian historical propaganda and Ukraine](#)” (Kyiv: UkraineWorld, October 2019).

Sources of Russian disinformation and propaganda targeting Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine

Propaganda and disinformation are neither new nor unique. However, technological developments create new opportunities and formats for information manipulations to spread. Russian propaganda and disinformation proved to be very effective in terms of following its audience. The core of Russian propaganda and disinformation still comes from a wide network of TV channels and media outlets. They mimic the media, but there is no journalism, but rather channels for Kremlin-controlled propaganda and disinformation. As of August 2022, key TV channels and media outlets controlled by Kremlin are blocked in the Lublin Triangle countries.

Broadcasting of Russian media on the territory of Ukraine was already blocked in 2017²³. The National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine introduced sanctions against 468 legal entities and 1,228 persons, including Russian media, Crimean Russian media companies, and media representatives. Among those sanctioned: Russia Today, NTV-Plus, Ren TV, RTR-Planet, Russia-24, NTV, TRC of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation “Zvezda/Звезда”, MIA “Rossiya Segodnya”, RBC,

VGTRK, NTV-Plus, TNT-teleset, Moscow Media, Nashe Radio, “Promedia” and others. These sanctions include restriction or termination of the provision of telecommunication services and use of public telecommunication networks, blocking of assets, and suspension of economic and financial obligations. At the same time, Internet providers in Ukraine were prohibited from providing users with access to the domains and subdomains of these mass media.

In March 2022, the EU imposed sanctions and suspended the broadcasting activities of Sputnik’ and RT/Russia Today (RT English, RT UK, RT Germany, RT France, and RT Spanish) in the EU, or directed at the EU as a response to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the instrumentalised role of these channels used as a weapon of aggression. Later in June 2022, the broadcasting activities of other three Russian state-controlled outlets (RTR Planeta, Russia 24 and TV Centre International) were suspended by the EU.

In Poland, however, Russian state media like Sputnik were not specifically popular. Even the ones in the Polish

²³ Petro Poroshenko, “[Указ Президента України Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 28 квітня 2017 року «Про застосування персональних спеціальних економічних та інших обмежувальних заходів \(санкцій\)»](#)” (Kyiv: Uryadovy Kuryer, May 2017).

language. Thus, Kremlin-owned media outlets have never been the key sources of Russian propaganda and disinformation in Poland.

However, in Lithuania, the case is different as there is a significant part of the Russian-speaking population. Regarding the most popular Russian language social media outlets which are orientated towards the Baltic region the top 5 most popular are: [Baltnews](#), [Tribaltic Extinctions \(Трибалтийские Вымираты\)](#), [RuBaltic](#), [Russian Lithuania \(РУССКАЯ ЛИТВА\)](#), [Latvijas balzams](#). The most popular of them all is Baltnews – it averages around 3600-3800 interactions per post. According to a study made by the Lithuanian “Market research center”, which was conducted in 2021, 29.4% of the survey’s respondents stated that they use Russian media²⁴. While among representatives of Lithuanian national minorities, about 70% used Russian-language media. Russian-speaking minorities also watch channels from Belarus that heavily spread Russian propaganda and disinformation. Besides, they follow pro-Russian state entertainment²⁵. The most popular news outlet in the Russian language, which is orientated towards the Baltic region, is [RuBaltic](#). According to media monitoring research done by CRI, 520 of RuBaltic’s articles which contained propaganda gathered 354 420 views on Telegram from the 13th of June until the 28th of August²⁶.

Overall, the amount of those watching television has been decreasing in all 3 countries, while online is becoming the primary source where citizens find disinformation. Analysing different reports and disinformation trends we can observe that social media platforms serve as primary channels to spread disinformation and propaganda in all three countries. In Poland, most of the malign information resides on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. This is mainly an effect of their popularity in Poland or the characteristics of their users and the topics they cover. In Poland, with a population of over 37 million, the most popular digital platform is YouTube, with 27.2 million users, followed by Facebook (17.65 million users), Messenger (15.8 million users), Instagram (10.7 million users) and TikTok (7.7 million users)²⁷. Twitter is generally less popular, with 2.05 million users, but gathers an audience more focused on political affairs, geopolitics etc., which creates a great target audience for disinformation. For example, on the Polish segment of Facebook, there are groups like ***Ukrainiec NIE jest moim bratem*** (over 50 000 followers). Its name can be translated as “Ukrainian is NOT my brother”. It disseminates anti-Ukrainian and anti-refugees content, including disinformation, misinformation etc., often using disinformation content from other websites. The page was created in March 2014, shortly after the Russian invasion of East Ukraine.

²⁴ Austėja Masiokaitė, “[Lietuviai svarbiausiu informacijos šaltiniu laiko internetą](#)” (Vilnius: Delfi.lt, October 2021).

²⁵ Dmitri Teperik et al., “[Resilience Against Disinformation: A New Baltic Way to Follow?](#)” (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, October 2022).

²⁶ Laisvūnas Čekavičius et al., “[Media monitoring report: Anti-Ukrainian war Propaganda in the Baltic states](#)” (Vilnius: Civic Resilience Initiative, September 2022).

²⁷ Simon Kemp, “[Digital 2022: Poland](#)” (DataReportal, February 2022).

A similar situation is in Lithuania, where among 2.6 million residents, YouTube has 2.08 million users in Lithuania; 1.70 million users use Facebook, Facebook Messenger reached 1.50 million users; Instagram has 854.0 thousand users; Twitter has 255.9 thousand users²⁸. For instance, **Ateitj kuriame dabar** - a YouTube channel in which pro-Russian propaganda against Ukrainians is being shared and anti-Lithuanian content is being produced. **Būkime vieningi and Būkime vieningi - NAUJAS YouTube page**, owned by Vaidas Zemaitis Lekstutis, in which Russia, V. Putin, the former Soviet Union, and Stalin have been praised for many years. At the same time, Lithuania, Western countries, the European Union and NATO are despised. **Ekspertai.eu** is a YouTube channel with over 15700 subscribers and over a million views. It is linked to PressJazz TV. Uploads Russian propaganda themed content at least once a week.

However, in all 3 countries, new platforms are rising. Specifically Telegram and TikTok. While TikTok has a predominantly young audience, Telegram that emerged as a messenger is more diverse in its users. TikTok is mostly referred to as an entertaining platform, however, socio-political content is heavily present on the platform as well. Detector Media, for instance, analysed how the Russian propaganda machine used TikTok to

spread disinformation about Nord Stream 2²⁹. However, we know very little about TikTok and how information manipulations are spread there. We can mostly navigate it through hashtags and captions, however, they are often missing.

Telegram, presenting itself as a secure platform, became a breeding ground for information manipulations. This is an effect of a less strict moderation approach and the lack of anti-disinformation policies at Telegram, especially when compared to the three big platforms mentioned at the beginning. It attracts far-right groups and serves as a safe haven for conspiracies. On the eve of and after the full-scale invasion of the Russian army to Ukraine, public figures who promoted the slogans of Russian propaganda faced issues: some of their Facebook pages or YouTube channels were blocked, where they had gathered an audience for years³⁰. Some have received criminal cases or ended up in custody³¹. However, Telegram remained a safe haven where Russian lovers could spread Russian propaganda without hindrance. Through the years, the service administration has done almost nothing to stop the spread of disinformation³². In this cosy ecosystem, pro-Russian channels create a parallel reality, spread propaganda, convey the words of collaborators and propagandists as truth, and quote each other.

²⁸ Simon Kemp, "[Digital 2022: Lithuania](#)" (DataReportal, February 2022).

²⁹ Ksenia Iliuk, "[Пропагандисти танцюють? Моніторинг російської дезінформації про «Північний потік-2» у тіктоку](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media, November 2021).

³⁰ MediaSapiens, "[YouTube заблокував в Україні канал Анатолія Шарія](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media, March 2022).

³¹ Detector Media, "[На Волині оголосили підозру пропагандисту, який вже отримав вирок за антиукраїнську діяльність](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media, September 2022).

³² Iryna Riaboshtan et al., "[From «Trukha» to Gordon: the most popular channels of the Ukrainian Telegram](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media, September 2022).

When it comes to Ukraine, Telegram is the main source of disinformation in terms of quantity and diversity. It is also one of the most popular sources for Ukrainians to get information from, especially since Russia's full-scale invasion³³. However, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook have the highest amount of users in Ukraine (28, 16 and 15 million users respectively)³⁴.

Among the hundred most popular Telegram channels aimed at Ukrainians, there are ten openly pro-Russian Telegram channels: pro-Russian bloggers; anonymous channels publishing manipulative analytics and fabricated insiders; channels that pretend to be media and publish news under the pretext of Russian propaganda; pro-Russian media. In this top list: channels of Olga and Anatoliy Shariy and Tetyana Montyan (described earlier as a pro-Russian public person). Also, in the top 100 are two channels run by Russian intelligence: Legitimny (675,000 subscribers) and Resident (601,000 subscribers).

Detector Media started researching anonymous Telegram channels back in 2020³⁵. It was already then that a number of anonymous Telegram channels stood out in terms of their rhetoric favouring Russia. The frequency with which these channels quote each other, as well as the

simultaneous promotion of the same messages by them, indicates close links between them, as well as their centralized management³⁶.

In February 2021, cyber specialists at the Security Service of Ukraine uncovered a large-scale agent network working for Russia's intelligence agencies³⁷. It claims that over a dozen anonymous Telegram channels focusing on politics in Ukraine are working for Russian military intelligence.

Such channels may be roughly divided into national (since they focus on the national agenda with an emphasis on central authorities) and regional ones (these mainly focus on certain cities, although from time to time they cover the national political situation, too). The first of these categories includes such popular channels as Legitimnyi, Resident, Cartel, Splentitsa, Chorny Kvartal and Politicheskyy Rasklad. The second one includes Netipichnoye Zaporozhye, Trempel Kharkov, Odeskiy frayer, Dnepr Live, Nikolaev Live and Kherson Live.

However, a preliminary analysis of Russian disinformation in Telegram indicates that the network of pro-Russian channels is much more extensive. For example, such channels as the ZeRada (271 000 subscribers) and First (481 000 subscribers) channels can also be traced to this network. Typically these channels try to hide

³³ Diana Krechetova, "[Телебачення поступається соцмережам: де українці дізнаються новини під час війни. Опитування](#)" (Kyiv: Ukrainska Pravda, August 2022).

³⁴ Simon Kemp, "[Digital 2022: Ukraine](#)" (DataReportal, February 2022).

³⁵ Detector Media, "[Моніторинг \(про\)російської дезінформації в регіональних медіа за 7–13 вересня 2020 року](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media, September 2020).

³⁶ Detector Media, "[On the other side of the screen: An analysis of media consumption and disinformation in the Ukraine's information environment](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media, May 2021).

³⁷ MediaSapiens, "[СБУ заявила, що викрила мережу Telegram-каналів, які курують у ГРУ РФ. Серед них - «Легитимний» та «Резидент»](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media, February 2021).

their pro-Russian position, but Detector Media has been tracking over 500 channels that spread Russian propaganda and disinformation targeted at Ukrainians³⁸.

The tactics of propagandists on Telegram in all 3 countries are very similar. It seems like Russian propaganda launched and tested them in the Ukrainian information environment and now is transferring it to other countries. In particular, Lithuania and Poland. For instance, **Ldiena** is a Telegram channel in which Russian propaganda and anti-Lithuanian narratives are shared. **Strażnicy Wolności** is a Telegram channel gathering more than 18 000 members. Focused on

anti-mainstream and anti-establishment news, spreading disinformation, before war focused on COVID-19 and vaccines, currently openly pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian. Highly active as it is open, what means anyone can post. Other pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian Telegram channels in Poland are “Kanał Informacyjny KJU”, “Ktoś”, “Oko Cyklonu”, “Olej w głowie”, “Ukraina w Ogniu”, “Ciężka Artyleria”, “Ruch Oporu”, “Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny”, “Nwk24.pl – kanał oficjalny”, “NewsFactoryPL”, “Antypropaganda”, “Qanon Polska”, “Zbrodzeni, Polityka, Afery”, “RuskiStatek”, “Ciężka Artyleria - kanał”, “Ruch Oporu”, “Nwk24pl”, “NiezależnyMI”, “swiatinformacji”, “ndp_pl”.

³⁸ Iryna Riaboshtan, “[«Телеграмна імперія» розвідки Росії під час великої війни](#)” (Kyiv: Detector Media, June 2022).

Measures to build resilience to Russian propaganda and disinformation

Each Lublin Triangle country has a unique experience in measures to build resilience to Russian propaganda and disinformation. The policy paper focuses on those in place from January 2021 to August 2022. Thus, it is not a comprehensive analysis of

measures that have ever been taken in the countries, but rather key measures and responses within the legislation, policy, and education taken by state institutions, civil society organisations and businesses.



State institutions, agencies and their policies

In Lublin Triangle countries, tasks in the field of committing disinformation and strategic communication are carried out by various units working independently within specific departments. Most often, they reside between foreign affairs and security, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defense. However, there is still room for improvement in cooperating efficiently and achieving synergies.

In March 2021, Ukraine created two state bodies responsible for countering disinformation: the Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security under the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and the Centre for Counter-

ing Disinformation under the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine³⁹. The creation of a body responsible for combatting disinformation and conducting strategic communication was considered a positive development in Ukraine. However, their mandates seem to overlap and duplicate each other. Besides, various strategic communication units reside within other state institutions, which poses an additional challenge for synergy and one voice policy as there is no mechanism on how they should cooperate. Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Centers have focused on informing Ukrainians about the development of the events as well as raising awareness about disinformation tactics.

³⁹ Government Portal, "[Презентовано Центр стратегічних комунікацій та інформаційної безпеки](#)" (Kyiv: Government Portal, April 2021); Internet Freedom, "[Центр протидії дезінформації на базі РНБО: що відомо про новостворений орган](#)" (Kyiv: Internet Freedom, April 2021).

In Lithuania, there are also several bodies responsible for strategic communication. However, they have the format of departments that are logically assigned to ministries, for instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other governmental structures - Armed Forces of Lithuania.

In Poland, in September 2022, a new position was created within the Chancellery of the Prime Minister - Government Plenipotentiary for the Security of the Information Space of the Republic of Poland. His tasks include identifying and analysing information activities against the security, interests and image of Poland, identifying entities, especially foreign entities, undertaking and conducting information activities against the interests of Poland, identifying manifestations of information operations conducted in the information space, and conducting activities aimed at neutralising identified threats to the security. Also, Academic Centre for Strategic Communication⁴⁰ was established after the War Studies University had been tasked with conducting training and analyses in this area. The Centre's mission is to improve the Polish Armed Forces's communication system, raise society's awareness of threats coming from the information environment, initiate public debate on strategic communication, and counteract disinformation. The Center signed also an agreement on cooperation with the Territorial Defence Forces. The main objective of the agreement is to combat disinformation jointly. This includes the exchange of information and good practices in the field of strategic communication, particularly in combating disinformation.

There is also a growing number of initiatives for media education. One example is the "Media Education" (pl. Edukacja Medialna) project, run by the *Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska*, under the honorary patronage of the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Ministry of Administration and Digitization. The project offers scenarios, exercises and materials for teaching in schools, community centres and libraries.

Cross-organisational contacts are facilitated by the presence of subject matter experts and analysts from renowned research centres, such as NASK National Research Institute. NASK National Research Institute is a state-owned institute whose mission is to search for and implement solutions for the development of ICT networks in Poland. It conducts research, works and operational activities for the security of Polish cyberspace.

Communications efforts with regards to Ukraine are coordinated and consulted with the Government Communications Centre – this allows for a coherent and coordinated response.

Simultaneously to all of that activity, hybrid threats are being monitored regularly by the Government Crisis Management Team (RZZK). The group meets on a regular basis to discuss current challenges, including exposure to disinformation.

Both domestic and international trends are closely observed with foreign disinformation as the primary concern of a dedicated StratCom team operating within Polish MFA. MFA StratCom team monitors disin-

⁴⁰ [Academic Centre for Strategic Communication.](#)

formation targeting Poland spread internationally, carries out international campaigns which are aimed at countering disinformation and inculcating international audiences to false claims, and cooperates with international partners on topics of strategic communication and countering disinformation.

In 2021, Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence prepared a national action plan for combating disinformation. In Poland, NASK (a Polish research and development organization and data networks operator) and 11 other expert organisations created of a Code of Good Practice in the area of combating disinformation. In Ukraine, on October 15th of the same year, the National Security and Defense Council heard and adopted the Information Security Strategy of Ukraine. The document is designed for the period up to 2025 and defines existing and potential threats to Ukraine's state security and policy in this area. Among the global challenges and threats to information security is mentioned in particular "the information policy of the Russian Federation". In Ukraine, In October 2021, National Security and Defence Council, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, and The Center for Countering Disinformation created a "*Glossary of names, terms and phrases recommended for use in connection with the Russian Federation's temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions*".

All the abovementioned state agencies and institutions actively participate in disinformation monitoring, detecting, and raising awareness activities. Since May 2022, in Poland,

the Government Security Center and the Government Commissioner for the Security of the Information Space of the Republic of Poland have been informing about propaganda narratives and exposing fakes. After the full-scale invasion State Security Service of Ukraine, the Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security, the Centre for Countering Disinformation *regularly informed about propaganda narratives and fakes exposures in different messengers* as a part of state security and informational policy. Also, The Center for Countering Disinformation developed a chatbot where users can check information as well as send disinformation pieces for the Centre for StratCom to review it.

In 2021, the National Media Literacy Project Filter was launched in Ukraine by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine. The project was launched with the financial support of the OSCE. The goal of the project is to increase the level of awareness of the population of Ukraine regarding the relevance of the problems of disinformation and the importance of the ability to detect manipulation, to improve the level of media literacy of Ukrainians ultimately.

In 2022, the Academy of Military Sciences and the Ministry of National Defense also launched a similar initiative in Poland. The national information campaign in Poland, "Fejkoodporni" also aims to raise awareness about what disinformation and fake news are, how dangerous they are, how to protect yourself from them, and how to protect yourself and your loved ones.

All three countries aim at incorporating cyber and digital dimensions into resilience to disinformation, in particular, on the state level. Lithuania, with its score of 97.3, is sixth in the world and fourth in Europe according to the Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) published by the ITU on 29 June 2021⁴¹. Lithuania received the highest assessment in the areas of legal regulation and the development of cybersecurity facilities.

In Lithuania, the *National cyber security centre (The Ministry of National Defence)* conducts cyber security training for public sector companies. More than 2,000 public sector employees from more than 20 institutions attended the training in 2021. It helps public sector companies identify and withstand potential cyber-attacks.

Throughout 2021, the *Secure State Data Transmission Network* was strengthened. Around 130 sites were started to be protected by additional collective security measures. In inventorying all the information resources of the Secure Network, about 230 unsafe resources that worked but are no longer relevant were disabled.

In 2021, to increase the effectiveness of the management of cyber incidents directed against the Lithuanian national defence system and to carry out systematic prevention of cyber incidents, established sectoral cyber incident management centre *Mil-CERT*. In 2021 *Mil-CERT* recorded and contained 365 cyber incidents. Special attention in *Mil-CERT* is also dedicated to strengthening the cyber resilience of national defence system users by periodically organising social media engineering exercises.

Also, in 2021, The Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence carried out procurement supervision of critical information infrastructure managers. That year they rated about 200 submitted procurement objects and issued reasoned recommendations regarding the contract technological risks and requirements related to national security that may arise during execution and appropriateness of determination in purchase documents.

Throughout this period, Lithuania's strategic communication bodies in key institutions (*MFA StratCom, Government Office*) were empowered – in 2020, a mechanism for strategic communication coordination on national security matters was created. The key objectives were to increase information sharing, build working relationships between the governmental institutions and media that could be used to counter foreign disinformation campaigns swiftly and integrate strategic communication across government on national security matters (speak with 'one voice').

The coordination mechanism works in this way. First, having identified a possible information incident, the institution, guided by information incident evaluation criteria, conducts a primary evaluation of the incident. Second, based on the evaluation, they determine the incident's threat level using set criteria. Third, after the Government Office receives this information, they must, within an hour, initiate consultations regarding the primary evaluation and the institution's offered response. After the meeting is finished, the Government Office must inform the institution that sent them the primary evaluation about either

⁴¹ [Global Cybersecurity Index](#) (Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2021)

(a) approval of the information incident threat level determined by the institution, the response method and communication messages proposed by the institution; (b) their recommendation to revise the threat level and response method; (c) their recommendation to change the threat level and response method or (d) express the need to discuss in more detail the threat level and response method.

Moreover, this mechanism defines clear methods of responding to information incidents. Two different methods are singled out – the prompt and the continuous response. The prompt response works in such a manner – after determining *the first (high) threat level* of an information incident, the Government office prepares and submits the information and proposed communication plan regarding the incident directly to the Prime Minister. *If the second (medium) threat level* is determined. In that case, the response to the incident is carried out through public information by the institution whose field of activity this incident is directed against. *If the third (low) threat level* is determined, the institution whose field of activity this incident is directed against informs the public information agents about this incident. *If the fourth (lowest) threat level* is identified. In that case, the institution whose field of activity this incident is directed against informs the public information agents about this incident only if those agents ask for it.

All of these measures helped to create a shared understanding of the baseline threat landscape in the information domain across government.

Poland, with a score of 93.86, is in 30th place in the world according to Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) published by the ITU on 29 June 2021⁴². In February, the government raised the alert level regarding threats in cyberspace from ALFA-CRP to CHARLIE-CRP – the third on the four-level scale⁴³. The main reason was cyber attacks on government servers in Ukraine, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said at the time. In early 2022, the Israeli company Check Point Research informed us about a sharp increase in cyber attacks in 2021. Poland was among the countries particularly hit by the rising number of attacks on government institutions and, according to Microsoft, became a priority target outside of Ukraine for hostile Russian cyber-activities, with the only United States attacked more frequently⁴⁴.

In Poland, there are currently Cyber-space Defense Forces whose tasks include the “detection, recognition and prevention of cyber threats, protection of ICT networks and support of military operations conducted by the Polish Armed Forces within cyberspace.” According to current reports⁴⁵, the formation of these troops is expected to end in 2024. The Ministry of Digitization is also active in this field, an example of which is the promotion of the European Month of

⁴² [Global Cybersecurity Index](#) (Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2021)

⁴³ Dziennik.PL “[Premier podwyższył stopień alarmowy z ALFA-CRP do CHARLIE-CRP](#)” (Dziennik.PL Media, February 2022)

⁴⁴ GeekWeek “[Jak się walczy w Polsce z rosyjskimi atakami cybernetycznymi?](#)” (GeekWeek, May 2022)

⁴⁵ [STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN CZECH REPUBLIC AND POLAND: COMPARISON OF PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES](#) (Prague Security Studies Institute)

Cybersecurity and the educational portal bezpiecznewybory.pl.

Ukraine got a 65.93 score and took 78th place worldwide as of the 2020 Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI)⁴⁶ published by the ITU on 29 June 2021. In Ukraine, the cyber domain got a huge push in development with the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. Cyberpolice on the 26th of February 2022, created a chatbot for blocking pages that spread Russian disinformation⁴⁷. This and many other activities were facilitated by the state with close cooperation with businesses and average Ukrainians. Ukraine has created a cyber army comprising motivated individuals and is coordinated by the Ministry of Digital Transformation⁴⁸. The Ministry itself, during the full-scale war, did not stop the development of new technological solutions. Right after the start of the full-scale invasion Ministry presented several solutions: *e-Document*, which allows citizens to generate lost documents, *e-Enemy* which allows citizens to send information about enemy troops and *Damaged property*, which allows submitting information about the property that was damaged or destroyed as a result of hostilities. Besides, Ministry actively suggests technological solutions for the collection of funds for the army's needs and coordination of cyber-activists.

Besides, in March 2022, the Ministry added Ukrainian television and radio

to *Diya* (state app). As Russia started bombing telecommunication infrastructure to isolate Ukrainians informationally and spread propaganda and disinformation, having access to Ukrainian TV and radio was essential.

In addition, the Ministry of Digital Transformation, together with the Kyiv School of Economics and the largest Ukrainian IT companies, created the *Truth Fund*⁴⁹ to combat Russian propaganda and disinformation. The foundation's team creates and distributes information that exposes the crimes of Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine. Immediately after the start of the full-scale invasion, the foundation launched advertising campaigns on all social networks, urging Russian mothers not to send their sons to fight in Ukraine. In addition, the foundation constantly informs Europeans about what is happening in Ukraine. The fund also uses targeted stocks to influence Western companies still operating in Russia. Later Ministry took charge of the project UNITED24 Media - an English-language modern-format digital media centred around the YouTube channel and social media platforms. However, media is rather a mandate of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy that is in charge of Freedom, a TV channel that targets Russian speaking population on occupied territories as well as Russians living in Russia and all over the world.

⁴⁶ [Global Cybersecurity Index](#) (Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2021)

⁴⁷ Ukrinform "[The cyber police developed a Telegram chatbot to block disinformation services](#)" (Kyiv: Ukrinform media, February 2022)

⁴⁸ Suspilne News "[Ukraine is creating an IT army - Fedorov](#)" (Kyiv, Suspilne News Media, February 2022)

⁴⁹ [Truth Fund](#)



Bans and regulations of those spreading propaganda and disinformation

Ukraine blocked 14 Russian TV channels back in 2014 from its cable networks to stop them from spreading war propaganda⁵⁰. Back then the decision was heavily criticised by international organisations as it was seen as a form of censorship. However, Ukrainian authorities along with key organisations combating disinformation considered this step essential⁵¹. It was important to explain that Kremlin-controlled media had nothing to do with quality journalism and freedom of speech. They were and still are the tools for spreading propaganda and disinformation, inciting hate and spreading genocidal rhetoric. Thus, it was a matter of national security.

Before Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukraine has also been actively exercising an instrument of ban and sanctions. Some of the procedures were criticised by Ukrainian civil society, for instance, using sanction mechanisms under the Security Council of Ukraine regarding Ukrainians responsible for spreading propaganda and disinformation. However, supporting the idea of suspending

those channels in the first place⁵². Ukraine sanctioned multiple sources of pro-Russian disinformation and propaganda that are described in detail in section two of the policy paper. It is worth mentioning that 53% of Ukrainians supported sanctions against Viktor Medvedchuk and 44% suspensions of TV channels affiliated with him⁵³.

In 2021, a new package of sanctions against Russian media was put into effect, which concerned Era-media, Only News, Version, Narodniy Noviny, ANNA-News, Novinfo, Moscow Komсомоlets, Rostelecom, and others. Besides, Ukraine has been sanctioning Russian propagandists since 2015⁵⁴. Among the first ones sanctioned⁵⁵: Director General of the international media group *Rossiya Segodnya* Dmitry Kiselev, head of the holding *Red Star* Alexei Pimanov, editor-in-chief of the maRussian troops' crimes on Ukraine's territory stumbled upon the stench.

In 2017, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, Minis-

⁵⁰ Reuters "[Ukraine bans Russian TV channels for airing war 'propaganda'](#)" (Reuters, 2014)

⁵¹ Radio Svoboda "[Will banning Russian TV channels save Ukraine's information space?](#)" (Kyiv: Radio Svoboda Media, March 2016)

⁵² Detector Media "[Experts called the blocking of «Medvedchuk's channels» the most positive event since the beginning of the year - survey](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, May 2021)

⁵³ Detector Media "[More than half of Ukrainians support sanctions against Medvedchuk, the level of support for closing channels is somewhat lower](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, May 2021)

⁵⁴ President of Ukraine Decree "[On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine dated August 20, 2021 «On the application of personal special economic and other restrictive measures \(sanctions\)»](#)" (Kyiv: President of Ukraine, August 2021)

⁵⁵ Radio Svoboda "[Human Rights Watch calls on Ukraine to lift sanctions against 17 journalists from Russia](#)" (Kyiv, Radio Svoboda Media, June 2016)

try of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, State Border Service of Ukraine started to form a *ban list for Russian cultural representatives*, who are prohibited from entering Ukraine due to anti-Ukrainian statements, violation of the Ukrainian laws or who are a threat to the national security of Ukraine. The list has been regularly updated since.

Restricting access to Russian books with propaganda narratives to the Ukrainian market. In 2019, the State Committee for Television and Radio broadcasting issued over 4 thousand permits for the import of publishing products from Russia and 2.3 thousand permits refusals⁵⁶.

In February 2021, the *National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine* suspended licences for around 100 broadcasters who work in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia.

It took Russia's full-scale invasion to block Kremlin-controlled TV channels in the EU. However, Lithuania's reaction was prior. In February 2022, the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission (LRTK) banned rebroadcasting of eight Russian-language television channels in the country, some for three years and some for five years, due to incitement and propaganda. The channels were Belarus 24, NTV Mir, RTR Planeta, Rossija 24, PBK, TVCI, MIR24 and RBK-TV. A study commissioned in September by the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission revealed that viewing of Russian television programs in Lithuania has halved. Although more residents of Eastern Lithuania became interest-

ed in satellite antennas, trying to access the blocked channels. One satellite antennas company's manager said that their sales increased by 20% since the ban on Russian propaganda TV channels). This measure effectively referred to the Lithuanian Radio and Television Committee survey. According to it, 60% do not miss Russian television at all. The Committee confidently states that their measure was a success in combating Russian propaganda.

Lithuania's Parliament banned rebroadcasting and online distribution of radio programs, television programs or individual programs of entities established, directly or indirectly managed, controlled or financed by Russia and Belarus. This provision will be valid until October 16, 2024. In April 2022, the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission decided to stop the free reception of 32 TV programs in Lithuania controlled by the Gazprom-Media company and rebroadcast in Russia. Also, in 2022, the *Communications Regulatory Authority* (The Ministry of National Defence) in Lithuania created a search tool which uses artificial intelligence to search for illegal content on the Internet. More than 288 thousand Lithuanian websites were checked. Potentially prohibited or harmful content detected was referred for detailed evaluation by RRT specialists. After RRT specialists examined each report, it was determined that 19 websites might violate the national laws of Lithuania or the European Union, 8 reports were forwarded to the Police Department for further investigation, and 11 - to the Office of the Journalists' Ethics Inspector.

⁵⁶ Detector Media "[In 2019, the State Television and Radio Committee allowed the import of 4,300 titles of Russian books](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, January 2020)

Poland has also joined all the EU sanctions as an answer to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Warsaw was a strong proponent of sanctioning Kremlin "soft power" propaganda mouthpieces - Russkiy Mir Foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo which were eventually subject to restrictions within the 7th package of sanctions. Immediately after the Russian invasion, the Polish National Broadcasting Council (pl. KRRiTV) banned Kremlin-aligned media from broadcasting in Poland. The ban included Russia Today, RTR Planeta, Sojuz TV and Russi-

ja 24. Besides, the Polish authorities banned some pro-Russian and Russian websites in Poland. The ban was conducted by the ABW - Internal Security Agency, a counter-intelligence agency. Blocking activities started just after the invasion on the 24th of February and continued in the following months. The following services has been banned: dziennik-polityczny.com; lenta.ru; myslpolska.info; pl.sputniknews.com; ria.ru; rt.com; ruptly.com; wicipolskie.pl; wolnemedi.net; wrealu24.pl; wrealu24.tv; xportal.pl⁵⁷.



Civil society initiatives

In countries of the Lublin Triangle, civil society made a significant contribution to building resilience to Russian propaganda and disinformation. The quantity of diversity of initiatives is striking. Here, we would focus on key initiatives providing the best cases from the experience of each country.

The most widespread for all three countries is fact-checking and debunking initiatives. Since 2018, a similar project, "Demaskuok.lt" has been operating in Lithuania, which fights against Russian disinformation. It is a national initiative that brings together representatives of the public, the media and the state to combat fake news. This project's team consists of journalists and volunteers from different social groups. They developed and used a highly advanced and operational AI-based technological

tool that helps identify fake news and prevent its spread. Journalists and members of civil society are already using this tool. It is perceived positively. Journalists have already been joined voluntarily by active citizens from various social and public groups, who at any time of the day, can coordinate and extremely quickly help the media to expose false news. The number of volunteers is growing. State institutions also joined the DEMASKUOK.LT initiative.

Moreover, the civil campaign 'Lithuanian elves' – active citizens fighting disinformation online – was active throughout the year. This campaign's key objectives are to track the trends of disinformation techniques on social media and the internet, exchange information and use existing measures on social media to disable disinform-

⁵⁷ xportal.pl

mation channels (groups, bots, etc.). This Grassroots support for the government enables a whole-of-society response.

Also, there was an increase of academic research and media literacy projects for fact-checking and debunking. Their goals were to provide evidence-based analysis for informed decision-making and strategic planning and to increase societal awareness via fact-checking, debunking and other means, which helps support resilience building. Some examples are Eastern Europe's Research Center's work on External threats and risk factors in the context of Lithuanian elections, A study of geopolitics and international politics and threat perception or Civic Resilience Initiative's work on anti-Ukrainian war Propaganda media monitoring report, tools used for fighting disinformation.

In Ukraine, fact-checking and debunking are used to combat disinformation widely. StopFake⁵⁸ and VoxCheck⁵⁹ are primarily devoted to debunking. Also, there are various projects and initiatives, for instance, NotaEnota⁶⁰ - a Facebook project that works on debunking and education. DisinfoChronicle⁶¹ - project of Detector Media, where the team collects and documents real-time chronicles of the Kremlin disinformation about the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In Poland, there is #WłączWeryfikację campaign, aimed at supporting Internet users in verifying information

on social media. The #WłączWeryfikację profiles are run by experienced experts who debunk false information online and point out manifestations of disinformation activities. Also, there is a web portal called *Zgłoś Trola* (Report the Troll), which serves as a tool for reporting trolls and accounts spreading pro-Russian disinformation on the Polish-language versions of major social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and others. The submissions go to analysts who initially screen the content on the profiles. This then goes to NASK verification. In the next step, the submission is sent to the social media platforms, which also undergo internal verification. Created as an answer to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Each country has a lot to offer regarding educational projects promoting media literacy. Various training and workshops as well as online courses and materials. For instance, the online course *Disinformation: types, tools and methods of protection* by the Ukraine Crisis Media Centre. Also, there are educational courses on the Prometheus platform: *Information hygiene. How to recognise lies in social networks* (April 2022).

Throughout 2022, the British Council in Lithuania and the Knowledge Economy Forum jointly implement the People to People project Escape disinfo. During this project, students learnt to observe, analyse and act on intentionally and unintentionally presented misleading information in an escape room, and learn to distinguish it.

⁵⁸ [StopFake](#)

⁵⁹ [VoxCheck](#)

⁶⁰ [NotaEnota](#)

⁶¹ Detector Media "[DisinfoChronicle](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, February 2022)

Ukrainian civil society has numerous interesting activities promoting media literacy using humour. Like *Telebachennya Toronto*⁶² (over 775 thousand subscribers on YouTube) and *Klyaty Rationalist*⁶³ (over 259 thousand subscribers). Ukrainian stand-up comedians have been cooperating with CSOs to produce programmes that will raise awareness of Russian propaganda and promote media literacy.

Overall, the civil society organisations of Lublin Triangle countries have

a high capacity for monitoring and analysing Russian malign information campaigns. In all three countries, substantial studies are being constantly published. As a part of knowledge exchange, professional networks are quite effective. In Ukraine, there is a *DisinfoHub*, which is a network of organisations working in the field of combating disinformation. The Hub is managed by NDI Ukraine and brings together organisations in several formats: regular online meetings, newsletters, common databases, and strategic sessions.



Big Tech measures to combat Russian propaganda and disinformation

All three countries are working with Big Tech companies to disrupt disinformation activities or to limit the negative effects of information manipulation. In Ukraine, for instance, there is a coalition of civil society organisations and state agencies, particularly the Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Policy, as well as international donors. Coalition regularly meets with Meta, Google, Twitter and Microsoft to discuss ways of mitigating propaganda and disinformation. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Big Tech platforms have taken various measures. It is probably one of the most extensive scopes of measures taken by online platforms in terms of quality and diversity.

Meta has been labelling Russian state-controlled media's *Facebook*

pages, and *Instagram* accounts since 2020⁶⁴. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Meta continued to label Russian media content, show it lower in the feed and make it more difficult to find it on Facebook and Instagram around the world. The same applies to the content containing links to Russian state-controlled media and media outlets. At the same time, Russian state-controlled media have been banned from advertising or monetising their content on the company's platforms worldwide. Facebook's pages and Instagram accounts of Russian state-controlled media are being blocked or deleted not on the company's initiative but at the request of different governments. At the request of the Ukrainian government, access to the pages of pro-Russian bloggers and Russian

⁶² [Telebachennya Toronto](#) (YouTube Channel)

⁶³ [Klyatyy ratsionalist](#) (YouTube Channel)

⁶⁴ [Meta's Ongoing Efforts Regarding Russia's Invasion of Ukraine](#) (Meta, February 2022)

propagandists was restricted. At the same time, access to Russia Today and Sputnik was limited in the EU and UK in response to government requests and sanctions imposed.

Twitter started fighting Russian media propagandists in 2017 when the United States began to record and speak publicly about the US presidential election being influenced on behalf of the Russian government⁶⁵. That year, the social network decided to ban content promotion on all accounts owned by Russia Today and Sputnik. The company took the next step in August 2020, when it began labelling accounts controlled by the Russian government in addition to twenty other states and reducing their reach. In 2021, the social network expanded the list of labelled and restricted countries and accounts. Today, it contains about 100 media accounts marked as connected with the Russian authorities. Also, Twitter started labelling the accounts of the Belarusian state-controlled media. After February 24, 2022, Twitter banned advertising in Ukraine and Russia. It also banned the following functions: political advertising (since 2019); monetization of content related to the Russian-Ukrainian war that is misleading or false; monetisation of search queries related to the Russian-Ukrainian war; promoting content created by Russian government-related media.

YouTube, like other social networks, takes measures to counter disinformation on its platform and also controls the distribution of content about Russia's war against Ukraine. In particular, after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the company reported the disabling of monetisation for residents of Russia⁶⁶. YouTube Premium, Music Premium, sponsorship, super chat, super stickers, and merch will not be available to any Russian viewers. The video hosting also has announced that Russia's state-controlled media channels are blocked globally for violating anti-violence rules⁶⁷. In particular, YouTube will remove advertising and content about Russia's war in Ukraine that violates the policy of the video service. Like other social platforms, YouTube has blocked Russian propaganda channels RT and Sputnik across Europe, as well as "Channel One", Russia-24 and Russia-1, TASS, RIA Novosti, RBK, and TRC of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation *Zvezda*, in Ukraine⁶⁸.

In addition to YouTube media channels, video hosting also blocks the accounts of some pro-Kremlin propagandists. For example, three channels of Russian presenter Vladimir Solovyov, the channels of propagandist Anatoliy Shariy, his wife Olga Shariy, and their Dubl channel were blocked in Ukraine⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ Detector Media "[Meta, Twitter, and Google against Russia. Social networks opposing the Kremlin propaganda](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, March 2022)

⁶⁶ Detector Media "[YouTube has disabled all monetization features for users in Russia](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, March 2022)

⁶⁷ Detector Media "[YouTube removed more than 70,000 videos and 9,000 channels related to the war in Ukraine](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, May 2022)

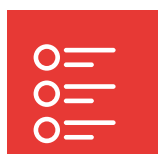
⁶⁸ Detector Media "YouTube will block Russian state media channels around the world" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, March 2022)

⁶⁹ Detector Media "[YouTube blocked the third channel of the Russian propagandist Solovyov](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, March 2022)

Viber started removing messages with hate speech. Rakuten Viber announced in May that it would sign the [EU Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online](#). Along with Viber, there are other signatories such as Meta, TikTok, Microsoft and others.

Google, together with its subsidiary Jigsaw launched a campaign to

tackle disinformation and misinformation about Ukrainian refugees in Poland. The campaign was designed to create resilience against anti-refugee narratives using a prebunking ad campaign based on the research on social media platforms YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok.



Annex A. Media and actors spreading pro-Russian rhetoric in Lublin Triangle countries

The list is not extensive. Its purpose is to outline key sources and actors and illustrate how they spread

pro-Russian rhetoric in Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine.



Media spreading pro-Russian rhetoric

Media spreading pro-Russian rhetoric are more challenging to deal with than Kremlin-controlled media outlets. They rarely position themselves openly pro-Russian, making it complicated for citizens to identify it. Also, pro-Russian rhetoric could not be obvious or present not in a prevalent mode. In all three countries, such websites are sources of pro-Russian propaganda. See Annex A for detailed lists of media and actors spreading pro-Russian rhetoric in each country.

Poland

Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny. A portal is spreading disinformation, most often coinciding with Russian narratives. Their website was initially blocked after the Russian invasion,

but it is currently operating again, while their Telegram channel has remained online since the Russian invasion. Fake editors sign this service. The Independent Political Daily (NDP) is a portal, active since 2014. It has repeatedly been identified as an entity that spreads disinformation, especially on military topics. Fake material hitting US troops in Poland, but also Polish commanders, has become a feature of the site.

News Front Polska. The NewsFront network of channels, controlled by Kremlin services, is the iron fist of anti-Ukrainian propaganda, spreading hostile Russian narratives in 10 languages all over the globe. US services and disinformation researchers say the FSB (Federal Security Service)

is behind NewsFront. The News Front Poland website has been blocked in Poland, but its channel on Telegram continues to operate.

Myśl-Polska. One of the key sources spreading pro-Russian content in Poland. Its columnist is Mateusz Piskorski, a former MP accused in 2016 of spying for Russia and China. Myśl-Polska is a weekly newspaper that also runs an active website with news, opinions and articles.

Lega Artis. Blog of the law firm Lega Artis, which became famous for reproducing disinformation and misinformation on COVID-19 and vaccines. After the Russian invasion, it focused on producing anti-Ukrainian content, particularly anti-refugee content.

Magnapolonia.org. Media outlet spreading disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracy theories. Content published by the Magnapolonia.org. is used to spread disinformation on Telegram, Twitter and Facebook. In many cases, their articles have been directly copied from Russian sources.

Wrealu24. Right-wing media outlet involved in spreading disinformation, misinformation and conspiracy theories. Highly active in the area of COVID-19 and vaccine disinformation. Since the invasion, openly anti-Ukrainian, anti-refugees and pro-Russian. Its content is spread through many channels: Facebook page (98 000 followers); Twitter profile (38 500 followers). Wrealu24 used to run a viral YouTube channel which was blocked in recent months by the platform. In reaction to content moderation, Wrealu24 opened its own streaming platform Wrealu24TV, which was supposed to be a right-wing internet television, and which

was also blocked, in this case, by the Polish authorities.

Zmiany naziemi.pl. The fringe media outlet spreading a mix of conspiracy theories, disinformation and misinformation. After the Russian invasion, it started pushing pro-Russian content and distributing Russian propaganda. Zmiany naziemi.pl operates its social media channels on Facebook (41.000 followers), YouTube (108.000 subscribers) and Twitter (3060 followers), all used to distribute its content.

Ukraińiec NIE jest moim bratem. Facebook page with over 50 000 followers. Its name can be translated as “Ukrainian is NOT my brother”. It disseminates anti-Ukrainian and anti-refugees content, including disinformation, misinformation etc., often using disinformation content from other websites. The page was created in March 2014, shortly after the Russian invasion of East Ukraine.

Lithuania

Interesas.lt. An internet website/blog in which Russian propaganda is being shared. Page owned by Marius Jonaitis.

Musutv.lt. An internet website/blog. It serves as a platform for key Russian propaganda actors in Lithuania. Vaidas Žemaitis Lekstutis own the website.

Ldiena.lt. Internet websites that spreads Russian propaganda and disinformation. Laurynas Ragelskis own it. He also owns 20min.lt, an internet website systematically spreading Russian propaganda and disinformation.

Infra.lt. A media outlet, which is run by some of the main actors from

“Šeimų sąjūdis”. In this media outlet, disinformation about Russia’s war against Ukraine is spread not by openly justifying Russia but by raising distrust in Ukraine, accusing the United States of causing this war. Conspiracy theories about the Great Reboot, the “Schwab Plan”, etc. are also quite popular.

Sarmatas.lt. A media outlet owned by Arvydas Daunys. On this outlet, disinformation about Russia’s war on Ukraine is spread not by openly justifying Russia but by raising distrust in Ukraine, accusing the United States of causing this war. Conspiracy theories about the Great Reboot, the “Schwab Plan”, etc., are also quite popular.

Ukraine

TV channels 112, NewsOne and ZIK. Pro-Russian TV channels that, as of August 2022, are under sanctions and no longer broadcast. The channels were banned within sanctions imposed on the official channel owner and MP Taras Kozak by the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine in 2021⁷⁰. All three channels are widely believed to belong to Russian president Vladimir Putin’s closest ally in Ukraine, Viktor Medved-

chuk. They presented themselves as Ukrainian but were clearly pro-Russian. Guests and hosts of their TV shows spread narratives of Russian propaganda⁷¹. The channels were criticised during the entire broadcasting time, particularly by the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting, for its pro-Russian position. On the 26th of February, a new Pershyi Nezaleznyi TV channel was launched⁷². It claims to be independent, but analysis reveals it has the same hosts, guests, narratives, and management as the sanctioned Medvedchuk’s TV channels.

NASH TV channel has also been under sanctions since the 11th of February 2022⁷³. Owned by pro-kremlin politician Yevhen Murayev, the channel was a breeding ground for Russian propaganda and disinformation. Before sanctions were introduced, the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting fined Nash TV channel⁷⁴ (Nash 365 LLC) more than UAH 124,000 and decided to apply to the court to revoke the license of Maxi TV channel because of the broadcast of the program “This is important”, during which the Yevhen Murayev made racist remarks. Also, The National Council of Ukraine on

⁷⁰ President of Ukraine Decree [On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine dated February 2, 2021 «On the application of personal special economic and other restrictive measures \(sanctions\)»](#) (Kyiv: President of Ukraine, February 2021)

⁷¹ Inform Napalm [“Medvedchuk’s TV channels closure in Ukraine is a counteraction to Russian hybrid aggression, not an attack on freedom of speech”](#) (Kyiv: Inform Napalm, Media, May, 2021)

⁷² Detector Media [The “Medvedchuk Channels” team started broadcasting on the First Independent](#) (Kyiv, Detector Media NGO, February 2021)

⁷³ Hromadske [The National Security Council imposed sanctions against the TV channel «NASH» and the company that promotes the broadcasting of Russian channels](#) (Kyiv, HromadskeMedia, February 2022)

⁷⁴ Detector Media [“The National Council fined «Nash» and wants to cancel the license of another Murayev channel after the appeal of «Detector Media»”](#) (Kyiv, Detector Media NGO, February 2022)

Television and Radio Broadcasting has applied fines to NewsOne, NASH, and 112 Ukraine TV channels for inciting war and discrimination against Ukraine's Armed Forces⁷⁵.

Some of the pro-Kremlin journalists who worked on these channels continued their pro-Kremlin rhetoric after sanctions on the channels were introduced.

Strana.ua - online media outlet functioning since the 16th of February 2016 and owned by Igor Guzhva. The outlet is criticized⁷⁶ for its pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian editorial policy, as well as its manipulative manner of presenting information: publication of fakes, dissemination of Russian propaganda, use of pseudo-experts, emotionally coloured headlines, manipulative translation of materials of foreign media⁷⁷. Due to sanctions imposed on the owner, the media had to be closed as well⁷⁸. However, it changed its web address and continued working. Also, the media has its own Telegram channel - Politika strany.

“Klymenko Time” - the pro-Russian media platform with a website, a YouTube channel, a Telegram channel and a production studio. It is the platform of Oleksandr Klymenko, the former Minister of Revenue and Duties in the government of Mykola Azarov, who fled Ukraine in 2014 during the Revolution of Dignity, but tried to influence Ukrainian politics in particular with his media (Vesti, Radio Vesti, Vesti Reporter)⁷⁹.

The online media **New Edition** owned by pro-Kremlin propagandists Olga and Anatoliy Shariy, also has its own YouTube channel⁸⁰. The media was founded to circumvent sanctions against Shariy's previous edition **Shariy.net**⁸¹. The Telegram channel has over 379,000 subscribers. It tries to mimic media. Thus pro-Russian messages are blurred by a vast number of news articles, both domestic and foreign. The pro-Russian rhetoric of the channel can be seen by its use of specific manipulative tactics. For example, it could be facts but with comments that manipulate readers' perception of truth.

⁷⁵ Radio Svoboda [The National Council fined the channels «NASH», «112» and NewsOne for inciting enmity](#) (Kyiv: Radio Svoboda, Media, May 2021)

⁷⁶ Detector Media [How “Strana” and “Nash” protected the Kremlin from Ukrainian aggression. Review of penetration of Russian propaganda into the Ukrainian media space in April 2021](#) (Kyiv, Detector Media NGO, May 2021)

⁷⁷ Detector Media [“Putin zeroed in on the “Chechen case”: terrorism is being “sewn” into Ukraine”](#) (Kyiv, Detector Media NGO, April 2021)

⁷⁸ President of Ukraine: Decree [“On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine dated December 30, 2021 “On making changes to personal special economic and other restrictive measures \(sanctions\)”](#) (Kyiv, President of Ukraine, February 2022)

⁷⁹ Center for countering disinformation [Report](#) (Kyiv, Center for countering disinformation, October 2021)

⁸⁰ Detector Media [“Anatoliy and Olga Shariy launched a new site that “belongs to journalists” instead of Shariy.net”](#) (Kyiv, Detector Media NGO, November 2021)

⁸¹ President of Ukraine: Decree [“On the decision of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine dated December 30, 2021 “On making changes to personal special economic and other restrictive measures \(sanctions\)”](#) (Kyiv, President of Ukraine, February 2022)



Parties and public figures spreading pro-Russian rhetoric

Lithuania

Marius Jonaitis is one of the main Russian propaganda actors. He is in charge of 4 social media groups which have the purpose of glorifying Russia and Putin. He also owns “*Interesas.lt*” - an internet website/blog on which pro-Russian propaganda is being shared. He also has a YT channel in which Russia, V. Putin, the former Soviet Union, and Stalin have been praised for many years. At the same time, Lithuania, Western countries, the European Union and NATO are despised.

Vaidas Žemaitis Lekstutis is one of the main pro-Russian propaganda actors in Lithuania. In charge of 7 social media groups/websites. He is the co-owner of the Telegram page “*Liaudies žurnalistika*”, in which Russian propaganda and anti-Lithuanian narratives are shared. This media has 590 subscribers and 400 average post views. Another co-owner is Marius Jonaitis. Also, Vaidas Žemaitis Lekstutis is the owner of “*Musutv.lt*” - an internet website/blog in which Russian propaganda is shared by some of the main Russian propaganda actors in Lithuania.

Also, one of the main pro-Russian propaganda actors in Lithuania is Vygantas Kelertas. In charge of the political movement “*Dawn of justice*”, which includes other famous propaganda actors in Lithuania, such as A. Paleckis, K. Juraitis, E. Vaitkus, etc.

Jonas Kovalskis - one more member of “*Dawn of Justice*” (*Teisingumo*

aušra). *Teisingumo aušra* was created by A. Paleckis, one of the key pro-Russian propaganda actors in Lithuania, who was recently sentenced to prison for six years for spying for the FSB. Self-proclaimed lawyer, pro-Russian propaganda actor, sharing anti-West, EU, and NATO content.

Laurynas Ragelskis is also one of the main pro-Russian propaganda actors in Lithuania, in charge of 7 websites / social media pages, in which he shares pro-Russian propaganda, glorifies Stalin, and despises the West. His internet website/blog “*Ldiena.lt*” also shares pro-Russian propaganda by some of Lithuania’s main Russian propaganda actors. His other internet website/blog - “*20min.lt*” - also shares pro-Russian propaganda. Also, here should be mentioned YT Channel “*LDiena • Laurynas Ragelskis*” run by Ragelskis.

Dmitrij Glazkov - a pro-Russian propaganda actor, who glorifies Putin and Stalin, despises Lithuania / the West, selling books about Stalin.

One more pro-Russian public person - **Rimantas Janavičius**. He is in charge of 8 websites / social media pages. Some of these groups and pages are openly pro-Russian or glorify the former Soviet Union. Others are non-political, such as groups for advertising or book lovers. Through them, users are attracted to pro-Russian groups belonging to the network.

Kipras Valentiniavičius is in charge of NGO “*Lietuvos visuomenės taryba*”, nationalist political party “*Apsauga*

Geležinis vilkas” and one of the heads of “*Šeimų sąjūdis*”, a social movement which is against the EU conception of family. These movements are oriented towards discrediting the EU and the Lithuanian government. Moreover, in these groups, disinformation about the war in Ukraine is spread not by openly justifying Russia but by raising distrust in Ukraine, accusing the United States of causing this war. Conspiracy theories about the Great Reboot, the “Schwab Plan”, etc. are also quite popular there.

Vikotras Jašinskas - One of the heads of “*Šeimų sąjūdis*”, in charge of associations called “*Kauno forumas*” and “*Vardan šeimos*”. In these groups, disinformation about Russia’s war on Ukraine is spread not by openly justifying Russia but by raising distrust in Ukraine, accusing the United States of causing this war. Conspiracy theories about the Great Reboot, the “Schwab Plan”, etc. are also quite popular here.

Adelina Sabaliauskaitė is one of the key actors of “*Šeimų sąjūdis*”, and one of the main activists in the riots near Seimas in August 2021. Her Facebook page has 7229 followers. She uploads daily. *Vitolda Račkova*, also, is one of the key actors of “*Šeimų sąjūdis*” and “*Lietuvos visuomenės taryba*”. She was arrested during the riot near Seimas in August 2021. She owns a Telegram channel.

Arvydas Daunys - the owner of “*Inf. It*” (including its YT channel, which has 4280 subscribers and 889469 views and a Telegram channel, which has 2100 subscribers). This media outlet is run by some of the main actors from “*Šeimų sąjūdis*”. In this media outlet, disinformation about the war in Ukraine is spread not by openly. Also, he owns a media outlet, “*Sarmatas. It*”. In it, disinformation about Russia’s

war against Ukraine is spread not by openly justifying Russia but by raising distrust in Ukraine, accusing the United States of causing this war. Conspiracy theories about the Great Reboot, the “Schwab Plan”, etc. are also quite popular.

One of the leaders of the far-right political party “*Lietuvos liaudies partija*” is **Tauras Jakelaitis**. Another of the far-right political party “*Lietuvos liaudies partija*” is *Nendré Černiauskienė*, also a member of a social movement called “*Referendumo iniciatyvinė grupė*”. One more leader of the far-right political party “*Lietuvos liaudies partija*” is Aras Sutkus, a member of “*Lietuvos visuomenės taryba*”. *Vilmantas Povilaitis* - a member of “*Teisingumo aušra*”, “*Lietuvos visuomenės taryba*” and “*Referendumo iniciatyvinė grupė*”.

One of the main pro-Russian propaganda actors in Lithuania is Kazimieras Juraitis. He registered to participate in the 2019 Lithuanian presidential elections. But he did not collect the required number of signatures. Journalist, owner of PressJazz TV. Has a YT channel “*Kazimieras Juraitis 3*” with over 11900 subscribers and 657136 views. Uploads almost daily. Has his own website (kazimierasjuraitis.lt). In all of his work, he spreads pro-Russian propaganda and disinformation. One more pro-Russian public person - *Erika Švenčionienė*/ She is a loyal companion of Juraitis. Member of “*Geros kaimynystės forumas*” (Good neighbour forum), an association run by Paleckis.

Poland

Konfederacja is a political party spreading anti-Ukrainian content since the beginning of the invasion. Already in the first days, its MPs joined

in amplifying false information about crimes committed by refugees on the Polish-Ukrainian border. The party is the originator of the #StopUkrainisationPoland campaign. One of its leaders, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, is known for reproducing Russian propaganda narratives, e.g. denying the crimes in Bucza.

Grzegorz Braun is one of the Konfederacja party leaders and a member of the Polish parliament lower chamber, Sejm. Grzegorz Braun's narrative is mainly based on a vision of the Ukrainian situation in Poland, where Ukrainians have numerous privileges and advantages over Poles. He describes his approach as a common-sense approach to Ukrainian politics. He believes that helping Ukrainian citizens is "philanthropy at the expense of the Polish citizen". Besides, he thinks that Ukrainian citizens come to Poland mainly to take advantage of the benefits offered by the Polish authorities, not as an escape from war. Poland, in his narrative, is to be nationalised and its citizens artificially replaced by people of foreign origin.

Mateusz Piskorski is a former Polish MP who founded the pro-Kremlin Change party in 2015. According to the ABW (Internal Security Agency), the party was directly linked to Russia and the Kremlin. Its activities never fully developed, and the party itself never gained much support. In 2016, he was detained by the ABW. The prosecution charged him with espionage. He was eventually accused of being involved in the activities of two foreign intelligence services against Poland: a Chinese and a Russian.

In May 2019, - after three years behind bars Piskorski was released. The trial before a Warsaw court is still taking

place behind closed doors. Piskorski currently appears on the disinformation-spreading channel 'Centrum Edukacyjne Polska' on the YouTube platform. He is also a columnist for *Myśl Polska*, a magazine that presents Putin's policies in superlatives and reproduces the Kremlin's propaganda narratives. Piskorski also contributes to Russian media outlets, including RT and Sputnik, and pro-Russian media outlets, such as the Belarussian channel *Belaruś 1*. As part of his activities, Piskorski reproduces pro-Russian propaganda content and disinformation and manipulates incoming news from Ukraine.

Wojciech Olszański i Marcin Osadowski. Two pro-Russian and nationalist video bloggers who run the *Niezależna Polska TV* (eng. *Independent Poland TV*) Youtube channel. Their content promotes pro-Russian narratives, Kremlin propaganda, hate speech, and anti-establishment and anti-Semitic content. Wojciech Olszanski is currently serving a six-month sentence for incitement to commit a crime.

Leszek Sykulski is a Polish geopolitician, active in social media, such as on the YouTube platform where he runs a channel. He conducts information activities that coincide with the goals of Russian propaganda operations. Sykulski's communications include agitation and pro-Russian disinformation, the beneficiaries of which are hostile propaganda sources.

Marcin Skalski is a columnist who publishes his texts on several websites with a right-wing political affiliation. Before the war, he was also active on Twitter. His narrative is strongly anti-Ukrainian. Above all, he believes that Ukrainian statehood collapsed in 2014 after the events of the Maidan and the

overthrow of President Yanukovich. In his view, Ukraine's current political elite is a Bandera junta that pursues a nationalist, fascist and fiercely anti-Russian policy. He cites the alleged persecution of the Russian-speaking population and the forced Ukrainianisation of the population of eastern Ukraine. He believes that the war broke out at the own behest of the Bandera government in Kyiv and that Vladimir Putin realistically did not want the war but was forced into it. Skalski's tweet posts are based on replicating many of the anti-Ukrainian narratives held by far-right circles, such as narratives of ethnic conflict resulting from mass migration from Ukraine and the favouritism of Ukrainian citizens by the Polish government and denigration of banderism. He frequently tweets or re-tweets posts with #StopUkrainisation-Poland.

Marcin Rola is the "frontrunner" and editor-in-chief of the media outlet Wrealu24. Highly active in spreading disinformation and misinformation regarding COVID-19 and vaccines. He co-authored the book "Manipulacje - Czyli Jak Teorie Spiskowe Stały Się Faktem" (Manipulation - How Conspiracy Theories Became Facts), which used a mix of disinformation, misinformation and conspiracy theories, mainly regarding COVID-19. In his activity after the Russian invasion, Rola pushed anti-Ukrainian and anti-Refugees content, using disinformation, Russian propaganda and hate speech, blamed the US and NATO for the war, and denied Russian crimes in Ukraine. He also created an alternative social media platform

named "BanBye", which is used to spread disinformation, misinformation and conspiracy theories without any content moderation.

Ukraine

Olga and Anatoliy Shariy - a couple of pro-Russian bloggers with several Telegram channels (public and pre-paid ones), personal YouTube channels, and a New Edition media outlet. Both pretend to be pro-Ukrainian patriotic but heavily spread pro-Russian narratives. Both conduct their channel in a rather rude, superficial way, using obscene vocabulary and personal insults to Ukrainian authorities and Western politicians. Bloggers use Russian propaganda glossaries, such as "civil war", when referring to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014. The channel's rhetoric also includes hate speech, discrimination against Ukrainians based on language (Russian speakers should be privileged), and region (residents of the Western part of Ukraine are worse Ukrainians, a.k.a, "Nazis"). Also, Anatoliy Shariy founded a political party, **Shariy's Party**, and took part in local elections and elections to Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada)⁸². The party has a pro-Russian ideology, conducts pro-Russian propaganda and promotes Ukrainophobia. For instance, during the election campaign, the Shariy Party distributed campaign materials with a map of Ukraine without Crimea⁸³. In August 2020, key pro-Kremlin Opposition Platform For Life chose Shariy's Party as their main ally in the 2020 local elections in Ukraine. In March 2022, the Nation-

⁸² Chesno "Shariy's party: who are they and why do they exist" (Kyiv: Chesno, July 2020)

⁸³ NV "The Shariy's Party distributes leaflets with a map of Ukraine without Crimea – photo" (Kyiv: NV, Media, October 2020)

al Security and Defense Council suspended the activities of this political party during martial law⁸⁴.

Overall, after the Revolution of Dignity took place in Ukraine, four pro-Russian political parties were established by members of the pro-Kremlin Party of the Regions which runaway president Viktor Yanukovich ran.

The pro-Russian political party **Opposition Bloc** was created in 2014 by rebranding the pro-Russian Party of the Regions and unifying the fragments of the previous party under one political brand⁸⁵. Most of the former Party of Regions MPs joined the newly created party Opposition Bloc. For the first time, Opoblok took part in the elections to the Ukrainian Parliament in 2014. Before the 2019 parliamentary elections, the representatives of other pro-Russian parties announced that they were going to the elections together under the brand Opoblok⁸⁶. The most famous members and pro-Russian personas are Yuriy Boyko, Oleksandr Vilkul, Mykhailo Dobkin, Serhiy Kivalov, Taras Kozak, Vadym Novinskyi, and Nestor Shufrych. Also, the member of this party was Yevhen Balytskyi, who collaborated with Russia on occupied territories⁸⁷. In March 2022, the National Security and Defense Council

suspended the activities of this political party during martial law.

The pro-Russian political party **Nashi** was created in 2018⁸⁸. On February 10, 2017, the party's name was changed to Power of the People; then, the party was renamed to Ukrainian Format. Later the political party became part of the Opposition Bloc. The leader is **Yevhen Murayev**, who is known for his pro-Russian rhetoric as well as a TV channel that spreads propaganda and disinformation⁸⁹. The National Security and Defense Council suspended the activities of this political party during martial law.

The pro-Russian political party **Nash krai** was legally registered in 2011 under the name Block Party, but de facto, it appeared in 2014⁹⁰. The party co-founders were Oleksandr Mazurchak, Yuriy Granaturov, Oleksandr Feldman, Anton Kisse and Serhii Kaltse. They were members of the Party of Regions before the Revolution of Dignity. The activities of this political party National Security and Defense Council, were suspended during martial law.

Illya Kyva is a pro-Kremlin politician who was parroting Kremlin's propaganda in Ukraine for years⁹¹. Cur-

⁸⁴ Radio Svoboda [“The NSDC has suspended the activities of a number of parties, including OPZZ and the “Party of Sharia” - Zelenskyi”](#) (Kyiv: Radio Svoboda, Media, March 2022)

⁸⁵ BBC News Ukraine [“Opposition bloc: reincarnation of the Party of Regions”](#) (Kyiv: BBC News Ukraine, October 2014)

⁸⁶ Slovo i Dilo [“«Opoblok» united with the parties of Kernes and Murayev”](#) (Kyiv: Slovo i Dilo, Analytical resource, June 2019)

⁸⁷ Detector Media [“The Russians appointed Yevgeny Balytsky, a pro-Block activist, as the head of the occupying power of the Zaporizhzhia region”](#) (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, May 2022)

⁸⁸ Ukrayinska pravda [“Murayev's new party begins «active function»”](#) (Kyiv: Ukrayinska pravda, Media, September 2018)

⁸⁹ BBC News Ukraine [“Who is Yevgeny Murayev, whom the Kremlin seems to see as the new leader of the Ukrainian government”](#) (Kyiv: BBC News Ukraine, January 2022)

⁹⁰ Chesno [“«Наш край» у регіонах та Верховній Раді”](#) (Kyiv: Chesno NGO)

rently, he lives in Moscow and helps Russian propaganda spread its anti-Ukrainian narratives. Prosecutors charged pro-Kremlin lawmaker with high treason. Ilya Kyva has also been charged with infringing on Ukraine's territorial integrity, taking part in Russian war propaganda and using illegal weapons possession. When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine Kyva blamed the war on President Volodymyr Zelensky and urged him to resign. As of August 2022, Kyva is in Moscow⁹² helping Russian propaganda to attack Ukraine.

Tetyana Montyan - experienced propagandist and Ukrainophob who has been helping Russia to demonise

Ukraine⁹³. The Russian invasion of Ukraine makes her happy, according to her posts on Telegram. In her Telegram channel, the propagandist sometimes expresses her sympathy, worries about the fate of peaceful citizens bombed by her Russian friends and says that she prays for the quick victory of Russia so that it does not have to kill us all.

Overall, pro-Russian bloggers, who until recently, almost in unison, spread pro-Kremlin messages, are now "in search for the new rhetoric": some switch sides on the go, some mask obvious indicators of working in the interests of the Kremlin, and some are just silent.



Annex B. Reading list

In order to find detailed debunkings of Russian propaganda and disinformation, as well as get more information on the tactics and sources, the following resources are highly recommended.

- Detector Media at detector.media
- Instytut Kosciuszki at ik.org.pl
- EUvsDisinfo at euvsdisinfo.eu
- Disinfo Chronicle at disinfo.detector.media
- The Beacon Project at www.iri-beaconproject.org/

- NASK at twitter.com/WeryfikacjaNASK
- Disinfo Digest at disinfodigest.pl
- Demagog at demagog.org.pl
- Centrum Badań nad Współczesnym Środowiskiem Bezpieczeństwa at infowarfare.pl
- UkraineWorld at ukraineworld.org/
- exty.org at texty.org.ua/tag/eng/

⁸⁴ Detector Media "[Anti-Western Rhetoric in Information War. Who is Turning Ukrainians against the West?](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, May 2022)

⁸⁵ Radio Svoboda "[Kyva is in Russia](#)" (Kyiv: Radio Svoboda, Media, February 2022)

⁸⁶ Detector Media "[Hall of Shame. Ukrainian politicians and media personalities who have supported the Russian aggression against Ukraine](#)" (Kyiv: Detector Media NGO, March 2022)

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LUBLIN TRIANGLE PERSPECTIVE

детектор media