



MONITORING REPORT

February 20 – March 05, 2023

This report collates insight drawn from monitoring of the narratives trending across proKremlin sites and social media in across twelve countries in Central and Eastern Europe, as they relate to Russia's war in Ukraine. The data were collected and analysed by a number of NGOs, think tanks and researchers, and collated by the Open Information Partnership (OIP), to promote knowledge sharing across the OIP network and the broader region. The analysis contained in this report is the result of each group's monitoring, it is not authored by and does not represent the view of OIP, the FCDO or Zinc Network.



Country-By-Country overview:

- Armenia
- Baltics (Russian Language)
- Belarus
- Bulgaria
- Georgia
- Hungary
- Moldova
- Poland
- Slovakia
- Ukraine

Working Definition of Disinformation:

1. False or misleading information spread deliberately via Hostile State (HS)-backed or HS-aligned outlets.
2. Not-attributable false or misleading information which fits with existing HS narratives, aims or activities.
3. Content based on verifiable information which is unbalanced or skewed, amplifies, or exaggerates certain elements for effect, or uses emotive or inflammatory language to achieve affects which fit within existing HS narratives, aims, or activities.
4. For the purposes of this report, disinformation also can be spread either organically through human ignorance and uncertainty or through poor journalistic standards, as long as the narrative in question verifiably originates with HS-backed or HS-aligned sources.

The following overview summarises developments in disinformation narratives by country, including new or shifting narratives and key cases. These development and insights primarily relate to narratives about the following themes:

- Anti-Western Narratives
- Narratives Discrediting Ukraine
- Battlefield Events
- (Negative) Economic Consequences of Sanctions
- Ukrainian Refugees
- Conditions of Russians and Russian-speaking Minorities
- Threat of War Expanding Beyond Ukraine
- Aid to Ukraine
- Conspiracy Theories

ARMENIA

Media Initiatives Center

ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

Publications:

6

Views:

55,915

These narratives were focused on accusing the West of using Ukraine as a pawn, portraying the EU and/or NATO as being weak and inevitably breaking apart as well as on the West allegedly provoking the war in Ukraine

THREAT OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Publications:

3

Views:

445,235

This narrative was focused on threat to the Armenian security that is allegedly further undermined by the “anti-Russian” position of authorities and support of Ukraine

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE

Publications:

2

Views:

19,390

This narrative mostly relied on accusation of Ukrainians being “Nazis” and reinforced the justification of war offered by the Russian government that insists it was started to protect the people from “neo-Nazism” in Ukraine

Contextualizing most popular narratives

Most of the posts containing disinformation came from Telegram blogs rather than media outlets. Media outlets promoting disinformation were: Sputnik Armenia (2; affiliate of Russian state-run Sputnik agency), YerevanToday (1; affiliate of pro-Russian ex-president Robert Kocharyan), and Radar Armenia (1; this case was a short quote of Vladimir Putin). The progovernment Baghramyan26 channel maintained neutral content or covered topics related to Turkey/Azerbaijan possibly facilitating sanctions evasion for Russia.

Most Russian disinformation narratives were manifested in the form of quoting Russian officials, without any additional commentary from the channel or media outlet. Ukrainian officials were quoted much less. However, Joe Biden’s statements and his visit to Kyiv were widely covered, with other US officials frequently cited too.

In two posts, the Armenian government was criticized for an allegedly pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian position. Furthermore, a pro-Ukraine rally that took place in Yerevan was criticized by pro-Russian Telegram blogs.

Two posts contained claims that there are Western-funded puppet groups with pro-Ukrainian positions, but that are silent when it comes to Armenia's own problems (first of all, NagornoKarabakh – this is a sensitive topic and easy to weaponize).

Most popular post / Key actor

The most vivid example of Russian disinformation was Mika Badalyan – a Russian-Armenian blogger who moved to Armenia after the Velvet Revolution. Badalyan has both ties with the pro-Kremlin media scene and with the Armenian opposition (the pro-Russian bloc of Robert Kocharyan). In 2021, Badalyan announced plans to establish [correspondent office of Russian nationalist Tsargrad TV \(Царьград TV\)](#) in Armenia (see more [here](#)). Badalyan is comparable to Russian 'Z-bloggers' - bloggers supporting the Russian invasion of Ukraine and using the symbols that became associated with it, such as letters "Z" and "V", to mark their position of support - and often spreads typical Russian disinformation narratives; this is coupled by manipulative content about Nagorno-Karabakh.

In one post, Badalyan shared a screenshot from a reportedly Ukrainian Telegram channel in which Armenian genocide victims were mocked. Badalyan then expressed surprise over Armenians supporting Ukraine after such things. This is yet another example of an overarching strategy to weaponize the topics of Armenian genocide and the war in Nagorno-Karabakh to attack people with neutral or pro-Ukraine positions (see also the combination of manipulative content about Nagorno-Karabakh with the Russian narratives above). This strategy could be particularly effective also because it targets Ukraine's actual pro-Azerbaijani position – perceived by many in Armenia as unjust support for an aggressor - and further inflates it with manipulation and disinformation (see more context [here](#) and [here](#)).

Mika Badalyan and Sputnik Armenia published opinions that Armenia might become the next Ukraine because it has a dangerously bad relationship with Russia. Interestingly, in one post by the Armenian Military Portal, there was the opposite opinion: criticism of Russian radicals who demand that "younger brothers" be unconditionally loyal to Russia, while Russia provides nothing in exchange.

BALTICS (RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE)

Civic Resilience Initiative

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE	Publications: <u>10</u> Views: 30,203	These narratives employed a variety of sub-categories to create and reinforce negative images of Ukraine, mostly relying on the claims that Ukrainian military targets civilians
THREAT OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE	Publications: <u>7</u> Views: 19,698	This narrative exploits fearmongering, targeting the Russian-speaking audience in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to persuade them that support for Ukraine comes at the expense of their national and individual security
CONDITIONS OF RUSSIAN AND RUSSIAN- SPEAKING MINORITIES	Publications: <u>5</u> Views: 3,535	This narrative was focused on accusations of Russophobia, allegedly dominating in given countries and putting Russian culture at risk, burning Russian books and prohibiting Russian artists from performing

Contextualizing most popular narratives

Throughout the monitoring period, the dominant narratives amplified by pro-Russian sources, both media outlets and Telegram channels alike in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were focused on discrediting Ukraine in a variety of formats (10 publications, 30,203 views), from accusations of Nazism to promoting the idea that Ukraine will not become an EU/NATO member and is not really supported by the Western partners. The most widespread sub-narrative, however, centred on accusations that the Ukrainian military is allegedly targeting the civilian population both in Ukraine itself and on the Russian territory in the Bryansk region.

Within the category of narratives promoting the threat that the war will expand beyond Ukraine, the most popular sub-narrative was “X country is under threat / will be pulled into war” (7 posts, 19,698 views). In its consistency, it was more dominant than any sub-narrative from the previous category focused on discrediting Ukraine and can be considered the most important disinformation trend of the monitoring period. Here, the threat is understood in two ways. Firstly, stories within this sub-narrative tried to indicate that the sovereignty of the

Baltic states is under threat. For example, several Telegram posts joked about the showcase of Russian tanks in Lithuania's, Latvia's and Estonia's city squares, stating that it won't be long until Russia reoccupies these lands with the same tanks. In other cases, they tried to compare Crimea with the Baltic states, claiming that logistically it would be even easier to occupy these lands because of their poor military preparedness. Secondly, "threat" was understood in the sense that the Baltic states, by helping Ukraine, are under threat of losing their own identity. In some cases, Latvia was mocked for covering its streets with Ukrainian flags, stating that it won't be long until Riga is renamed as Kyiv. In the more severe cases, some posts warned to be wary of state security service raids in your apartment, to check up on whether you support Ukraine or not.

The second most popular sub-narrative this week was "X country is Russophobic / Russian culture is being attacked" (5 posts, 1 article, 61,097 views). Stories within this narrative tried to show that allegedly millions of Russian books are being burned in the Baltic states. Other stories accuse the Baltic states of not letting Russian singers perform, claiming that it is an act of Russophobia. Lastly, there were posts suggesting that the Baltic states are using double standards when they blame Russia for its actions in Ukraine, while they themselves despise Russians and want to see them killed.

Most popular post / key actor

The most popular Telegram post this week came from the Telegram channel that can roughly be translated as "Triune Baltic Deadlands" - "[Трибалтийские Вымираты](#)". This post mocked the showcase of Russian tanks in the Baltic capitals. It incited fearmongering, claiming that it won't be long until Russia will "deliver working samples". Regarding key actors, the posts were written by the Telegram group admins themselves and their identity is currently unknown; however, the most popular Telegram post of the week, which came from [Трибалтийские Вымираты](#), was a repost (with additional comment) from Aleksey Stefanov, a correspondent in the Baltic states for Kremlin-owned Rossiya Segodnya. This seems to conclude that Stefanov played a big part in this week's disinformation story circulation in the Baltic region.

Trend projection for next week

Based off the first week of monitoring, there were no narratives regarding economic consequences of sanctions or Ukrainian refugees, circling around the Baltic region's media space in the Russian language. This week's trend shows that Russian disinformation is centered around (a) inciting fearmongering within the region of an inevitable Russian occupation of the Baltic states and (b) calling out Russophobia in the Baltic states. "fearmongering" implies that the relevant messaging is aimed at causing panic within the intended target audience (the readers of the posts itself), hoping for the panic to spread further.

As these particular fearmongering stories did not pick up any attention in mainstream media, it is safe to assume that (a) at the very least it is difficult to gauge the citizens' reaction, as there have been no polls made regarding the Baltic region's attitude towards a potential war in the past few months or (b) if these stories did not garnish any mainstream attention, it was not a successful attempt to cause panic. If this trend continues, we should expect more focus on narratives discrediting Ukraine, spreading threat of war expanding to the Baltics and highlighting Russophobia within the region.

The Russophobia and warmongering narratives coincide with one another, as it would be a usual Russian disinformation ploy to incite fearmongering within a country. That is to say that if messages are spread about how the Russian-speaking minority is being treated poorly, it creates a pretext for Russia "to save the abused people". The more the "Russophobia" narrative gets pushed, the more sense it is to follow it up with the "reoccupation" narrative to incite fearmongering and panic within the region.

The 11th of March will mark the thirty-third anniversary of The Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania. This might prompt Russia's disinformation actors to produce such narratives which would delegitimize Lithuania's statehood or undermine the state's capacity to function, i.e., "country is not a sovereign state", "government is unstable and incompetent", and "country is struggling economically". These narratives' production is projected to be produced by Russian officials or key Lithuanian Russian disinformation actors as Vaidas Zemaitis Lekstutis, Algirdas Paleckis or Erika Švenčionienė and then be reproduced in the (social) media outlets oriented towards the whole Baltic region.

BELARUS

Belarus Press Club

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE	Publications: <u>6</u> Views: 118,594	This group of narratives was mostly focused on accusations of Ukraine targeting civilians, with reference to the incident in the Bryansk region; it also relied on portrayal of Ukrainians as Nazis and the idea that Western societies do not support Ukraine
ANTIWESTERN NARRATIVES	Publications: <u>2</u> Views: 3,580	Two publications within this narrative promoted messages that the West is using Ukraine as a pawn and that it profits from the war
UKRAINIAN REFUGEES	Publications: <u>1</u> Views: 3,175	The publication within this narrative claimed that German citizens are dissatisfied with the alleged abuse of aid provided by the government to Ukrainian refugees, who supposedly do not wish to work

Contextualizing most popular narratives

Among the narratives discrediting Ukraine, the predominant one for the monitoring period was a claim that Ukrainians are Nazis. In particular, the channel "Belarusian silovik" [compares](#) the current situation with the supply of German Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine with allegedly the same situation during the Second World War, hinting at the supposedly Nazi essence of Ukraine.

Heavy focus is also on the idea that Ukrainians are allegedly targeting the civilian population. For this purpose, several fakes were spread about the Ukrainian military attacking peaceful Russian villages and taking hostages. There were also reports that armed men could have taken about 50 residents of the village hostage. At the same time, it was reported about the penetration of armed people into the village of Lubechane, where several visitors to the local store were allegedly taken hostage. Later, none of the claims were confirmed.

Thus, the channel "Belarus' golovnogo mozga" [referred](#) to Russian media, which reported that a Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group took hostages in the Bryansk region, and then blew up a substation and a gas station. There were also reports that armed men could have taken about 50 residents of the village hostage. At the same time, it was reported that an armed

group had entered the village of Lubechane, where several visitors to the local store were allegedly taken hostage. None of these conjectures were, or have later been, confirmed.

The Belarusian Silovik channel, citing Russian news-focused Telegram channel Shot, [claimed](#) that the Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group in the Bryansk region allegedly fired on a school bus and at the same time two people were killed and a child was injured.

For anti-Western narratives, the message that Ukraine is being used by the West as a pawn and that Ukrainian leadership does not care about it was evidenced by the message of the channel Azarenok, that in turn [referred](#) to the telegram channel of the capital's television "STV. News of Belarus". It quoted columnist of the media "PolitExpert" Vladimir Yeranosyan, who stated that the Ukrainian leadership persuaded the people to accept war, that the male population cannot earn money, since Ukrainian economy is completely destroyed, and that, to feed their families, they receive a salary from the Pentagon.

Finally, the channel "Zheltyye slivy", referring to welt.de, [concludes](#) that only every 8th Ukrainian refugee works in Germany, the rest either diligently pretend that they are looking for a job or don't even do that - they supposedly demand benefits. Such behaviour of the Ukrainian refugees is reported to cause outrage of the German citizens, thus portraying them as having negative perception of the refugees.

Most popular/Key actors

The most popular publication throughout the monitoring period was posted by "Belarus' golovnogo mozga", referring to the accusations of Ukrainian sabotage and reconnaissance group taking hostages in the Bryansk region. The post was viewed 27,802 times, being the most widely viewed publication among the sources monitored in Belarus.

BULGARIA

Center for the Study of Democracy

ANTIWESTERN NARRATIVES

Publications:
17
Views:
21,563

These narratives were focused on the West allegedly using Ukraine as a pawn and being prepared to continue the war at the expense of Ukrainians, with some of the narratives simultaneously promoting the contradictory ideas that the West both prioritizes Ukraine over its own citizens and is losing interest in helping it.

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE

Publications:
13
Views:
20,753

Narratives under the umbrella of discrediting Ukraine were mostly focused on promoting the ideas that Ukrainian leadership does not care about its citizens and is corrupt, as well promoting the claims that Ukrainian media cannot be trusted.

AID TO UKRAINE

Articles:
12
Views:
12,497

Narratives aiming to undermine the supply of aid to Ukraine relied on messages that such aid weakens the suppliers and will be used to attack Russia and/or Russians

Contextualizing most popular narratives

The most popular narratives utilized in this period were the ones discrediting giving military and financial aid to Ukraine and Western politicians caring about Ukraine “at the expense of their own citizens”. Numerous posts discredited Biden’s visit in Kyiv, stating that during President’s Day, Biden chose Ukraine over America. He was also criticized for being absent during the recent Ohio railroad accident.

Internal contradictions in the eco-system of Russian disinformation in Bulgaria are also evidenced by the discrepancies in the anti-Western narratives promoted within the monitoring period. While some of the messages portrayed the West as being ultimately disinterested in the fate of Ukrainians, since their country is perceived as merely a pawn and interest in helping it gradually declines, other publications focused on the allegedly excessive attention that Ukraine and Ukrainians receive from the Western governments at the expense of their own citizens.

Another often mentioned topic was Kyiv’s intention to seize Transnistria’s huge weapon depots. This was used in combination with the narrative that NATO countries are unlikely to

be able to provide Ukraine with sufficient quantities of equipment and ammunitions in the near future.

Most popular post/Key actor

Within the monitoring period, the most viewed publication was produced by a Telegram channel “BG Via”. This publication, categorized as mostly promoting narratives discrediting Ukraine, labelled Ukrainians as “Nazis” and pushed the idea that should “liberals” in Russia take over and stop the war this course of action would be disastrous for Russia. The article suggested the war can be stopped when Ukraine is deprived of access to the Black Sea since it would undermine Ukrainian economy and weaken it geopolitically.

GEORGIA

GRASS FactCheck

ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

Publications:
7
Views:
5,253

These narratives were predominantly focused on blaming the West for escalating hostilities in Ukraine, the West provoking the war, being responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream 2 and losing interest in supporting Ukraine.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES/FAKE NEWS

Publications:
5
Views:
7,496

The dominant conspiracy theories in the Georgian information space were unrelated to the war in Ukraine and Russia's actions, although one of them was anti-US in nature.

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Articles:
1
Views:
360

This narrative was represented by a publication portraying Ukrainian refugees as a threat to Georgia's security, them being prioritized over Georgian citizens and being ungrateful for the benefits they receive.

Contextualizing the most popular narratives

Currently, the Georgian information space, including the disinformation ecosystem, is mainly consumed by internal issues, especially by the draft law on "transparency of foreign influence" – a Russia-type law brought in by parliamentary majority that aimed to limit the work of and suppress Georgian civil society and media. Amongst many problems, the law was supposed to oblige CSOs and media with at least 20% foreign funding to register as agents of foreign influence – similar to a practice used in Russia. The draft law was discussed and successfully voted on at the first parliamentary reading by the Georgian Dream parliamentary majority. Following the large-scale protests in Georgia, the draft law withdrawn. The discussion process preceding the introduction of the draft law was full of anti-Western disinformation, disseminating disinformation messages that mainly blamed the EU and the US for interfering in Georgia's internal affairs. NGOs were also accused of an attempt to open a second front in Georgia against Russia.

Despite the main focus not being on Ukraine, several disinformation narratives were identified. The war was claimed to be triggered by the West, not Russia; the West was also blamed for prolonging the war and not supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflict due to a decision to sacrifice Ukraine, and Georgia as well, to weaken Russia. The responsibility for the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline was also placed on the West/Ukraine.

Two messages were observed regarding recent developments:

- 1) Georgian rally to express solidarity with Ukraine in Tbilisi was used to spread disinformation regarding Ukrainian refugees in Georgia. It was claimed that they were prioritised over Georgians but were still ungrateful and spoiled. Moreover, it was claimed that they constituted a threat to Georgia's security and stability as Ukrainian refugees in Georgia were actually saboteurs handled by Ukraine's embassy in Georgia, carrying out destructive actions.
- 2) The reports in Russian media that Ukrainian forces staged an attack inside Russian territory, in Bryansk region, was parroted by local propagandists, claiming that the Ukrainian military attacked and killed children and civilians, and took civilians as hostages. This message aimed to portray the Ukrainian armed forces as terrorist in order to divert attention away from Russia's war crimes and brutality.

The ever-enduring narrative that Ukraine is losing the war and Russian armed forces are successfully advancing was one of the most active, as it represents the core messages of Russian disinformation in Georgia, on which the other narratives are based.

Most popular post/Key actors

The most popular publication of the monitoring period is ascribed to the category of anti-Western narratives. A pro-Russian portal News Front Georgia, a Georgian branch of a NewsFront agency based in the Russian-occupied Crimea and operating in 10 languages to spread pro-Kremlin disinformation, shared Sergey Lavrov's statement that Russia is not rejecting the start of serious negotiations with Kyiv, but nobody is calling on Ukraine to do so - on the contrary, the West was preparing Ukraine for war and is not willing to make peace.

HUNGARY

Political Capital

ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

Publications:
9

Views:
14,193

This group of narratives was predominantly focused on the claim that the war in Ukraine was provoked by the West for its own benefit and facilitated the spread of Vladimir Putin's recent speech and its anti-Western arguments, including the idea that Ukraine is being used by the West as a pawn.

BATTLEFIELD EVENTS

Publications:
8

Views:
1,805,935

Pro-Russian sources paid substantial attention to military developments, promoting the idea that Ukraine is losing the war while Russian forces are advancing. The messaging was focused on the developments near Bakhmut and was proliferated by the pro-government media outlet Origo, granting the majority of Views under this category

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE

Publications:
5

Views:
3,974

This narrative was partially linked to the developments in Bakhmut, promoting the idea that Ukraine mistreats its soldiers. It was combined with the claims that Ukraine discriminates against ethnic minorities in the country.

Contextualizing the most popular narratives

This week, 31 out of the 50 sampled posts and articles contained disinformation narratives, with the majority centered around 3 narratives (anti-Western narratives, narratives discrediting Ukraine and battlefield events). During the monitoring period, there was a relatively strong focus on anti-Western narratives, and narratives discrediting Ukraine. This was partly due to the fact that the anniversary was "commemorated" by a number of disinformation sites, which used the occasion to point to the positive portrayal of Ukraine's alleged overreach. On the other hand, there was also a relatively high level of attention around the events in Bakhmut, with disinformation actors attempting in a number of cases to present the events as if the fighting there was evidence of the extreme weakness of the Ukrainian army. More than a third of these disinformation narratives were spread by farright influencer Zsolt Bede on Telegram followed by three government affiliated actors – including a media outlet, an influencer and a fringe site - with four narratives each. Thus 75% of all disinformation came from these four actors.

1. Anti-Western narratives

Anti-Western narratives focused on the claim that the “West or NATO provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia,” mostly emphasising alleged US involvement in the conflict i.e., preparing a chemical provocation in Donbas, or that the war only serves American interests. This connects to the narrative that the West, especially the US, profits from the war in Ukraine and uses Ukraine as a pawn in its plan to weaken, destroy or invade Russia. Putin’s address to the nation was also frequently quoted, which naturally gave a floor to numerous anti-Western messages. Posts of this kind were spread by pro-government and far-right influencers and fringe sites.

Pro-government influencers and fringe sites regularly cite Republican sources while being critical to the US in most cases. This week they quoted Trump’s claims about the destruction of Nord Stream 2 where he pointed at the US or Ukraine as the possible perpetrator, but acquitted Russia. Another Facebook page shared a video with Hungarian subtitles in which Fox News presenter Tucker Carlson claims that the goal of the US is to invade Russia and “put American tanks in Red Square”. They regularly manipulate the original posts as well, i.e., the Telegram channel of a far-right influencer shared a manipulated picture that depicts a “screenshot” of one of Elon Musk’s tweets, in which he says that Bakhmut is “almost surrounded and it’s good.” Or falsely referred to Scott Ritter, a former US intelligence officer, convicted [sex offender](#) and regular vector of pro-Russian disinformation, who claims that the Ukrainian army will be completely destroyed by autumn.

2. Battlefield events

Articles and posts were detected that covered the events of the war, especially the battle for Bakhmut and the alleged “hopeless position of the Ukrainian army”, despite Western support. The sources (such as the government-controlled Origo, or far-right influencers) claimed multiple times that Russia already controls the city, referring to sources connected to the Kremlin. A Telegram post of far-right influencer Zsolt Bede claimed that the airport in Machulishchy, Belarus was attacked by Ukraine secret services.

3. Narratives discrediting Ukraine

Narratives aiming to discredit Ukraine were also popular among pro-government and far-right influencers and fringe sites. By claiming that Ukraine mistreats its soldiers and leaves young and old conscripts to die in Bakhmut, while saving the “valuable troops”, they repeat the now

trending but relatively new disinformation narrative about the so-called “forced conscription” of ethnic minorities, underage boys, women and old people into the military. This narrative connects to the wider narrative that Ukraine regularly mistreats and subdues ethnic minorities, which is a common anti-Ukrainian trope amongst pro-government and far-right circles in Hungary. These actors also repeat the decade-old claim that the Ukrainian leadership is Nazi or corrupt.

4. Aid to Ukraine

Pro-Kremlin actors tried to undermine Western support of Ukraine by using common narratives, including that Western military aid is insufficient to repel the attacks of the Russian army or that military aid only prolongs the conflict and risks World War III. One of the main pro-Kremlin news sites also published a video on 27 February about an alleged protest in Paris against NATO and military aid to Ukraine. In the description of the video, they claim that “thousands of people marched in Paris on Sunday to protest against arms shipments to Ukraine and demand France's withdrawal from NATO.” However, the protests shown on the video had happened earlier, before 12 February, as videos of the protests were already uploaded on that date, and there was no additional protest on February 27.

The source in question was Orosz Hírek (“Russian News” - oroshirek.hu) which is presenting world events according to the Kremlin's perspective. There is no impressum on the site, the contact address is a Russian email-address (oroshirek@yandex.ru) so it can be suspected that this site is connected to pro-Kremlin actors. Generally this means writing news articles in a neutral tone, but citing mostly Russian official sources or cherry-picking articles from global media outlets that are reinforcing the Kremlin's narrative about world events. This site sometimes publishes videos allegedly from anti-Western/anti-NATO protests but they often proved to be manipulated.

Pro-Kremlin actors regularly try to exaggerate the scope of anti-Ukrainian protests in European countries by using fake pictures or framed negative Twitter comments as if they would represent the European opinion toward Ukraine. This is a regular tactic used by this particular disinformation site by either exclusively reporting about and enlarging the size of real protests or creating entirely fake ones. This week these narratives were spread by pro-government and far-right influencers.

5. Other

Pro-government influencers repeated the year-long message of the ruling party calling Hungarian opposition actors foreign-controlled warmongers under the influence of “Brussels” and the “globalist left”. Interestingly, narratives about the need for immediate peace or about economic issues, which are the main messages in the government-controlled media space, were largely missing from the sources this week. Only one resharing of Viktor

Orbán's speech contained a narrative about the need for immediate ceasefire and that "sane politicians understand: there will be no winners in this war!".

Most popular post/Key actor

The most substantial number of Views belongs to the messages shared by the government-controlled outlet Origo. Within the monitoring period, these messages were focused on military developments and predominantly portrayed Ukraine as losing side, contrary to the alleged successes of Russia near Bakhmut.

Origo is popular Hungarian news-site which was bought by pro-government businessmen in 2014 and was later transferred to the government-controlled media conglomerate called KESMA, which owns hundreds of Hungarian media outlets. This essentially means that it is part of the state propaganda machine, as KESMA is suspected to receive communication panels directly from a ministry. Almost all of the KESMA-owned sites are distributing the same messages in line with government communication. When it comes pro-Kremlin narratives, this site distributes messages of the Kremlin, without proper context and the guest/opinion articles are generally pro-Kremlin or anti-Ukrainian.

THREAT OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

Articles:
5
Views:
280,065

This narrative is disproportionately predominant in Moldova and mostly linked to the breakaway region of Transnistria, which Russian sources relying on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs portrayed as being a potential target of Ukrainian provocation.

Contextualizing the most popular narratives

In the Republic of Moldova, the anti-Ukrainian disinformation agenda has been exponentially dominated by a single narrative - Ukraine's alleged intention to militarily attack the breakaway region of Transnistria. Both in terms of the number of Views - over 300 thousand views in the generated report alone, and the number of posts - this is the dominant theme. The theme was launched on anonymous Russian telegram channels claiming to be Ukrainian, then amplified by similar channels, including those operating for audiences in the Republic of Moldova, especially Transnistria. The falsehood was subsequently fortified by statements from the Russian foreign and defence ministries. Active multiplication followed for several days. The Moldovan and Ukrainian authorities responded and maintained their attention on the issue.

The same narrative subsequently had a repeated boost by being mixed with the theme of nuclear danger - Russia accused Ukraine of preparing the use of a "dirty bomb" in Transnistria (a bomb allegedly created with British help, from materials smuggled in by ships participating in the "grain deal" - an example of mixing conspiracy narratives of different kind).

In addition to these we noticed the takeover of continuing Kremlin disinformation themes about the war by several pro-Kremlin sources, but also a gradual resuscitation of the anti-refugee topic. As per the sources in question that continuously post disinformation about the war, the most prominent are listed below:

1. [Bogdan Tirdea](#), 8267 subscribers - Telegram channel of a member of the Moldovan parliament from the "Communist and Socialist Bloc"(A common bloc of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova and the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova). Bogdan Tirdea promotes Kremlin narratives. He is one of the main ideologues of the Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova. A lot of Telegram channels, websites and Facebook pages distribute his manipulative and propagandistic content.

2. [Transnistria guy](#) [Приднестровец], 75 822 subscribers - Telegram channel allegedly managed by FSB affiliated sources. The channel posts mainly news related to Transnistria and foreign news.
3. [Gagauzian Republic](#) [Гагаузская республика] 33 090 subscribers - Telegram channel that posts a lot of content related to the war in Ukraine, and regional issues. It supports Russia and discredits Ukraine.
4. [Smuglianka](#) [Смуглянка], 3 155 subscribers - Telegram channel that posts conspiracy theories. It supports Russia and discredits Ukraine.

It may be assumed that the Transnistria-related campaign was prepared in advance on the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the large-scale invasion. It could be to overshadow the focus of public discussion in Russia, but also in other countries on the results, causes of the war and other issues unfavourable to the Putin regime.

Another interesting aspect is that the illegal authorities in Transnistria have somewhat avoided supporting Russia's disinformation campaign. Despite their loyal attitude, they have practically denied the veracity of the Kremlin's claims. Slightly more pronouncedly anti-Ukrainian was the so-called Transnistrian Foreign Minister Ignatiev - affiliated with the Russian FSB and less loyal to Transnistria's local leaders.

The narrative about Ukraine's alleged military aggression in Transnistria was primarily aimed at Russian audiences. In the Republic of Moldova, it created a mild wave of concern. One important aspect is the unwitting fortification of this narrative by the Ukrainian media and some opinion makers. Several Ukrainian sources have misinterpreted the Moldovan Prime Minister's statements about the need to evacuate the Russian military from Transnistria and openly called on Chisinau to launch a military operation against the separatist region. The presence of these speeches greatly increased the credibility of the Russian narrative about Transnistria and contributed to the worsening of Ukraine's image in Moldova. In its strategic disinformation effort in the Republic of Moldova, Russia has always had as one of its major goals to create and increase dissension with Ukraine at the level of citizens and governments.

Most popular post/Key actors

The most popular message was distributed by a Telegram channel "[Transnistria guy](#)" ["Приднестровец"] focused on the region of Transnistria and portrayed as a local source. The message, having been viewed 177,286 times, insists that Transnistria is "a peaceful state" and will not fall for provocations aimed at forcing it to join the hostilities. While in this publication the author does not specify which side might undertake a provocation against the region, further context is provided by the second most viewed post authored by the same channel and referring Russian Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Quoting them, the author insists that Ukraine will suffer the consequences should it decide to attack Transnistria in any way, as Russia has leverage to retaliate on Transnistria's behalf.

POLAND

Fakenews.pl

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE

Publications:

10

Views:

44,388

The key focus of narratives discrediting Ukraine was the portrayal of Ukrainians as “Nazis” which was supplemented by sub-narratives picturing them as targeting civilian population and losing the will to fight

CONSPIRACY THEORIES/FAKE NEWS

Publications:

9

Views:

190,609

The conspiracy theories predominantly disseminated via far-right sources focused on portraying the war in Ukraine as a part of a global conspiracy, simultaneously undermining Ukrainian agency and picturing it as being ruled by the West

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Publications:

3

Views:

17,984

These narratives were predominantly focused on portraying Ukrainian refugees as a threat to Polish security, that they are prioritized by the government over the citizens of Poland and that they are ungrateful to their host country.

Contextualizing the most popular narratives

The most frequently observed narratives in recent weeks have been those discrediting Ukraine and undermining Western support for the government in Kyiv. Conspiracy theories were used en masse in spreading disinformation on right-wing and far-right channels on Telegram. Russian disinformation continues to use far-right and anti-vaccine circles to spread false content. This situation has not changed since 2021. Through analysis of the data, it is possible to distinguish a few particularly popular narratives that have been in use for a long time, and to note the emergence of the new one.

An important narrative was to discredit and ridicule President Joe Biden's visits to Kyiv and Warsaw. Biden appeared in conflicting messages, both those proclaiming that his presence was just an empty gesture and those claiming that he was and is the actual leader of Ukraine and Zelensky merely his puppet. Even archival footage purporting to prove that back in Petro Poroshenko's presidency Joe Biden was the de facto leader of Ukraine was used.

The fact that there are numerous refugees from Ukraine in NATO countries continues to be exploited. They are accused of ingratitude, theft, rape, smuggling and murders in Western

Europe. Antagonizing the public against the refugees is meant to undermine the internal security of NATO countries and lead to a decline in mass public support for Ukraine.

The frequency of the Kremlin's basic message - accusing Ukrainians of being Nazis - is also not waning. This motif appears en masse on numerous channels on Telegram messenger, often alongside other narratives.

Notable is the emergence of a new trend - the theme of chemical weapons used on the battlefield or as a part of false flag operation. This is a separate narrative from the biological laboratories in Ukraine and is based on the false message that the West, especially the United States, is supplying Ukraine with chemical weapons. This one is to be used in the Donbass or western Ukraine in order to then to blame Russia. According to some posts, the chemical weapons are to be used in a false flag operation on the territory of a NATO country. It is highly likely that this narrative will gain more popularity in the coming weeks.

Most popular post/Key actors

The messages falling under the category of conspiracy theories received the widest viewership due to the publication shared by Tsyol.pl outlet, which has a substantial audience compared to the other sources monitored this week, generating the most substantial viewership among all of them. The publication (160,000 views) quoted Evgeniy Prigozhin and his statements focusing on the internal political situation in Russia, aimed at fearmongering and attempting to solidify the political and military influence of PMC "Wagner". "Wagner" is pictured as a guarantor of Russia's internal stability that would be undermined and Russia plunged into chaos by the war spreading to its own territory due to the incompetence of the Russian military.

ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

Publications:
17
Views:
1,085,636

The plethora of anti-western narratives was dominated by the messaging attributing blame for the war to the West that has allegedly provoked it, at the same time stressing its decisiveness to use Ukraine as a pawn and prolong the war “until the last Ukrainian”. Western alliances were also portrayed as weak and ready to fall apart.

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE

Publications:
3
Views:
31,265

Narratives discrediting Ukraine were focused on two contradictory messages stating that Ukraine does not want to fight, at the same time portraying it as a side that is not interested in establishing peace

AID TO UKRAINE

Publications:
2
Views:
7,430

This narrative promoted the idea that providing aid to Ukraine is not popular among Slovak citizens and goes against their wishes, with the focus on a “pro-peace” demonstration criticizing the supply of military aid to Ukraine.

Contextualizing the most popular narratives

Throughout the last two weeks, the Slovak disinformation space was, based on our analysis of the 50 sampled posts and articles, dominated mostly by anti-Western narratives. During last few months (approximately from September/October 2022) Slovak disinformation actors adopted a rhetoric according to which everyone and everything supporting Ukraine is pro-war. On the contrary, they position themselves as pro-peace even though they spread Russian disinformation and try to justify Russian aggression. This tactic was previously addressed by the Slovak Police department, which pointed out the fact that the sentiments expressed by pro-Russian actors in Slovakia are misleading. In reality they are acting against Ukraine, which according to them should surrender. This is the reason why pro-peace in this case means pro-Russian. The fact that the Slovak police pointed out this strategy shows that Slovak institutions are aware of this situation.

However, these actors are not operating only in online space. They are organizing “pro-peace” protests where they demand Slovak politicians stop supporting Ukraine (stop sending aid to Ukraine) or leave NATO. These protests were a topic of numerous posts and articles. They mostly exaggerate the number of protests around the country and also the number of people taking part in them. They are therefore trying to create a narrative that the majority (or at least a significant part) of Slovak society

does not support Ukraine and wants to leave NATO. By calling themselves “pro-peace”, they are also trying to appear as on the “correct side”, however in reality, they are only justifying Russian aggression to which Ukraine should surrender.

These actors are also spreading hateful narratives against the Slovak government and Slovak president, which are supporting Ukraine. Disinformation actors often call them “warmongers” (which is in accordance with already mentioned rhetoric about supporting Ukraine being equivalent to supporting war) which is often followed by claims that the Slovak government is dragging Slovakia into the war.

A significant number of posts and articles spread the narrative that the US is aggressive and not only caused (provoked) the war in Ukraine but is planning a war with China. One of the posts even claimed that war in Ukraine is only a practice for the US, during which it can learn from the achievements and failures in order to win the anticipated war with China, which the US cannot afford to lose. Another one claimed that the US is planning to destroy Taiwan. All of these claims are supporting the narrative that peace is not in the US interest and on the contrary, the US chooses, supports and provokes wars around the world.

Other posts and articles spread a number of different narratives. Some of them claimed that Russia is trying to start peace negotiations but Ukraine declines. One article claimed that the sanctions caused an energy crisis in Europe, and this is why the sanctions are not supported by North African countries. A couple of posts were trying to create an illusion that Ukraine is losing the war by claiming that another Ukrainian soldier is questioning his fighting or by exaggerating the number of Ukrainian casualties. One article also focused on the topic of the Ukrainian Euromaidan in 2014, which according to the article was planned and organized by the West.

Most popular post/Key actors

The message that enjoyed most viewership (325,000 views) was distributed by a conservative outlet “Hlavne Spravy” and speculates that the US is using Ukraine as an opportunity to practice for a big war against China. It claims that the US will learn from their achievements and failures in Ukraine in order to prepare for a war against China, which would be of utmost importance to the US. It quotes the article by Rebecca Heinrichs, published by the Hudson Institute. However, the original article explores the lessons learned by the US throughout the course of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as these lessons may be effective in deterring China. The conclusion that Washington uses Ukraine as a pawn to exercise in the face of a Chinese threat is made by “Hlavny Spravy” and constitutes disinformation.

As a source, “Hlavny Spravy” is known for mixing disinformation content with factual articles based on information from credible sources, which makes it more difficult for the readers to distinguish between disinformation and fact-based reporting. The outlet, however, is consistent in promoting pro-Russian disinformation. For example, in March 2022 a video was released of a former author from Hlavné správy, Bohuš Garbár, being recruited for espionage on behalf of Russia. The video

showed Sergej Solomasov, a military attaché at the Russian embassy, recruiting Garbár to become a spy. This video has also become the strongest proof of Hlavné správy's ties with Russia.

It is not, however, the only controversy surrounding Hlavné Správy. One of the authors was presenting himself as Eugen Rusnák. In reality, it was a Russian national called Jevgenij Pačev spreading pro-Russian disinformation. The outlet was also recognized as dangerous by National Security Office in Slovakia, which, after the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, had an authority to block outlets spreading pro-Russian disinformation. Hlavné správy was one of them. It is worthwhile to mention, that the National Security Office was deprived of the authority of make such decisions after several months.

UKRAINE

Detector Media

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE

Publications:

9

Views:

9,796,198

Attempts by pro-Russian sources to discredit Ukraine were mostly focused on claims that the Ukrainian military targets the civilian population and deliberately stages provocations, while its government doesn't care about the Ukrainian people in general and the military, which is allegedly mistreated, in particular

BATTLEFIELD EVENTS

Publications:

7

Views:

9,127,552

This messaging was predominantly aimed at promoting the idea that Ukraine is losing the war and struggles militarily as opposed to the alleged advancement of the Russian troops, with particular attention paid to the developments near Bakhmut.

ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

Publications:

5

Views:

4,185,533

Anti-western narratives targeting a Ukrainian audience were centred mostly on the sub-narrative that the US already is directly involved in the war and, since it is using Ukraine as a pawn, is responsible for the incident in Bryansk region, allegedly carried out by the Ukrainian saboteur and reconnaissance group

Contextualizing the most popular narratives

Within the monitoring period, “Detector Media” recorded Russian disinformation messages and narratives designed to destabilize the situation in Ukraine, disperse panic in society, etc. In particular, the most messages recorded this week fuelled the narrative that Ukraine is losing the war. Reports said that the situation at the front was getting worse. In particular, in Bakhmut. They said that Russia is successfully displacing Ukrainians in this direction. There were also reports claiming that the number of cemeteries in Ukraine is increasing, and the existing ones are expanding. Allegedly, the situation at the front is so bad that many people die every day and there is no place to bury them. Russia needs all these messages to show that the situation in Ukraine is hopeless and Russia will win the war. In addition to the fact that such posts claimed that the situation in Ukraine is hopeless, their authors also strengthened the image of Russia. That is, they claimed that Ukraine would lose, but Russia would also have advantages at the front. Such messages are harmful, because they may sow panic in society, and demoralize Ukrainians, who are already exhausted by life in the conditions of a great war. Also, such messages distort reality.

There were also messages fuelling the narrative that Ukraine is provoking Russia into war. Many posts this week were devoted to the situation related to the so-called work of the Ukrainian saboteur and reconnaissance group in the Bryansk region of Russia. The authors of the posts mainly claimed that Ukraine had committed an act of terrorism in Russia, as a result of which civilians suffered. According to the authors of the posts, Ukraine is provoking Russia to aggression in this way. This message of Russian disinformation is not new and from time to time appears in the information space in the background of the news. For example, with such a message, Russia has repeatedly justified its actions in Ukraine and shifted the responsibility for civilian deaths and destruction to Ukraine. This is how Russian agitprop creates the appearance that Ukraine is to blame for the war because Ukrainians and the Ukrainian army are ready to attack civilians, kill them, etc. Thus, for nine years, Russia replicated the narrative that Ukrainians are shelling Donbas and killing children there. And with this, Kremlin tried to justify the war it started. Messages about provocations in the context of news about the saboteur group are also needed to shift the blame from Russia onto Ukraine.

In addition, some messages fuelled the narrative of Western governance of Ukraine. Allegedly, the war in Ukraine is beneficial to the US. In particular, the authors of some posts sampled in this monitoring period claimed that the United States was participating in the war. For example, it was argued that the US should bear responsibility for the alleged attack on the Ukrainian saboteur and reconnaissance group. It was claimed that Washington "stands behind those who shot civilians in Bryansk." That is, the authors hint that Ukraine is governed by the US. In this way, Russia once again seeks to discredit the subjectivity of Ukraine, devalue it, and present it as not an independent state. Such messages also help Russia to justify its aggression. In the case of Bryansk incident, the so-called collective West aggressively targets Russia, now on its own territory, and so it is left with no other choice than to defend itself.

In addition to the three main narratives this week, there were also messages that the US is profiting from the war in Ukraine and using Ukraine solely as a tool for profit and influence on Russia.

Most popular post/Key actors

The most viewed publication (2,604,276 views) was published by Telegram channel Readovka, selfpositioned as a source of “real news” that was launched in May 2021. As of March 2023, the channel has 1,689,707 subscribers and mostly reports on the war-related events as well as negative content with potential to generate click-bait from Russia and countries formerly occupied by the Soviet Union. The reporting angle is consistently pro-Kremlin.

The message published by Readovka references an incident in Bryansk region of Russia and the alleged activity of the Ukrainian saboteur and reconnaissance group there that is accused of targeting civilian population. The message by Readovka features an audio-file with a female voice describing what is claimed the activity of the group in the village of Sushany, Bryansk region, including the attack on a woman who was simply standing next to her house. The group is said to have captured hostages and burnt down houses in Sushany; the author of the publication is sympathetic with the victims of the alleged saboteur group that provides a demonized image of the Ukrainian military.

List of Narrative and Sub-Narrative Headings:

ANTI-WESTERN NARRATIVES

- 1a. The EU and/or NATO and/or the West are weak and will break apart
- 1b. The West is using Ukraine as a pawn
- 1d. The West is losing interest in helping Ukraine / wants Ukraine to surrender
- 1e. The West/NATO provoked the conflict between Ukraine and Russia
- 1f. NATO/the US/the West is or will be directly involved in the war
- 1g. The West is profiting on the war in Ukraine
- 1h. The West will fight until the last Ukrainian
- 1i. Western leadership is incompetent
- 1j. The West/US is responsible for the sabotage of Nord Stream
- 1k. Western media is lying
- 1l. The West is trying to divide Slavs/Orthodox Christians
- 1m. Western countries/institutions ignore the will of their people
- 1n. Western politicians care about Ukraine at the expense of their own citizens
- 1o. The West is hypocritical to criticize Russia's actions
- 1p. Non-aligned countries are choosing to side with Russia over the West

NARRATIVES DISCREDITING UKRAINE

- 2a. Ukrainians are Nazis
- 2b. Ukrainians are targeting civilians and commit other war crimes
- 2c. Ukraine was planning to attack Russia first
- 2d. Ukrainians refuse to fight / have low morale
- 2e. The Ukrainian leadership is corrupt and/or incompetent
- 2f. Ukraine is blackmailing Western governments
- 2g. There are tensions among Ukraine's leadership
- 2h. Ukrainians are pretentious/demanding/ungrateful
- 2i. Ukrainian civil society wants to make concessions to Russia
- 2j. Ukraine's leadership does not care about its people
- 2k. Ukrainians do not support Zelensky
- 2l. Ukraine mistreats its soldiers/civilians
- 2m. Ukraine's informational space is controlled by the state authorities / Ukrainian media is lying Ukraine is autocratic
- 2n. Ukraine does not want peace
- 2o. Ukraine deliberately stages provocations
- 2p. Ukraine should not/will not become a NATO/EU member
- 2q. Ukraine is not a sovereign state
- 2r. Ukrainian volunteers are corrupt
- 2s. Life under Russian occupation is better than under Ukrainian rule / 1ak. Russia is liberating Ukraine
- 2t. X country should not help Ukraine due to their past historical conflicts
Ukrainian victory is impossible
- 2u. Western society does not support Ukraine

BATTLEFIELD EVENTS

- 3a. Ukraine is losing the war
- 3b. Russia is not fighting at full capacity
- 3c. Russian troops are advancing / achieving success
- 3d. Reports of Russian war crimes are exaggerated/fake news
- 3e. Russia is not to blame for the global food crisis
- 3f. Recognizing Russia as a terrorist state will not help Ukraine
- 3g. Belarus is not participating in the war in Ukraine
- 3h. Mobilization in Russia has been successful
- 3i. Ukraine "referendums" are legitimate
- 3j. Russia's losses in the war are small
- 3k. Russia is only targeting military infrastructure

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

- 4a. Ukrainian refugees are a threat to host countries' security
- 4b. Ukrainian refugees are spoiled/ungrateful
- 4c. Ukrainian refugees are prioritized over the host country citizens/inhabitants 4d.
Ukrainian refugees abuse the aid being provided

3. ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF SANCTIONS

- 5a. Sanctions hurt the West more than Russia

- 5b. Russia is unaffected by sanctions
- 5c. The West is to blame for inflation and the energy crisis
- 5d. Europe is threatened by an energy crisis
- 5e. The West does not follow/circumvents its own sanctions policy
- 5f. Western citizens do not support sanctions against Russia

4. CONDITIONS OF RUSSIANS AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MINORITIES

- 6a. Ukrainians discriminate against/terrorize Russian speakers
- 6b. X country is Russophobic / Russian culture is being attacked
- 6c. The West and its proxies are inciting Russophobia

5. THREAT OF WAR EXPANDING BEYOND UKRAINE

- 7a. WW3 is imminent
- 7b. The West seeks to open a second front against Russia
- 7c. X country is escalating the war
- 7d. The world is at risk of nuclear war/disaster
- 7e. X country is under threat/will be pulled into the war
- 7f. X country should maintain neutrality / align itself with Russia

6. AID TO UKRAINE

- 8a. Western military/financial aid is being misused/stolen
- 8b. Ukraine will use Western weapons to kill Russians/attack Russian territory
- 8c. Military aid unnecessarily prolongs the war/endangers civilians
- 8d. Aid to Ukraine is weakening/endangering the countries that provide it
- 8e. Western military aid is ineffective/will not influence the outcome of the war
- 8f. Ukraine is taking aid away from other countries in need

8. CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- 9a. There are Western biological weapons labs in Ukraine
- 9b. The war in Ukraine is part of a global conspiracy
- 9c. The war in Ukraine is staged/a hoax
- 9d. Western governments are using the war in Ukraine to limit the freedoms of their citizens
- 9e. Western leaders/institutions are Satanist
- 9f. Zelensky is a drug addict
- 9g. Ukrainians engage in organ trafficking
- 9h. Russia has a new secret weapon
- 9i. Ukraine will be divided up among other countries

Methodology

The Ukraine War Disinformation Working Group is partnered with LetsData for data collection and methodological development. LetsData uphold privacy and security principles regarding data collection and processing. To ensure this, we only use public data allowed to be collected and processed by each social media and website. The Ukraine War Disinformation Working Group analyses data from media outlets, public Telegram channels and public Facebook groups and pages.

Within the project, we analyse all publications concerning Ukraine in 12 countries encompassing 200 pro-Russian sources:

1. Armenia - Telegram and media outlets
2. Baltics: Russian language segment of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania - Telegram and media outlets
3. Belarus - Telegram and media outlets
4. Bulgaria - Telegram and media outlets
5. Georgia - Telegram, media outlets, Facebook
6. Hungary - Telegram, media outlets, Facebook
7. Moldova - Telegram and media outlets
8. Poland - Telegram and media outlets
9. Slovakia - Telegram, media outlets, Facebook
10. Ukraine - Telegram and media portals

This assignment of channels is designed to provide a focus on Telegram as a relatively undermonitored but major and exponentially growing platform for disinformation, while still providing insights for countries in which Telegram is yet to develop a significant audience and Facebook is still the primary disinformation platform. To make results cross-country comparable, 20 sources will be used for each country. For countries analysing media outlets and Telegram channels, 5 media outlets and 15 Telegram channels will be analysed. In some cases, for instance, in Ukraine, there are 20 Telegram channels, with 5 Telegram channels being the channels of pro-Russian media that duplicate the website content. For countries analysing media outlets, Telegram channels and Facebook pages, 5 media outlets, 15 Telegram channels and Facebook pages will be analysed.

Data sampling

To analyze pro-Russian disinformation, a sample of 50 publications per week for each country will be created based on two criteria. The first criterion will be the source type: media outlet or social media: with 70% of the publications in the sample coming from Telegram/Facebook and 30% from web sources. The second criterion will be the reach of the posts, with half of the posts in each category (media outlet, Telegram, and Facebook) having the highest number of views. The other half of the publications in each category will be selected randomly to diversify the content and increase the capacity to comprehend the diversity of pro-Russian narratives.

The final sample for countries monitoring media outlets and Telegram will consist of the following:

- 15% top media outlets publications;
- 15% random media outlets publications;
- 35% top Telegram posts; • 35% random Telegram posts.

The final sample for countries monitoring media outlets, Telegram and Facebook, will consist of the following:

- 15% top media outlets publications;
- 15% random media outlets publications;
- 17,5% top Telegram posts;

- 17,5% top Facebook posts;
- 17,5% random Telegram posts;
- 17,5% random Facebook posts;

List of sources per country

Source	Country
@VardanGukasyan	Armenia
@bagramyan26	Armenia
@reartsakh	Armenia
@ArmenianVendetta	Armenia
@military_arm	Armenia
@mikayelbad	Armenia
@xaytarak_official	Armenia
@sisumasis	Armenia
@infoteka24	Armenia
@togarma301	Armenia
@Artsakh_Daily	Armenia
@armmirotvorec	Armenia
@RadarARM	Armenia
@infocomm	Armenia
@civilnetv	Armenia
@newsamarm	Armenia
@rusyerevantoday	Armenia
@togarma301	Armenia

@armeniasputnik	Armenia
@LurerH1	Armenia

@pppaskov	Bulgaria
@The_Smart_Village	Bulgaria
@druschbaFM_Bulgaria	Bulgaria
@InfodefBULGARIA	Bulgaria
@bulgariaz	Bulgaria
@svobodik	Bulgaria
@otizvora	Bulgaria
@istinabg1	Bulgaria
@vazrazhdanebg	Bulgaria
@simeonoffkss	Bulgaria
@todorangelov	Bulgaria
@dianadeleva	Bulgaria
@ocelqvane	Bulgaria
@ronyrony	Bulgaria
@ivaivatta	Bulgaria
@pogled	Bulgaria
@NewsFrontBulgaria	Bulgaria
@trudnews	Bulgaria

@snabgorg	Bulgaria
@informiran	Bulgaria
https://kuruc.info/	Hungary
https://www.origo.hu/	Hungary
https://pestisracok.hu/	Hungary
@magyarjelen	Hungary
https://hirado.hu/	Hungary
@kurucinfo	Hungary
@toroczka	Hungary
@szentkoronaradio_official	Hungary
@nzona3	Hungary
@bodiabel	Hungary
@bedezsolt	Hungary
https://www.facebook.com/oroszhirek.hu/	Hungary
https://www.facebook.com/pestisracok.hu/	Hungary

https://www.facebook.com/szamokadatok/	Hungary
https://www.facebook.com/kkemenymag1	Hungary
https://www.facebook.com/bayerzs	Hungary
https://www.facebook.com/elemi.hu/	Hungary
https://www.facebook.com/magyarnemzet.hu/	Hungary
https://www.facebook.com/stefideri	Hungary

https://www.facebook.com/bohardanielriporter	Hungary
https://aif.md/	Moldova
@Noi.md Новости Молдовы	Moldova
@Accent_TV	Moldova
https://unimedia.info/	Moldova
@KP.MD: "КП" в Молдове	Moldova
@tirdea	Moldova
@Ungureanu112	Moldova
@Republic_Of_GaGauZia	Moldova
@moldavskii_piston	Moldova
@indexMD	Moldova
@gabrielcalin	Moldova
@romania_ru	Moldova
@dragosgalbur	Moldova
@MoldovaPolitics	Moldova
@turnulmaya	Moldova
@ivanovnamd	Moldova
https://www.facebook.com/groups/1874167932813420	Moldova
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086182868245	Moldova
https://www.facebook.com/latebuimistru	Moldova
https://www.facebook.com/ionchicu.md	Moldova
http://3droga.pl/	Poland
@narodowcy	Poland

http://pch24.pl/	Poland
http://ruchnarodowy.net/	Poland
http://wolnemedi.net/	Poland
@project_veritas	Poland

@anna_news	Poland
@WiadomosciCzasowOstatecznych	Poland
@siostryjasnowidzki	Poland
@polska_grupa_informacyjna	Poland
@ndp_pl	Poland
@infokju	Poland
@monikacichocka	Poland
@legaartiswsparcie	Poland
@OSTATNISPRAWIEDLIWI	Poland
@nwk24pl	Poland
@Olej_W_Glowie	Poland
@ruchoporupolska	Poland
@wolna_polska	Poland
@kanalstraznikow	Poland
https://www.hlavnespravy.sk/	Slovakia
https://bajecnezeny.sk/	Slovakia
https://www.hlavnydenik.sk/	Slovakia
https://spisiakoviny.eu/	Slovakia

http://www.ereport.sk/	Slovakia
@casusbellilive	Slovakia
@DKdenneSpravy	Slovakia
@zemavek	Slovakia
@InfoVojnaOfficial	Slovakia
@kulturblog	Slovakia
@ZvodkaOnline	Slovakia
@vimanadark	Slovakia
https://www.facebook.com/ChmelarEduard	Slovakia
https://www.facebook.com/heredos/	Slovakia
https://www.facebook.com/Spacek.republika	Slovakia
https://www.facebook.com/draxlerjuraj	Slovakia
https://www.facebook.com/Zdroji	Slovakia
https://www.facebook.com/hricalubos1	Slovakia
https://www.facebook.com/Infovojna	Slovakia
@LubosBlahaSmer	Slovakia

@montyan2	Ukraine
@rezident_ua	Ukraine
@legitimniy	Ukraine
@readovkanews	Ukraine
@ASupersharij	Ukraine
@ZE_kartel	Ukraine

@mriya24	Ukraine
@spletnicca	Ukraine
@ukraina_ru	Ukraine
@stranaua	Ukraine
@dark_k	Ukraine
@skosoi	Ukraine
@shepton	Ukraine
@JokerDPR	Ukraine
@EQUILIBRIUM2019	Ukraine
@OpenUkraine	Ukraine
@mediakiller	Ukraine
@OlgaSharj	Ukraine
@Novoeizdanie	Ukraine
@Vestnik_Konservatora	Ukraine
@yuryvoskresensky	Belarus
@pul_1	Belarus
@sewerfsefsd	Belarus
@belarusian_silovik	Belarus
@sputnikby	Belarus
@mlynby	Belarus
@ontnews	Belarus
@ATN_BTRC	Belarus

@Nashazemla	Belarus
@shpakouski	Belarus
@Azarenok_TV	Belarus
@dzermant	Belarus
@vashy_slivy	Belarus

@glav_tur	Belarus
@berezina_bel	Belarus
@ZhivetZheBelarus	Belarus
@lgbelarussegodnya	Belarus
@minskctvby	Belarus
@BISRby	Belarus
@zmeymarini4	Belarus
http://geworld.ge/ge/	Georgia
@SputnikGeorgia	Georgia
https://ge.news-front.info/	Georgia
http://www.obieqtivi.info/	Georgia
https://sezonitv.ge/	Georgia
@worldpolitkal	Georgia
@beqanews	Georgia
@crossroadwar	Georgia
@realoba	Georgia
@power_of_light_Q	Georgia
@PolitNewsN1	Georgia
https://www.facebook.com/groups/2534318576632286	Georgia

https://www.facebook.com/qartuliidea/	Georgia
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https://www.facebook.com/groups/534652040223283/	Georgia
@SputnikAbkhazia	Georgia
@sputnikossetia	Georgia
@rubaltic	Baltics
http://respublika.lt	Baltics
http://grani.lv	Baltics
http://dv.ee	Baltics
http://obzor.lt	Baltics
@balt4post	Baltics
@antifalivland	Baltics
@news_lv	Baltics
@estlatlitv	Baltics
@baltictea	Baltics
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@topbalt	Baltics
@baltologija	Baltics
@zhemchuzhina_new	Baltics
@zkbalt	Baltics
@volna_lv	Baltics
@baltiknews	Baltics
@free_baltic	Baltics
@latvijasbalzams	Baltics

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