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REPORT ON DISINFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN ESTONIA, LATVIA, AND LITHUANIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This report explores the role of social media platforms in shaping the information landscape in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, with a focus on the spread of disinformation. We analyse media consumption trends, identifying key differences between national and linguistic groups. The report examines how disinformation circulates on major platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, Telegram, YouTube, and X (Twitter), highlighting common narratives and the most influential accounts spreading misleading content. Additionally, we assess the accountability of social media platforms, their moderation policies, and the challenges of combating disinformation in the region. The data used in this report was collected from September to October 2024.

THE ROLE OF THE PLATFORMS IN NATIONAL INFORMATION SPACE

OVERVIEW OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION IN ESTONIA

The 2023 Integration Monitoring study[1] reveals distinct differences in media preferences between Estonians and individuals of other nationalities in Estonia, primarily Russians.

Estonians consistently rely on a few influential information sources. Public broadcast television channels ETV and ETV2 are the most trusted and important for them, except for the youngest age group. Other favored sources include online news portals, radio channels, national newspapers, and social media.

In contrast, individuals from other nationalities demonstrate a wider range of information sources and geographical reach but lack a universally trusted media outlet. This results in a more fragmented audience within this group. The 2023 survey shows that social media has emerged as their most important source (45%), followed by local Russian-language news portals (39%) and the Russian-language public broadcast television channel ETV+ (37%).

Age significantly impacts media consumption among individuals of other nationalities. Younger age groups (15-29 and 30-44) prefer social media, Estonian Russian-language news portals, video streaming services, and Estonian-language news portals. They cite alternative Russian media more frequently than state-controlled television. Conversely, the oldest age group (60+) primarily uses various public broadcaster channels and programs: ETV+, "AK vene keeles", and Raadio 4.

ETV+, Postimees and Delfi Russian-language news portals are highly valued by individuals of other nationalities. Though the importance of Estonian channels for this population is higher than Russian channels, the overall importance of all channels has decreased compared to 2020.

Social media usage is steadily rising in Estonia, with a decrease in the number of individuals who do not use any social media accounts or online forums. Individuals from other nationalities are more active social media and forum users than Estonians – 89% versus 77%, respectively. This difference is attributed to a higher proportion of users aged 60+ within this group and the greater variety of platforms they use. This trend is likely linked

to their low trust in traditional media, leading them to explore diverse information sources online. This also explains the popularity of YouTube among them (65% versus 44% among Estonians, including 58% of users aged 60+).

While Facebook remains the most popular social media platform among Estonian residents overall, Telegram is also highly popular among all age groups of individuals from other nationalities. They are more active on virtually all social media platforms and online networks compared to Estonians, except English-language online forums (e.g., Reddit). Between 2017 and 2020, there was a significant increase in the use of Facebook and various image and video-sharing platforms among individuals of other nationalities, but usage has stabilised in the past three years.

This overall growth in the use of internet-based platforms is likely due to YouTube's increasing role as a source of both news and entertainment. Conversely, the use of Russian-based social networks VKontakte and Odnoklassniki has decreased, possibly replaced by Facebook among older age groups.

The 2023 Integration Monitoring confirms the trend observed in the 2020 study: local Russian-language media (primarily online news portals) have surpassed Russian (television) media as the most important source of information for individuals of other nationalities. Younger age groups prioritise social media and Estonian-language news portals, while ETV+ dominates among the older generation. Consumption and trust in Russian media channels have further declined.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent information war have led to decreased assessments of the importance and credibility of all information channels. Less than half of individuals of other nationalities in Estonia trust Estonian information channels (ETV+, local Russian-language news platforms, regional and local newspapers). In contrast, ETV remains a highly trusted anchor channel for Estonians.

The most recent public opinion monitoring survey[2] (13.-19. Dec 2024), conducted by Kantar Emor AS on behalf of the Chancellery of the Republic of Estonia also showed that Estonians heavily favor ETV, ETV2, and online news sources like Err.ee, Delfi and Postimees. In contrast, individuals of other nationalities show a more diverse range of preferences, with social media platforms like Facebook, VKontakte, YouTube, and Telegram

being the most popular. Estonian public broadcaster channels are less favoured by them, with ETV+ being the most popular.

According to DataReportal[3], in January 2024, there were 1.04 million active social media user identities in Estonia, which equates to 78.7% of the total population. However, it's important to note that this figure reflects the total number of social media user identities rather than unique individuals. Moreover, social media use is nearly universal among internet users, with 84% of all internet users in Estonia accessing at least one social media platform in January 2024.

OVERVIEW OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION IN LATVIA

As in other countries, the consumption of traditional media is declining in Latvia and social media are playing an increasingly important role in information provision. The most dramatic changes have occurred in the print media segment, with just over half of the population consuming print media in Latvia in 2023[4]. In parallel, there is a crisis of trust in various institutions, including the media. There is also a significant difference in media consumption between generations, with young people increasingly rooting their information consumption habits on the internet and social media.

Internet portals are by far the most popular form of media[5]. They are the most important source of information for the majority. The most popular internet portals in Latvia are Delfi, TvNet, and the unified Latvian public media portal LSM.

Reacting to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the media landscape in Latvia changed dramatically – dozens of Russian media were banned, leaving its audience without the usual information channels[6]. It is important to note that Russian media – also Russian state propaganda media – was one of the most popular media among inhabitants of Latvia, especially Russian speakers. After the banishment of such media, the question of the new reality of information consumption among Russian speakers arose. It is still not very clear how and where this audience has migrated, but the expectations on the political level that Russian speakers in the absence of Russian language media will integrate into the Latvian-language media environment are not met yet and initial data shows that this is not going to happen.

Latvian Constitutional Protection Office (SAB) states[7] that the social media platforms Telegram and TikTok have become the main sources of spreading disinformation narratives of Russian origin. However, the latter, for example, first appeared in the SAB annual report only in 2023. Before that SAB was mostly worried about Telegram, where an "unusual practice" was implemented to spread information discrediting Latvia. Interestingly, in the 2020 report, SAB singled out Telegram as a positive example of "alternative sources of information" in connection with the decrease of trust in Russia's propaganda outlets. Before that, the attention of the security services was more focused on such social media and microblogging sites as Facebook, Instagram, X (former Twitter), as well as Russian VKontakte and Odnoklassniki, where "trolls actively spread Russian propaganda media".

According to DataReportal[8], there were 1.46 million active social media user identities in Latvia in January 2024, accounting for 80.2% of the total population. This figure represents the number of social media user identities rather than unique individuals. Additionally, 86.3% of Latvia's total internet user base accessed at least one social media platform in January 2024, indicating that the majority of internet users in Latvia are active on social media.

OVERVIEW OF MEDIA CONSUMPTION IN LITHUANIA

One of the key issues concerning media consumption habits in Lithuania is the level of trust in the media in general. A survey of 1,000 respondents conducted for GLOBSEC[9] between 18 March 2022 and 26 March 2023 showed that only 14% of respondents believe that the media in Lithuania is "completely free". A further 37% agree that the Lithuanian media is "rather free than not free". This means that around 51% of respondents believe that the Lithuanian media is free, i.e. able to contribute to the functioning and strengthening of democracy.

Meanwhile, 34% of respondents were convinced that the Lithuanian media is not free, while 15% had no opinion at all.

Respondents were similarly divided when asked whether they trust the Lithuanian media. 14% of respondents indicated that they do not trust the media at all, while 27% indicated that they rather distrust than trust. Thus, overall, 41% of respondents were not inclined to trust the Lithuanian media.

The survey divided the media into four groups. The first group included the national Lithuanian broadcaster LRT, which operates several TV and radio channels and a news portal. Among the respondents, 35% (46% from time to time) indicated that they regularly consume information published by the public broadcaster.

The second group includes the major commercial media outlets on the Internet. These are news portals such as Delfi.lt, 15min.lt, Lrytas.lt and others. The regular audience of this group was 33% of respondents (43% of occasional users).

The third group includes the media outlet Laisvės TV, associated with the popular Lithuanian journalist Andrius Tapinas. Founded in 2016, the channel is described as an "alternative TV" that lives on the support of its viewers. Laisvės TV publishes high-quality and professional content, covers current affairs, and uses humour. Serious issues are discussed using elements typical of the entertainment genre. 9% of users regularly consumed the content published on this online TV channel, while another 33% consumed the information published on the channel irregularly.

The fourth group was marginal portals, which often publish propaganda content that is not based on facts. These are mainly online mass media such as Respublika.lt, Bukimevieningi.eu, Ldiena.lt, Laisvas laikraštis, etc. Some of these publications (e.g. Ldiena.lt and Laisvas laikraštis) have already been identified as channels for the dissemination of pro-Russian propaganda on the Lithuanian Internet. The content of this group had 4.6% of the regular audience and 18.3% of those who used the information published here only occasionally.

According to DataReportal[10], at the beginning of 2024, 2.41 million people, or 89% of the total population, used the internet in Lithuania. At the same time, Lithuania recorded 2.10 million social network users, which corresponds to 77.6% of the total population. It is important to underline that this figure reflects the total number of users and not the number of unique individuals.

NATIONAL USERS: META PLATFORMS

Estonia: Data published in Meta's advertising resources indicates[3] that Facebook had 680 thousand users in Estonia in early 2024, representing about 52% of the population.

Instagram had 473 thousand users in Estonia in early 2024, representing about 36% of the total population. The population of Estonia stood at 1.3 million in January 2024.

Latvia: Facebook had 825 thousand users in Latvia in early 2024, representing[8] about 45% of the population. Instagram had 618 thousand users in Latvia in early 2024, equivalent to 34% of the total population at the start of the year. The population of Latvia stood at 1.8 million in January 2024.

According to Kantar Digital (Summer 2024 survey; (provided directly to Re:Baltica by Kantar and is not publicly available)) data on Facebook usage in Latvia, 67% of Latvia's population engages with Facebook daily, which equates to approximately 1 million daily users. When expanded to a weekly scope, Facebook's reach increases, with 76% of the population using the platform at least once per week. This translates to around 1.15 million users engaging with Facebook weekly.

Lithuania: Facebook had 1.6 million users in Lithuania in early 2024, representing[10] about 59% of the population. Instagram had 869 thousand users in Lithuania in early 2024, equivalent to 32% of the total population at the start of the year. The population of Lithuania stood at 2.7 million in January 2024.

Note: Meta only allows people aged 13 and above to use Facebook and Instagram, so those numbers reflect percentages of the "eligible" audiences who use Meta in 2024.

This data differs from the KantarMetrix online advertising and audience measurement study (provided directly to Delfi Lithuania by Kantar and is not publicly available). The KantarMetrix methodology is based on Site & Framework & User-centric measurement using a panel of people who surf the web. The study shows that in the first half of 2024, 74% of internet users aged 16-74 in Lithuania used Facebook.

Data collected by KantarMetrix since 2020 shows that the popularity of the Facebook website in Lithuania is declining. In 2020, its reach reached 97% of internet users in the 16-74 age group, and then, with slight semi-annual fluctuations, it fell to 74% in the first half of 2024. Unlike the website, the popularity of the Facebook app has remained at a high level from 2020 to the present. In the first half of 2024, 97% of internet users aged 16-55 used

the app. The lowest reach of the app was recorded in the first half of 2022, at 95% of the above age group.

NATIONAL USERS: X

Estonia: Numbers published in X's (Twitter) advertising resources indicate[3] that X had 318 thousand users in Estonia in early 2024. This figure means that X's ad reach in Estonia was equivalent to 24% of the total population.

Latvia: X had 544 thousand users in Latvia in early 2024[8]. This figure means that X's ad reach in Latvia was equivalent to 30% of the total population.

According to Kantar Digital (Summer 2024 survey) data on X usage in Latvia, 10% of the Latvian population uses X daily, translating to approximately 149,000 daily users. When looking at weekly engagement, the platform's reach expands slightly, with 13% of the population using X at least once per week. This corresponds to about 196,000 weekly users.

Lithuania: Numbers published in X's advertising resources indicate[10] that X had 1.2 million users in Lithuania in early 2024. This figure means that X's ad reach in Lithuania was equivalent to 45% of the total population.

Note: These advertising reach figures are not the same as monthly active user figures, and there may be meaningful differences between the size of X's ad audience and its total active user base. X only allows people aged 13 and above to use its platform, so these figures show the "eligible" audience on X in 2024.

NATIONAL USERS: TIKTOK

Estonia: Figures published in ByteDance's advertising resources show[3] that TikTok had 396 thousand users aged 18 and above in Estonia in early 2024, equivalent to 37% of all adults aged 18 and above in Estonia at the start of 2024.

Latvia: TikTok had 742 thousand users[8] aged 18 and above in Latvia in early 2024, equivalent to 50% of all adults aged 18 and above in Latvia at the start of 2024.

According to Kantar Digital (Summer 2024 survey) data on TikTok usage in Latvia, 28% of Latvians use TikTok daily. This amounts to approximately 425,000 people. Additionally, 34% of Latvians use TikTok at least once a week, which translates to around 514,000 people.

Lithuania: TikTok had 934 thousand users[10] aged 18 and above in Lithuania in early 2024, equivalent to 42% of all adults aged 18 and above in Lithuania at the start of 2024.

Note: ByteDance allows marketers to target TikTok ads to users aged 13 and above via its advertising tools, but these tools only show audience data for users aged 18 and above.

According to KantarMetrix data, TikTok was used by slightly more than half (54%) of internet users in the age group listed above. Since 2020, when the number of app users reached 30%, the number of TikTok users in Lithuania has been increasing every year.

NATIONAL USERS: TELEGRAM

Estonia: Datareportal doesn't provide data on Telegram users in Baltic countries. No data about Telegram's audience in Estonia is currently available.

Latvia: Kantar Digital's (Summer 2024 survey) data on Telegram usage in Latvia showed coverage and frequency of use as a percentage of the population. According to the survey, 23% of Latvia's population uses Telegram daily. With a population of about 1.82 million, this equates to approximately 355,000 people using Telegram daily. 29% of the population uses Telegram at least once a week. This translates to around 442,000 people weekly.

Lithuania: KantarMetrix data on Telegram usage in Lithuania shows that there have been around 679,000 users (16-55 years old) who contacted the Telegram app in the first half of 2024, this translates to 45%. Data shows that Telegram mobile application is getting more and more popular in Lithuania each year with user numbers rising from around 546,000 in 2020 to around 1,095,000 in 2023.

NATIONAL USERS: YOUTUBE

Estonia: Google's advertising resources show[3] that YouTube had 1 million users in Estonia in early 2024. The company's data suggests that YouTube's ad reach in early 2024 was equivalent to 79% of Estonia's total population at the start of the year.

Latvia: YouTube had 1.5 million users[8] in Latvia in early 2024. The company's data suggests that YouTube's ad reach in early 2024 was equivalent to 80% of Latvia's total population at the start of the year.

Lithuania: YouTube had 2.1 million users[10] in Lithuania in early 2024. The company's data suggests that YouTube's ad reach in early 2024 was equivalent to 78% of Lithuania's total population at the start of the year.

Note: These advertising reach figures do not necessarily represent the same thing as monthly active user figures, and there may be meaningful differences between the size of YouTube's ad audience and its total active user base.

This data also differs from the KantarMetrix online advertising and audience measurement study. The study shows that in the first half of 2024, 84% of internet users aged 16-74 in Lithuania used YouTube. YouTube remains the most popular app among Lithuanian users. In the first half of 2024, it was used by 98% of users. From 2020 onwards, this figure has fluctuated by only 1%.

SUMMARY

To ensure the comparability of data across countries, we use Datareportal 2024 data, as it is available for all three countries and has been collected using the same methodology. No other sources are used in this analysis. Since Datareportal does not include data on Telegram, it is not reflected here.

Platforms' Popularity Based on Ad Reach, % of total population
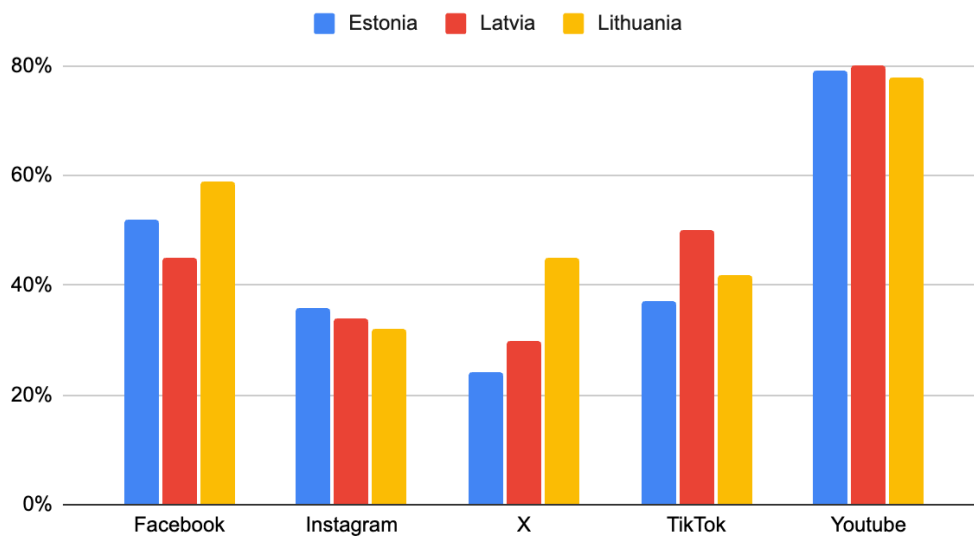
Source: Datareportal 2024: Estonia[3], Latvia[8], Lithuania[10]

DISINFORMATION ON THE PLATFORMS

In this chapter, we explain the mechanisms and patterns by which disinformation circulates across platforms, focusing on the structure, formats, and networks. The chapter focuses on platforms and channels – such as closed groups, pages, and individual influencer accounts – where misleading content gains traction. We explain how users engage with this content: whether they share it directly, adapt or rewrite it, and how cross-posting between platforms contributes to its spread.

Another focus is on identifying "superspreaders" – the top 5-10 influential accounts or entities with significant follower counts and reach on platforms in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The chapter also highlights key disinformation narratives on analysed platforms: domestic politics, geopolitics, environmental issues, and health.

Because the content spreads in very similar ways across Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, we analyse these patterns collectively, while identifying and highlighting key superspreaders specific to each country.

META PLATFORMS

The spread of disinformation on Facebook in the Baltic states takes diverse forms, with no single dominant format. Posts containing misinformation can appear as written content with few visuals shared and sometimes rewritten by users. Producers of disinformation often have their own alternative news websites, from which they cross-post content across multiple platforms including Facebook.

In Estonia, the most popular formats are simple written posts that are easily shareable. Disinformation producers with Facebook pages almost always cross-post their content from their own websites. Some use private profiles, leading to their content being rewritten and spread by other users.

In Latvia, misinformation is found across a variety of Facebook groups, especially those already inclined toward conspiracy theories. Another tactic is to create posts that mimic the appearance of legitimate media outlets, to lure users to click on links that steal personal data.

Facebook remains the primary platform for spreading disinformation in Lithuania. This occurs mainly through dedicated groups created to share news on specific topics, often with biased or hateful names against traditional media. These groups share both republished content from private accounts of known disinformation spreaders, as well as original posts not based on facts.

Private accounts are another vector, posting prolifically and using emotive language to provoke reactions. Individual channels belonging to so-called "alternative" news websites also actively republish their articles across social media. These sites try to imitate the style of legitimate news outlets, mixing real information with subtle distortions or unsupported personal assessments.

A distinct subset in Lithuania includes the accounts of public figures, who use more professional formats like video commentaries to disseminate targeted disinformation, often shifting focus from COVID-19 to broader criticisms of the Lithuanian government and society.

Dominant disinformation narratives on Facebook in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (qualitative overview)

Domestic politics:

- Government is useless, and does not care about 'simple citizens; while locals are starving, the ruling party is enjoying a luxurious life; the government always gives priority to others (e.g. Ukrainians) and does not care for the local people
- Governments seek to drag EE/LV/LT into war in Ukraine or preparing to invade Russia and escalate war
- Politicians are already buying properties abroad and plan to abandon the country in case of war (LT)
- EE/LV/LT is a failed state with high taxes, high unemployment rates, and low wages
- Nobody should trust mainstream media and should rather look for information in alternative channels
- There is systemic censorship from authorities and fact-checkers on Facebook

Geopolitics:

- Russia is strong and Ukraine is weak; Baltic states should re-establish friendly diplomatic relationships with Russia
- Zelensky seeks to drag NATO, EU countries, and the Baltics into war
- Zelensky is an illegitimate leader or dictator who uses drugs and is corrupt
- The West (especially the US) is to be blamed for the war in Ukraine; the West is provoking Russia and seeking to destroy the country; Ukrainian soldiers are weak and ill-prepared
- Baltic states made a huge mistake by deciding to leave BRELL
- NATO's presence in the Baltics and the EU means forced escalation

Environment:

- Climate change does not exist
- Renewable energy sources are even worse for the environment and economy than fossil fuels
- Scientists are lying about climate change; scientists are biassed towards green energy
- Electric cars are unsafe and bad for the environment
- Weather is controlled by the government and globalists; natural disasters are deliberately created by globalists
- Chemtrails conspiracy theory

Health:

- People should prioritise homeopathic medicine instead of contemporary medicine
- WHO and world governments seek to make people ill and poison their food or create artificial famine
- People in Europe will be forced to eat insects
- Vaccines are unsafe; vaccines are killing people
- Covid-19 pandemic was planned by globalists to control populations; the Covid-19 pandemic did not exist
- People in Europe will be forced to eat artificial laboratory-made products

- Food found in stores is unsafe and contains toxic ingredients. Sustainability labels such as Rainforest Alliance indicate the usage of insects in products marked by their logo

Name and owner	Followers	Main topics	Motivation	Comment
Estonia				
Vanglaplaneet (Peeter Proos)	9.7K	Deep state, geopolitics, health, environment	Business, political	Page of a popular alternative media portal. The page description states: "Vanglaplaneet reveals the agenda of the global financial and power elite known as the New World Order. This agenda aims to: World domination, Population reduction, Scientific dictatorship". Active across platforms and increasingly promotes Russian propaganda narratives.
Telegram (alternative news portal, not platform) (Hando Tõnumaa)	7.3K	Health, conspiracy theories	Business	Page of a popular and well-established alternative media portal, mostly focusing on propagating viral conspiracy theories.
Objektiiv (Markus Järvi)	24.7K	Perverted western values	Political	Page of a popular and well-established alternative media portal, producing content to support "conservative values". Often shares disinformation and Russian propaganda narratives. Active across the platforms.
Uued Uudised	25K	Deep state, local, international politics	Political	Page of a popular and well-established alternative media portal, producing content to support the Estonian Conservative Party's politics. The portal is the Estonian Conservative Party's news site.
Makroskoop (Adrian Bachmann)	5.5K	Conspiracy theories	Business	Page of an alternative media website propagating mostly "The Great Reset" conspiracy theories. Adrian Bachmann, editor-in-chief of the Makroskoop portal, which is known for spreading conspiracy theories, and chief analyst for the investment gold

				sector at gold sales company Tavid, has served for ten years as an analyst for the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service. He worked at NATO headquarters in Brussels – he has seen the "deep state" up close. Delfi Estonia's investigation.
Nursipalu kaitseks	5.7K	Defence politics	Political, personal	The page is dedicated to opposing Nursipalu Defence Training Area expansion and NATO presence in EE. Often shares Russian propaganda narratives and misleading claims.
Ei fosforiidile!	5K	Environment; politics	Political	The page dedicated to fighting potential phosphorite mining plans in Estonia. Often shares disinformation and misleading claims.
Oleg Besedin	8.6K	Local Russians, Russian war in Ukraine, local politics	Political, business	Longtime prominent Kremlin propaganda collaborator in Estonia; active across the platforms. Owns the largest Russian-language Facebook group in Estonia called "Таллиннцы".
Kertu Luisk	~3.5K	Russian war in Ukraine; local politics	Political, personal	Prominent spreader of Russian narratives and disinformation, health disinformation, and conspiracy theories.
Ülle Pukk	~5K	Russian war in Ukraine	Political	Prominent spreader of Russian narratives and disinformation. A spokesperson for the small local pro-Russia party Koos.
Latvia				
Jūlija Stepaņenko	19K	Antivaxx, "family values"	Political	Refused to get vaccinated during C19, lost seat in parliament.
Valentīns Jeremejevs	24K	#everything is bad	Political	Professional disinformator.
Nevakcinācij. Sociālo diskusiju grupa.	26.2K	Antivaxxers; chemtrails	Political	At least some administrators of the group are connected to Stepaņenko's party.
Latvijas Tautas Kanāls	30K	#everything is bad	Political	Popularises the disinformation TV channel "Brīvvalsts TV" which stresses the narrative of Latvia as a failed state.

Aldis Gobzems	76.7K	"No one knows how to manage things except me"; "Latvia is a failed state"	Political, personal	Former lawyer, ex-MP, a prominent figure in the populist electorate. Popularised ideas of anti-vax, failed state narratives, and other related topics. Now lives abroad.
Lithuania				
Respublika.lt (Vitas Tomkus)	88K	Anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party (ruling party 2020-2024), skepticism towards Ukraine, anti-LGBT, anti-Istanbul Convention, anti-liberal ideology	Business	Business page of news portal 'Respublika' which belongs to 'Respublikos leidiniai' group. 'Respublika' initially was a newspaper established in 1989 under the name 'Sąjūdžio dienraštis' and later renamed to 'Respublika'. Until 2014 it was published as a newspaper. After this date continue publishing only online on the dedicated website respublika.lt. Publishes a mixture of true and manipulated / false content. Usually critical of the Lithuanian government or the situation in Ukraine.
Jolanta Blažytė	36K	#everything is bad, anti-vaxx, conspiracy theories, critique for Ukraine support	Political, personal	One of the richest women in Lithuania, chairwoman of the board of 'Vikonda Group', former wife of EP member Viktor Uspaskich.
VIENINGI TĖVAI II (Laura Jasenaite)	44K	#everything is bad, „family values", anti-LGBT, anti-migration	Unknown	The group was created in February 2021 as a continuation of another disinformation-spreading group „Vieningi tėvai už stiprią ir saugią šeimą Lietuvoje" which was removed by „Meta". The group's official goal is to oppose LGBT and support „traditional values" and „traditional family". The group was created the same year when the controversial protest „Didysis šeimos gynimo maršas" was organized in Vilnius famous for anti-LGBT, anti-Istanbul convention ideology, various conspiracy theories, and pro-Kremlin participants.
Lietuvos kronikos	70.8K	#everything is bad, anti-LGBT, supports pro-Kremlin Lithuanian politicians, anti-The Homeland Union –	Unknown	The group was created in 2020 under the name 'Policijos kronikos' (eng. 'The Police Chronicles'), later renamed to 'Lietuvos kronikos' (eng.

		Lithuanian Christian Democrats party (ruling party 2020-2024)		'Lithuania's Chronicles'). All group's administrators are registered as digital content creators and spread disinformation on their accounts as well as in 'Lietuvos kronikos' group. One of the group's administrators is a backup profile of 'Lietuvos kronikos'. In both the profile and the group the same content is disseminated.
77 Žinios	25K	#everything is bad, anti-West, anti-George Soros, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party (ruling party 2020-2024)	Business	Operates as an „alternative media" channel spreading a mix of true and false content. Most used tactics to spread disinformation – real facts that are twisted to destroy credibility in Lithuania's political system and elected leaders.
Žydrūnas Savickas	32K	#everything is bad, anti-vaxx	Political, personal gain	Lithuanian powerlifter named world's strongest man. During the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most prominent members of the anti-vaxx movement. In 2024 participated in the EP election as a member of the Lithuanian Peasants and Greens Union party.
Ugnius Kiguolis	28K	Conspiracy theories, anti-vaxx, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party (ruling party 2020-2024)	Business, personal gain	Well-known businessman, and former pop-band „Naujieji lietuviai" member. During the COVID-19 pandemic was a frequent member of the anti-vaxx movement. His parents own a homeopathic clinic and association „Firmus Medicus".
COVID vakcinų mirtys (Tomas Vitrigaila; Aš tikiu mokslu; Laikmečio reporteris; Eglė Lu)	30.5K	Anti-vaxx	Unknown	The group was created in March 2021, right before the start of mass vaccination against COVID-19. The initial goal of the group was to share (false) notifications about people who allegedly died because of vaccination.
NE Sorošui Lietuvoje (Kęstutis J. Tam)	17K	Anti-LGBT, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party (ruling party 2020-2024), anti-George Soros, „The values of	Unknown	The group was created in May 2020 by the frequent disinformation spreader Kęstutis J. Tam. The group's official goal is to expose George Soros's activities in Lithuania and fight with neoliberal ideology.

		the West are rotten", anti-liberal		

X

Across the Baltic states, the spread of disinformation and propaganda on X (previously Twitter) varies in terms of tactics, reach, and impact.

In Estonia, X users often amplify viral, English-language posts that have gained global traction, sometimes adding local commentary in Estonian or English for their domestic audience. The Estonian X sphere differs markedly from the Meta (Facebook) ecosystem, with far less crossover in content and superspreaders. On X, Estonian users mostly discuss local politics, share mainstream media content, and express their own opinions, with relatively little direct disinformation observed. However, the global disinformation and propaganda posts that go viral on X tend to reach the Estonian X audience, often without being identified as such.

The Latvian X landscape presents a more complex picture. Here, both verified real people and anonymous accounts create and spread content, often in the form of bot networks. The proliferation of commercially available account verifications has allowed more and more anonymous users to pose as trustworthy sources, amplifying the impact of bot-driven disinformation campaigns. For example, a network of bots distributed nearly identical posts defending Russia's position and criticising Latvia's stance on ice hockey, pretending to be Latvian residents writing in the Latvian language. Latvian X users tend to react to both international and local events, with recurring themes around "traditional values" and opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, often driven by cross-pollination of narratives from Russian-language online spaces. Latvian X also readily absorbs and amplifies disinformation related to global events like the 2024 Paris Olympics, reframing them through the lens of a perceived clash between "traditional" and "Western, decadent" values. A common tactic is to imply that dissenting opinions are connected to foreign influences like the Kremlin, Soros, or the US, to discredit them within the defined online bubble.

X is the least popular social media platform in Lithuania, with even prominent figures maintaining limited engagement compared to other networks. As a result, the spread of disinformation on Lithuanian X is more sporadic and less impactful than in Latvia. The limited activity consists primarily of retweets, with some original content often linking to YouTube channels. Interestingly, these users post in both Lithuanian and English, likely

aiming to reach a broader, international audience given the small base of active Lithuanian X users.

Across the region, the tactics, formats, and strategies employed in the dissemination of disinformation on X vary, with Estonia seeing more passive amplification of global viral content, Latvia experiencing sophisticated bot-driven campaigns, and Lithuania observing sporadic, low-impact activity. However, common threads emerge, such as the exploitation of "traditional values" narratives, the blurring of lines between verified and anonymous accounts, and the cross-pollination of narratives across language barriers and national boundaries.

Dominant disinformation narratives on X in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (qualitative overview)

Domestic politics:

- Everything Russia-related and Russian language-related must be swept away from everyday life
- People who oppose the employed methods are "vatniks" or "kremlins"
- Government is failing; economic collapse is coming; electricity prices are the highest in the Baltics
- The government is corrupt and consists of cowards ready to flee once the war starts (LT)
- Children and the elderly are the most neglected groups in LT; nobody cares for them
- Mainstream media is controlled by the elites, it is heavily censored and does not allow alternative views (LT)

Geopolitics:

- Russia is winning the war, Ukraine is firmly collapsing
- Disinformation regarding Middle East conflict
- How is Israel committing genocide in Palestine different from Russia?
- Supporters of Palestine are supporters of terrorism
- Are all Russian citizens collectively responsible for the war in Ukraine?

- The election of Trump as US president will end support for Ukraine, which is dangerous for Latvia (LV)
- Kamala Harris is stupid (LV)
- The US is collapsing, it's a failing state.
- The Ukrainian government is corrupt; entering Kursk was a suicide mission for Ukrainians (LT)
- People in the West are russophobes, the West is a threat to Russia, and they're escalating the war (LT)

Environment:

- Viral climate myths, i.e global warming is natural and people can't influence it
- Estonia is so small compared to global actors so it's not worth changing anything (EE)
- The EU is pushing its green policies against locals' will
- What global warming is everyone talking about, if the winter is so cold?
- Moving towards green energy is killing the economy

Health:

- Significant narratives not detected in Estonia and Latvia
- COVID-19 vaccines have dangerous side effects and are deadly, they are untested and unproven (LT)
- Mpox is a hoax (LT)
- Mandatory vaccination caused health disruptions and social upheaval (LT)

Superspreaders	Followers	Main topics	Motivation	Comment
Estonia				
@MikeCalamus	1.2K	Russia-Ukraine war, geopolitics	Political	Former Conservative Party politician; after he left the party, started to propagate anti-Ukraine and pro-Russian views and content on his website "Eestieest!". Cooperating with Russian

				influence agents. Delfi Estonia's [investigation]().
@objektiiv1	427	Perverted western values	Political	Account of a popular and well-established alternative media portal, producing content to support conservative values. Often shares disinformation and Russian propaganda narratives. Active across the platforms.
Latvia				
@SlesersAinars (Politician Ainārs Šlesers)	2.2K	Critique towards the way the state is governed; "family values"; Latvia's economic interests	Political/Business	Populist MP. Oligarch, interested in business relations.
@liana_langa (Political activist Liāna Langa)	19.3K	Latvia must be free of all Russian influence	Political	The face of a campaign to de-russify Latvia where initiatives start in social media. Unsuccessfully run for local and European parliament.
@akirstei (Politician Aleksandrs Krišteins)	6K	Environment policy, "family values"	Political	Long-term MP
@realnepareizais (Anonymous user)	13.7K	-	Unknown	Verified user
@transhumaanists (Anonymous user)	76.3K	-	Unknown	Verified user
Lithuania				
@paulius60	1.2K	War in Ukraine, russophobia, US election, climate change, conspiracy theories	Ideological	-

@DrNidaVasiliaus (Nida Vasiliauskaitė)	1K	Politics, criticism of the Lithuanian government, anti-vaccines, anti-mainstream media, war in Ukraine	Political	Lithuanian philosopher and publicist, founder of a political party "Antoji Lietuva".
@sskras (Saulius Krasuckas)	851	Anti-vaccines, war in Ukraine, war in Israel, conspiracy theories, anti-mainstream media	Unknown	-
@Ignas_Vegele (Ignas Vegele)	835	Anti-LGBT, anti-vaccines, criticism of Lithuanian government	Political	Newly elected member of Seimas
@komentarasLT (Karštas komentaras)	631	Politics, criticism of Lithuanian government, war in Ukraine, economy	Business	A propaganda news outlet

TIKTOK

Across the Baltic states, the spread of disinformation and propaganda on TikTok follows several common patterns, though the specific tactics and narratives employed vary between the countries.

In Estonia, there are three main ways disinformation is circulated on TikTok: through original videos, unaltered sharing of existing viral content, and "reframing" videos that quote or respond to the initial disinformation. This reframing approach is used to create new disinformation by questioning or undermining the original message and to debunk false claims. Viral disinformation and propaganda videos are widespread on Estonian TikTok, often disguised as innocuous travel or lifestyle content. These videos typically feature young Russian women speaking in English, who avoid explicitly political topics like the war in Ukraine and instead depict a "normal, beautiful" everyday life in Russia, intended to cultivate a positive perception of the country.

There is also a huge amount of content[11] on Estonian TikTok intended to scare people regarding a "future war". A prevalent narrative is that Estonia or the Baltic states are preparing to invade Russia, or that NATO is using our countries to start World War III.

These videos take snippets of statements from government officials out of context, claiming that Estonia is already at war. This scaremongering content aims to instill fear and uncertainty among the Estonian population about the country's security situation.

The Latvian TikTok landscape exhibits similar tactics, with the three main vectors of disinformation being original videos, unaltered resharing, and reframing/response videos. The most prevalent disinformation themes on Latvian TikTok centre around domestic Latvian politics, including ethnic policies, economic issues, the war in Ukraine, migration, and human rights. Specific sub-narratives range from painting Ukrainian refugees as an ungrateful threat to amplifying Kremlin-aligned talking points about the "special military operation" and the "collapsing world order", to stoking fears about the erosion of "democratic/Christian society" due to an influx of Islamic migrants. As in Estonia, Latvian TikTok also hosts videos resembling travel or lifestyle content, featuring young Russian women speaking English and depicting an idealised version of everyday life in Russia, without addressing political tensions.

In Lithuania, the disinformation landscape on TikTok has emerged more recently, with many of the most prominent superspreaders only gaining significant followings on the platform in 2024. This suggests that as TikTok grows in popularity in Lithuania, domestic disinformation actors are increasingly viewing it as a promising channel to disseminate false narratives. Many of these superspreaders are familiar figures who previously garnered attention as leaders of the anti-vaccination movement during the COVID-19 pandemic. The most common tactic employed on Lithuanian TikTok is the use of genuine snippets of speeches or media appearances by Lithuanian politicians, which are then twisted and reframed to convey a completely different, misleading meaning. Another prevalent technique is the use of "blogger-style" content, where frequent disinformation peddlers provide personal opinions on important issues like domestic politics and elections, often grounded in false information.

Disinformation narratives on TikTok dominant in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (qualitative overview)

Domestic politics:

- The Estonian state is discriminating against local Russians; the local government fuels unprecedented russophobia (LV, EE)
- It's better to be friends with Russia; economic problems are caused by sanctions against Russia (EE)
- Energy prices are the highest in Baltic states; high prices are due to government corruption, stealing from ordinary citizens
- High prices are making people abandon the country (LV)
- Mainstream politicians are unable to lead the country towards prosperity, so it is necessary to change the "regime" (LV)
- Vytautas Landsbergis is to blame for Lithuania being a failing state; the economic situation in Lithuania is terrible; Lithuania's support for Ukraine is the reason why Lithuanians are suffering (LT)
- The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party is trying to rob Lithuanians and destroy the country; Lithuania's government is corrupt (LT)

Geopolitics:

- Baltic states are preparing to invade Russia; Baltic states are sending their armies to Ukraine; Estonia wants war (EE)
- Latvia has lost its sovereignty to the West; to develop economically, Latvia must look at economic interests and opportunities first; Russia is and will be Latvia's neighbour so it is necessary to cooperate (LV)
- Joe Biden is delusional; Kamala Harris is evil; Ukraine is a corrupt country; Zelensky is delusional and corrupt; Russia is omnipotent and could easily destroy the West (LT)

Environment:

- Viral climate myths
- Natural disasters are explained with conspiracy theories, i.e climate control (HAARP)

- Green transition is a hoax; fighting with climate change is not going to save the planet
- People will be forced to eat insects to fight climate change
- Instead of blindly listening to the Western green lifestyle tutorials Latvia must prioritise the well-being of its citizens (LV)

Health:

- Vaccine disinformation, i.e. COVID-19 pandemic was preplanned, vaccines are ineffective and dangerous
- Lifestyle channels propagating alternative medicine using false information (EE)

Superspreaders	Followers / likes count	Main topics	Motivation	Comment
Estonia				
@1911.est	28.4K / 493.5K	Local and international politics; against supporting Ukraine, Russophobia in Estonia	Personal, business	Mostly uses screenshots from mainstream media sources, and comments on them.
@ajuloputus (Angela Absalon, Lisandra Helena Tõlk)	3.8K / 52.9K	Health, conspiracy theories, anti-LGBTQ	Business, personal	Shares viral health disinformation claims, but also transphobic claims and "deep state" conspiracy theories. Disinfo. Is shared in meme format. Sells "challenge" packages for people who want to get to know more, closed group. Also active on Instagram and Facebook. Delfi Estonia's story about the account.
@targo.parnamets (Targo Pärnamets)	6.5K / 106.2K	Local politics, phosphorite mining in Estonia, vaccine disinformation	Personal, business	Popular alternative media propagator and anti-mainstream influencer. Owns his blog (website) and uses social media platforms to share his content.

@president_of_estonia (Hando Tõnumaa)	2.3K / 26.4K	Conspiracy theories, local and geopolitics, anti-vax	Business	Owner of an alternative media website called Telegram, a well-known and influential conspiracy theories propagator and spreader in Estonia. This is Tõnumaa's additional personal account.
@objektiiv	4K / 107.3K	Local and geopolitics, climate myths	Political	Account of a popular and well-established alternative media portal, producing content to support conservative values. Often shares disinformation and Russian propaganda narratives. Active across the platforms.
@margusliiva	8K / 118.9K	Pro-Russian content, discrimination against local Russians	Political	-
@baltic.mind	4K / 98.8K	Pro-Russian narratives; Baltics are failed states	Unknown	-
Latvia				
@glorijagrevcova (Glorija Grevcova)	141K / 6M	Critique how the state is governed; "family values"	Political	The most popular political tiktoker in Latvia. Former MP who had to leave the parliament when she was convicted of lying in her electoral declaration. Populist.
@ilmagnuss (Iļa Černogorods)	128K / 4.6M	Critique how the state is governed	Unknown	Spreads content by hoaxers and opposition parties that have been debunked by fact-checkers to a Russian-speaking audience.
@rudibremanis (Rūdolfs Brēmanis)	70K / 1.7M	Critique how the state is governed	Political	Professional disinformant. Failed to be elected at any level.
@maija_armaneva (Maija Armaņeva)	21K / 240.2K	Critique how the state is governed; "family values"	Political	Influencer; works as MP's assistant for Šleser's party.
@edgars_arklins (Edgars Arkliņš)	17.4K / 815.8K	Critique how the state is governed;		Unknown

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@igorsprelatovs (Igors Prelatovs)	3257 / 41.2K	CCritique how the state is governed.	Political	Russian-speaking politician; member of the municipal council in Daugavpils.
Lithuania				
@zygistan	14.2K / 319.9K	Anti-Istanbul convention, anti-green deal, anti-official media, anti-LGBT, anti-support for Ukraine	Unknown	Reshares a lot of content made by other frequent disinformation spreaders, uses snippets of political speeches against politicians themselves.
@lobovasandrius (Andrius Lobovas)	27K / 330.7K	Antivaxx, everything is bad	Personal	One of the most active speakers in the anti-vaccine movement.
@tik_talk111	10.7K / 371.9K	Pro-Kremlin, anti-Vytautas Lansbergis and his family, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party, everything is bad	Unknown	Mostly uses snippets of genuine political TV shows and politician speeches against the speakers themselves.
@tratas777 (Žilvinas Tratas)	4685 / 46.7K	Anti-Ukraine, anti-democracy, anti-official media, anti-vaxx, Ukraine supporters and the Lithuanian government is dragging the country into war	Personal gain, political	Controversial Lithuanian public figure, model, and actor who frequently spreads pro-Kremlin and anti-vaxx content in his personal social media accounts.
@antisisteminis (Stanislovas Tomas)	12K / 231.2K	Anti-official media, anti-Lithuania's government, everything is bad, supports pro-Kremlin candidates	Political, personal gain	In 2016 Stanislovas Tomas represented Rolandas Paksas, the leader of the Order and Justice party, in a case against Lithuania, and even helped the politician win the case. However, the 'lawyer' Stanislovas Tomas is not and never has been a

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31

				Lithuanian lawyer. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has found that he is a sham lawyer and has permanently banned him from representing or otherwise assisting the applicants. In 2019 Stanislovas Tomas smashed a memorial plaque to well-known Lithuanian partisan Jonas Noreika - General Vėtra. In 2019 Stanislovas Tomas was elected leader of the Union of Fighters for Lithuania party.
@iskrids	2176 / 56K	Anti-Joe Biden, supports pro-Kremlin Lithuanian politicians, anti-official media, anti-liberal values, elections are fake	Unknown	Endorsed pro-Kremlin candidate in Lithuania's presidential elections Eduardas Vaitkus
@tiesossviesa78	3142 / 52.1K	Conspiracy theories, esoteric content, anti-LGBT	Unknown	Mostly spreads Q-Annon, New World Order conspiracy theories with a special interest in anti-LGBT content.

TELEGRAM

In Estonia, disinformation on Telegram is most often spread through open Telegram groups or chats, where anyone can comment and post. Another common tactic is for local channels to repost content from international channels. The local groups in Estonia primarily focus on geopolitics, especially the Russia-Ukraine war and the actions of the West, particularly the US and EU. Additionally, conspiracy theories about the "global reset", health, and vaccination are also popular on the Estonian Telegram. While Telegram was previously used mainly by the local Russian-speaking population in Estonia, it has recently attracted more Estonian-language users as well.

The Latvian Telegram environment exhibits a similar dynamic, with disinformation being shared across various topical groups, often through reposting between them. These

groups, including those focused on issues important to Russian speakers in Latvia, tend to be open, despite being well-known to be monitored by security services and journalists.

Latvian-language Telegram groups that concentrate on a single issue often operate as more closed ecosystems, actively excluding or blocking users deemed unwelcome, such as journalists. Meanwhile, groups that emerge around a specific individual actor are more likely to remain open, allowing them to gain traction without traditional media exposure. A prevalent narrative in the smaller Russian-language Latvian Telegram groups is the claim that Latvia is a "failed state" where "Russophobia is blooming", with the content varying in wording but sharing a common underlying message.

The Lithuanian Telegram is dominated by a few larger channels, none of which exceed 11,000 followers. These channels are often centered around individuals who stand to gain personally or politically from their posts and followers or are affiliated with disinformation websites presenting themselves as legitimate news outlets. Across these channels, the communication is typically one-way, with the channel owners posting content and followers only able to leave comments.

While the content on these Lithuanian Telegram channels is often presented as original, the underlying narratives regarding subjects like the war in Ukraine, the Lithuanian government, politics, elections, the economy, and anti-EU/NATO sentiments tend to be consistent across the various channels. In addition to these political topics, many Lithuanian Telegram channels also spread popular conspiracy theories related to vaccines, viruses, climate change, and the government.

Dominant disinformation narratives on Telegram in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (qualitative overview)

Domestic politics:

- The Estonian state is discriminating against local Russians; it's better to be friends with Russia; economic problems are caused by sanctions against Russia (EE)
- Energy prices are the highest in the Baltic states
- The current government is corrupt, greedy and does nothing for its people (EE, LT)
- The only good political party is some small marginal pro-Kremlin party (LT)

- The economy of Lithuania is weak, the taxes are too high, and the wages are too small (LT)

- The media is controlled by the elites and alternative opinions are censored (EE, LT)

- Russophobia takes over society and political decisions; greedy ruling politicians are leading Latvia toward poverty while stealing from the citizens (LV)

Geopolitics:

- Baltic states are sending their armies to Ukraine

- Estonia wants war; overall pro-Russia content (EE)

- Latvia is a small country that is not able to influence anything (LV)

- Russia is going to achieve its objectives in Ukraine; Russia is fighting with NATO/West in the Ukraine

- Zelensky is not a legitimate leader, he opposes negotiations for peace

- Lithuania is too small to deter Russia and by buying new defence systems it's provoking Russia to defend itself (LT)

- The West is waging a war against Russia and provoking it; NATO expansion is a threat to Russia.

Environment:

- Climate change is a myth

- Natural disasters are explained using conspiracy theories, e.g. climate control (HAARP)

- Climate activists are hypocrites; the weather can be controlled by the government

Health:

- Viruses like COVID-19 and mpox are created artificially (LT)

- Vaccines are harmful and result in numerous risks and deaths

- By making vaccinations compulsory, the government is controlling its citizens and overstepping its powers (LT)

- Alternative medicine methods (EE)

- Conspiracy theories focusing on WEF, WHO, etc

Super-spreaders	Followers	Main topics	Motivation	Comment
Estonia				
@baltnews	23K	Pro-Russia and anti-West narratives. Disinformation about Baltic states' politics	Political, Russian state propaganda channel	Russian propaganda channel aimed at Baltic audiences, part of Russia's propaganda outlet "Rossiya Segodnya".
@estoniaworldwide	1.3K members	Conspiracy theories, international news	Unknown	Open group, mostly anti-mainstream and alternative news websites' content, including anti-vax, conspiracy theories, pro-Russian content.
@otsejatoorelt	2K	Conspiracy theories, anti-mainstream	Unknown	Channel that shares alternative news websites' content, including local political disinfo, anti-vax, conspiracy theories, pro-Russian content.
@tsensuurivaba	1K members	Conspiracy theories, pro-Russian content	Unknown	Open group, mostly anti-mainstream and alternative news websites' content, including anti-vax, conspiracy theories, pro-Russian content.
@fontenews (Veiko Huuse)	0.6K	Local politics, geopolitics	Unknown	Mostly anti-mainstream and alternative content, including conspiracy theories, pro-Russian content.
Latvia				
@roslikovs (Aleksejs Rosļikovs)	25.2K	Eradication of Russophobia, poverty, criticism of the government	Leader of populist, pro-Russian opposition party.	The largest TG group based around one person in Latvia
@baltnews	22.3K	News stories that are framed to make Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania look like failed states	Unknown	Part of Russia's propaganda outlet "Rossiya Segodnya".

@news_lv Шпроты в изгнании I Новости Латвии	9.6K	News stories that are framed to make the Baltics look like failed states	Unknown	Face: Aleksejs Stefanovs, an ex-Latvian journalist who worked for RT and "Sputnik"
@Bremanis Rudolfs Bremanis LIVE	5.25K	Politics, criticism of the government	Political	Professional disinformant. Failed to be elected at any level.
@mainampasauli #MaināmPasauli – News (Jānis Pļaviņš)	4.48K	Antivaxx, big-pharma	Political, economically	Well-known disinformator, who profits from selling the water which he claims has healing properties.
@antifalivland (Антифашисты прибалтики)	19.5K	Mighty Russia is getting closer to its war objectives. Latvia is a failed state.	Ideological, political	They also have a chat with the same name and with 3k members, where the conversation about topics relevant to the group is discussed.
Lithuania				
@ugniuskiguolis (Ugnius Kiguolis)	11.3K	Politics, anti-vaccination, anti-immigration, anti-LGBT, war in Ukraine, US presidential election, criticism of the Lithuanian government	Personal gain, business	One of the first conspiracy theorists in Lithuania related to COVID-19 has the biggest following on Telegram among fake news spreaders. Also has a separate chat.
@varlinas	11.8K	Anti-liberal, conspiracy theories, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party, anti-US democrats, pro-Donald Trump	Unknown	Also uses popular YouTube accounts 'Varlinaskūdroje' and 'Varlinasmiške' to disseminate disinformation.
@ekspertaiTelegram (Ekspertai.eu)	7.4K	Criticism of the government, support for non-systemic politicians, war in Ukraine, Russia, COVID-19	Political, ideological, business	A disinformation channel that presents itself as a news outlet. The General Prosecutor's Office is carrying out a pre-trial investigation against Ekspertai.eu for possession of pornographic content

@blazyte (Jolanta Blažytė)	6.1K	Criticism of the government, politics, war in Ukraine, Russia, economy, defense, US presidential election, anti-vaccination, conspiracy theories	Political, ideological	She and her former husband (MEP at the time) Viktor Uspaskich financed the creation of a disinformation platform 77.lt.
@neadequatus (AdeQatus™ Kanalas)	4.3K	US presidential election, COVID-19, anti-vaccination, conspiracy theories, russophobia, war in Israel, war in Ukraine	Unknown	-
@MindaugasPuidokas (Mindaugas Puidokas)	3.6K	Criticism of the Lithuanian government, politics, war in Ukraine, COVID-19, anti-vaccination	Political	Member of parliament
@AusraBiguzaite11	3.4K	Conspiracy theories, economics, COVID-19, anti-vaccination, Russia, USA	Personal gain, ideological	Author at ekspertai.eu and 77.lt
@atsibudimas	3.2K	War in Ukraine, pro-Kremlin, anti-EU, US presidential election, anti-migration, anti-NATO, anti-vaccination	Unknown	Mostly spreads conspiracy theories.
@zinios	3.2K	Anti-LGBT, anti-vaccination, politics, economy, COVID-19, war in Ukraine	Political, ideological, business	Partially financed by Jolanta Blažytė. It's a disinformation platform, has its own website.
@jotvingis	3K	Conspiracy theories, US presidential election, war in Ukraine, Russia, war in Israel, migrants	Unknown	Mostly spreads conspiracy theories.

YOUTUBE

In Estonia and Lithuania, the most popular YouTube channels often belong to "alternative" self-proclaimed portals or regular disinformation spreaders. To ensure wider dissemination of their content, these actors use multiple social media platforms, typically publishing the same information across channels. These superspreaders are also very active on

Facebook and have connections to "alternative media" websites popular in Estonia. While the YouTube channel itself may not be the main platform, it is used to upload longer-form video content.

On YouTube, disinformation is most commonly spread through professionally produced, TV-style shows that mimic the aesthetic of official media outlets. These programs provide targeted information in support of certain politicians, often known for their ultra-conservative views, opposition to the LGBTQ+ community or modern medicine, and more moderate stances towards Russia. Another prevalent format is personal commentary videos, where the channel authors informally explain their perspectives on various topics, frequently based on false information or lacking any supporting evidence.

The content on Estonian YouTube channels containing disinformation often focuses more on global politics and the Baltic region in general, rather than Estonia specifically. Additionally, a significant amount of the discussion and content posted on these channels includes conspiracy theories on a wide range of topics.

Unlike other social platforms, the topics of disinformation disseminated on Lithuanian YouTube tend to be less diverse, focusing predominantly on domestic Lithuanian politics or global political news.

Across the Baltic states, the YouTube disinformation landscape exhibits some common patterns, such as the use of multiple social media accounts to amplify content, the prominence of professionally produced TV-style programs, and the prevalence of personal commentary videos.

YouTube trends in Latvia are not too different from other Baltic countries, except stronger presence of Russian language channels that aim to spread the "Russian world" narrative by using the russophobic moods and decisions in Latvian society and politics. Pro-Russian Youtubers tend to blend local frustration about the economy or similar social topics into stories about the war in Ukraine, and Russia per se, continuing the topic of Latvia as a failed country, which has been brought up for a long time. Often YouTube videos can be perceived as a starting point for content multiplication on other social networking sites – long videos are cut into smaller pieces to fit the format and the needs of TikTok, Instagram, or Facebook. Quite often videos consist of some sort of interviews thus imitating journalism

formats that can obscure less media-savvy viewers' perception of the difference between quality journalism and what it is not.

Dominant disinformation narratives on YouTube in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (qualitative overview)

Domestic politics:

- Vytautas Landsbergis and his family are corrupt and evil; Lithuania is a failed state; the Lithuanian government is trying to drag the country into war with Russia; life quality in Lithuania is bad, people are unhappy and poor; voters should give their vote to 'alternative candidates' (who are mostly pro-Kremlin) (LT)
- The government is corrupt and stealing from ordinary citizens; economic issues are caused by sanctions against Russia; the government is part of the global power elite (various conspiracy theories) (EE)
- Energy prices and inflation are the highest in the Baltics (EE)
- Latvia is a failed state that is not able to prosper without help from outside; political leadership is corrupt and must be changed to finally see economic growth and unity in the society (LV)

Geopolitics:

- NATO is evil; the EU is useless; Ukrainians are nazis; Ukraine is corrupt and weak
- Baltics must have good relationships with Russia
- Latvia has to think about its own prosperity first, and cooperation partners should be chosen according to this principle

Environment:

- Environment and climate-change-related disinformation is not popular among Lithuanian superspreaders (LT)
- Green energy is making our country poor (Estonia)
- Latvia is green enough (in terms of the amount of forests), so the economy and well-being of people must be placed first

Health:

- Viral health disinformation narratives, often connected to conspiracy theories
- Contemporary medicine and doctors are not to be trusted (LT)

Superspreaders	Subscribers	Main topics	Motivation	Comment
Estonia				
@OlegBesedinTVN (Oleg Besedin)	51K	Local Russians, domestic and geopolitics	Political, personal, business	Longtime prominent Kremlin propaganda collaborator in Estonia; active across the platforms. Owns the largest Russian-language Facebook group in Estonia called "Таллиннцы".
@eestieestcom (Mike Calamus)	3K	Domestic politics, geopolitics	Political	Former Conservative Party politician; after he left the party, started to propagate anti-Ukraine and pro-Russian views and content on his website "Eestieest!". Cooperating with Russian influence agents. Delfi Estonia's investigation.
@Pets1983 (Vanglaplaneet)	6K	Conspiracy theories, geopolitics, anti-Ukraine	Business	Page of a popular alternative media portal. The page description states: "Vanglaplaneet reveals the agenda of the global financial and power elite known as the New World Order. This agenda aims to: World domination, Population reduction, Scientific dictatorship". Active across platforms.
@user-qh9to4fy9b (Telegram Meedia)	1K	Conspiracy theories, geopolitics, health disinformation	Business	Page of a popular and well-established alternative media portal, mostly focusing on propagating viral conspiracy theories.
@ObjektiivTV	12.3K	Domestic politics, geopolitics	Political	Account of a popular and well-established alternative media portal, producing content to support 'conservative values'. Often shares disinformation and Russian propaganda

				narratives. Active across the platforms.
@pildiraadio	4.2K	Conspiracy theories, health disinformation, Christian values against Western values	Unknown	Originally a radio channel for promoting Christianity, but Bibel talk is blended with conspiracy theories about health, the environment, and politics.
@AaduBirnbaum	10K	Domestic politics	Unknown	Content to promote the Estonian Conservative party, including their weekly radio show, where there is often false information.
Latvia				
@LatvijaPirmajaVieta	13.2K	Domestic politics	Political	Content to promote the party "Latvija Pirmajā vietā" (Latvia First), including interviews with the party's MPs, followers, reports from events that are ideologically aligned with the party
@kukuruzaivan	112K	International politics	Unknown	-
@rusojuz	6.8K	Domestic politics	Political	-
Lithuania				
@OpTV_jusu_tiesa	74.4K	Anti-Lithuanian government, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party, false expose of Ukrainian support groups and Lithuanian parliament members	Political, business	Presents itself as an alternative online TV channel created by Rūta Janutienė, Valdas Vasiliauskas and Vytautas Matulevičius who 'lost their jobs in the mainstream media after publishing investigative pieces on Russian influence in Lithuanian politics.'

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41

@kitaiptv1559 (Arnas Klivečka)	35.6K	Support for pro-Kremlin candidates, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party, anti-Vytautas Landsbergis and his family, criticism of Lithuanian government decisions, content denouncing the most prominent Lithuanian politicians based on false facts, criticism of liberal Lithuanian politicians	Political, business	The channel is owned by Arnas Klivečka, a well-known Lithuanian entertainer and former DJ, who has also appeared on 'OpTV'.
@ekspertaiTV (Ekspertai.eu)	25K	Support for pro-Kremlin candidates, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party, anti-Vytautas Landsbergis, and his family, 'Lithuania will be dragged into war', anti-NATO	Ideological	'Youtube' channel of well-known disinformation website ekspertai.eu. Apart from this channel also manages the YouTube channel @ekspertai.eurasia, Facebook account 'ekspertai.tv' (3.6k followers), and Telegram channel @ekspertaiTelegram (7.46k subscribers).
@KITOKSPASAULIS1	15.7K	Conspiracy theories	Unknown	Also uses the backup Youtube channel '@KITOKSPASAULIS2' (5.09K followers) and disseminates conspiracy theories on other major social media platforms under the same name.
unVarlinaskūdroje	11.6K	Conspiracy theories, anti-government, anti-mainstream media	Unknown	In videos mostly read articles by British conspiracy theorist Martin Geddes. Apart from this 'Youtube' channel also manages another backup channel 'Varlinasmiške' where the same content is being spread.

@ekspertai.eurasia (Ekspertai.eu)	11.4K	Support for pro-Kremlin candidates, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party (ruling party 2020-2024), anti-Vytautas Landsbergis and his family, 'Lithuania will be dragged into war', anti-NATO	Ideological	The second YouTube channel; managed by ekspertai.eu website.
Varlinasmiške	12.5K	Conspiracy theories, anti-government, anti-mainstream media	Unknown	The videos mostly show articles by British conspiracy theorist Martin Geddes. Apart from this 'Youtube' channel also manages another backup channel 'Varlinaskūdroje' where the same content is being spread.
Karžygys Vilnius	9K	Anti-US, anti-government, anti-Ukraine	Ideological	Presents itself as an alternative news source. Apart from this channel also uses a backup channel '@karzygysgyvai2943' (5.1k followers) where the same content is being spread.
@vygantaskelertas3848 (Vygantas Kelertas)	8.4K	Support for pro-Kremlin candidates in elections, 'Lithuanians will be dragged into war'	Ideological	Well-known frequent pro-Kremlin disinformation spreader. Also manages other channels, such as 'Facebook' account 'matrixlithuania' (3.3k followers).

@MariusJonaitis (Marius Jonaitis)	7.6K	Anti-current government, anti-West, support for pro-Kremlin candidates, anti-The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats party	Personal gain, ideological	Before the full-scale war in Ukraine worked as a journalist at respublika.lt. Apart from his own YouTube channel also manages less popular accounts, such as the YouTube channel 'Ateitį kuriame dabar', and the Telegram channel 'Liaudies žurnalistika'.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE PLATFORMS AND REGULATION

META PLATFORMS

How do they act and respond to disinformation?

Meta platforms in the Baltic states largely rely on user engagement to identify disinformation, similar to other platforms, by allowing content to be reported. In obvious and graphic cases, content review and restriction can be done promptly and proactively, but often there may be no response at all. In 2024, after reporting several fake profiles posing as well-known media outlets and journalists, reviews concluded without results. Creating and using such accounts to spread fake news and disinformation is a common tactic to convey messages to a broader audience by posing as a trusted source.

The one way Facebook improves content quality is through partnerships with third-party fact-checking organisations. In January 2025, Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced the ending of the program within the US. Meta will replace it with so-called community notes like on the X platform. The content moderation changes weren't rolled out in the EU for now.

Overall, Meta's policy has aimed to balance freedom of expression with user safety but faces several loopholes. For example, difficulties in distinguishing between opinion and disinformation, refusal to fact-check politicians' posts, and a focus on evaluating "viral" content. This approach is changing in real-time after Donald Trump took office.

Has their approach changed recently?

Over the years, there has been a shift toward AI-based decision-making. Although this is technically logical, the lack of human oversight is noticeable—content such as landscape photos, car-related news, and other harmless posts have mistakenly been flagged as "spam," "disinformation," and even "sexually explicit content." These AI decisions mean that even reliable and responsible content creators can be classified as policy violators and subjected to sanctions, such as lower visibility in the news feed. At the same time, automated reports have not been able to eliminate fake news pages and profiles. This

combination may not only undermine people's trust in specific news platforms but also in news content itself.

Since the beginning of 2025, Meta has announced[12] many drastic changes related to its content moderation policy and handling of disinformation on the platform[13].

Zuckerberg cited the outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential election as underlying the decision, calling it a "cultural tipping point towards, once again, prioritizing speech". "We're going to get rid of fact-checkers and replace them with community notes similar to X, starting in the U.S".[14] The changes will impact Meta platforms Facebook and Instagram, which have billions of users, as well as Threads.

Meta introduced its fact-checking program in 2016 as part of an effort to curb misinformation. The initiative was launched in response to criticism over Facebook's role in spreading false claims during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. A 2023 statement from Meta said the fact-checking program had "expanded to include nearly 100 organizations working in more than 60 languages globally".

Proactivity vs. Reactivity

Proactively, Meta platforms have for many years strengthened the environment with the presence of third-party fact-checking solutions and are effective at identifying visually disturbing content. However, automated tools often inaccurately identify disinformation and policy violations, which remain publicly visible. In certain cases, Meta representatives have been responsive to individual requests to delete or restrict content. As previously mentioned, Meta is now actively changing its content moderation policies, shifting towards "free speech", meaning that the responsibility will heavily lie on the users themselves.

Is it working in the Baltic countries? The main issues

For now, Meta's 3rd party fact-chacking program continues to work in the EU, and Meta has partners in all Baltic countries. Yet the disinformation control in the Baltic countries works partially. Several fake media accounts were not deleted even after repeated reports and remain active.

One of the issues is the small size of the Baltic states and the use of small local languages, which makes Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia technically low-priority clients with limited business value. At the same time, their proximity to Russia makes all three countries significant targets for disinformation. Not all media outlets know about or are informed of the ways to seek assistance from Meta directly. Likewise, much of the disinformation and illegal content goes unnoticed by the platform's automated solutions.

X

How do they act and respond to disinformation?

On the X platform, identifying and labeling misinformation is placed in the hands of users through the Community Notes feature. Registered users who qualify for this feature can add clarification notes under posts that contain factually inaccurate information. If enough Community Notes users agree with the proposed clarification, it is published under the post. This approach could be a good supplement to a broader disinformation control program, but on its own, it struggles to function effectively for several reasons.

Firstly, there are technical ways to bypass the system. Experiments have shown that one person can qualify for the Community Notes group with multiple X accounts, allowing the clarifier to evaluate their own notes.

Secondly, coordinated user groups can be formed to influence Community Notes evaluations, enabling them to rate recommendations positively or negatively according to favorable political or ideological perspectives.

Thirdly, research[15] indicates that this form of content moderation is more likely to prompt users to correct posts that don't align with their own political stance. On the X platform, it is possible to report various violations, such as hate speech, spam, or impersonation, but there is no option to report misinformation.

Has their approach changed recently?

After changes in X ownership, teams responsible for content moderation were laid off. As a result, disinformation detection has been left to the users themselves, with the platform responding only to certain violations, such as hate, abuse and harassment, violent speech,

child safety, privacy, spam, suicide or self-harm, sensitive or disturbing content, impersonation, violent and hateful entities.

Is it working in Baltic countries; the main issues

In the Baltic countries, especially in Latvia, where there is a highly active X community, a wide range of misinformation is also present. However, the Community Notes community is not very active. This means that disinformation posted on X most likely will not be subjected to fact-checking.

It also means that the technical loopholes of Community Notes make this system highly vulnerable — in a smaller community, organising a group of biassed content moderators is easier than in larger countries because there are fewer users who could counteract artificial "upvotes" or "downvotes".

TIKTOK

How do they act and respond to disinformation?

TikTok's policies prohibit certain types of content, such as health misinformation, climate change denial, and specific conspiracy theories. Such content can either be banned from the platform or restricted from appearing in the "For You" section.

In practice, however, such content is still visible. During an experiment involving repeated reports of videos containing specific violations, TikTok neither removed nor restricted the content but instead informed the reporter that they would see less of this kind of content.

Additionally, content is often restricted by unclear algorithms. For example, a video featuring Belgium's famous "Manneken Pis" sculpture was blocked and not restored even after a review request, while a repeatedly reported video showing explicit private parts of a real man remains accessible and continues to generate views.

Similar to Meta's automatic content moderation, regular content creators on TikTok can suffer from unpredictable AI-driven restrictions. For instance, media content featuring war footage or addressing sensitive topics professionally (like coverage of musician P. Diddy's allegations) may be flagged as violent, causing media platforms to self-censor to avoid potential blocks or restrictions.

Has their approach changed recently?

There have been improvements in TikTok's content moderation policies. While the platform previously imposed immediate account bans for violations, it now uses a warning system, applying real restrictions only after three confirmed violations. The introduction of a review system has also helped reverse some erroneous content restrictions imposed by TikTok. However, despite clear policy wording, content creators still lack a clear understanding of how TikTok decides which content to sanction.

Proactivity vs. Reactivity

Regarding health content, TikTok acted proactively by adding links to reliable health information for related content about COVID-19. In contrast, TikTok's enforcement of its misinformation policies in the Baltic countries tends to be selective and reactive, making it challenging for content creators to predict moderation outcomes.

Is it working in Baltic countries; the main issues

As with other social media platforms, the small size and language diversity of the Baltic states pose challenges for TikTok in implementing scalable, automated solutions without local support. However, in 2024, TikTok announced its entry into the Baltic advertising market, with local third-party oversight enabled.

Due to unclear and automated moderation, Baltic media outlets often self-censor, fearing unjustified profile restrictions. The lack of a designated contact in the Baltic states for addressing such issues leaves them without local support for help or answers when restrictions occur.

TELEGRAM

How do they act and respond to disinformation?

Although Telegram updated its privacy policy in the fall of 2024 regarding data sharing with law enforcement agencies, there is currently no indication of changes concerning the platform's approach to disinformation.

Telegram remains the least moderated platform in terms of content, allowing large communities to gather, adapt popular conspiracy theories to local contexts, and spread them widely. The lack of control makes Telegram an easy target for actors unfriendly to the Baltic states, as information spreads unchecked.

Telegram's low image and video resolution makes it difficult to detect forgeries, while its technical simplicity makes it suitable for mass information distribution. Additionally, a single group in the app can host up to 200,000 users, which is not possible on other alternative messaging platforms.

Has their approach changed recently?

Although Telegram's privacy policy and public rhetoric have shifted toward cooperation with law enforcement agencies, there is currently no reason to believe that the spread of disinformation in the Baltic states has decreased. No significant changes have been observed in the largest disinformation groups.

Is it working in Baltic countries; the main issues

There is virtually no feedback between users and Telegram's support team, and there is little confidence that reports of violations seen on the platform lead to any action from Telegram. This allows conspiracy theories to spread freely and radical groups to form without consequence.

YOUTUBE

How do they act and respond to disinformation?

YouTube employs various strategies to combat disinformation. Community Guidelines outline restrictions on hate speech, harassment, impersonation, spam, and misleading content, including misinformation related to voting. YouTube prioritizes high-quality content from trusted sources, while low-quality or misleading content is downranked in recommendations. For topics frequently targeted by conspiracy theories, such as COVID-19 or flat Earth theories, YouTube adds information panels with reliable content. Content that violates platform guidelines is either removed or algorithmically downranked.

Has their approach changed recently?

In the summer of 2024, YouTube began testing a new feature in certain countries, similar to the "Community Notes" on the "X" platform, with a pilot version for users in the U.S. and the U.K.

Proactivity vs. Reactivity

YouTube's content ranking policy emphasizes a proactive approach to limit the spread of disinformation, while the newly introduced "Community Notes" feature would allow for reactive engagement by platform users.

Is it working in Baltic countries; the main issues

Language limitations prevent smaller countries from fully utilizing some of YouTube's content recommendation features, such as the "breaking news" or "news" sections that highlight media content in other regions. Additionally, the language barrier may hinder the platform's ability to distinguish between news content and populist content posing as news, allowing anti-scientific videos from political actors to reach a wide audience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, videos by vaccine opponents were widely circulated on YouTube, often gaining more views than equivalent media content.

CONCLUSION

This report examines the role of social media platforms in the Baltic states' information landscape, the spread of disinformation, and the accountability of platforms.

Media Consumption Trends

Estonia: Estonians primarily rely on public broadcasters (ETV, ETV2) and online news, while Russian-speaking residents consume a broader mix, favoring social media and Russian-language portals. Trust in Estonian media among Russian speakers has declined post-Ukraine invasion.

Latvia: Traditional media consumption is decreasing, with social media gaining prominence. Russian-language media bans post-Ukraine war have led to uncertainties in audience migration. Telegram and TikTok have emerged as key disinformation platforms.

Lithuania: Media trust is low, with only 51% of Lithuanians considering their media free. The audience is split between public broadcasters, commercial media, and alternative outlets, some of which spread disinformation.

Social Media Usage

Facebook remains dominant across all three countries, but Telegram is more popular among Russian-speaking communities. TikTok usage is growing, particularly in Latvia and Lithuania.

YouTube is widely used as a news and entertainment source. X has limited traction, though accounts especially in Latvia spread disinformation.

Disinformation on Platforms

The report identifies patterns and key narratives across major platforms:

Meta (Facebook, Instagram): Disinformation spreads through closed groups, alternative media pages, and influential individuals. Key narratives include government corruption, NATO's role in Ukraine, and climate change denial.

X: Disinformation often amplifies global viral content, especially in Estonia. Latvia sees bot-driven campaigns, while Lithuania experiences sporadic, low-impact disinformation.

TikTok: Disinformation spreads through viral videos and manipulated political statements. Topics include Baltic states preparing for war, economic struggles, and vaccine conspiracy theories.

Telegram: Russian-speaking communities frequently use Telegram, with narratives centered around Ukraine, economic struggles, and Western influence.

YouTube: Channels mimic professional media formats to spread alternative viewpoints and false narratives.

Accountability & Platform Regulation

Meta's fact-checking approach is changing, with plans to replace fact-checkers with "community notes" similar to X. AI moderation issues on platforms lead to false content removals while allowing disinformation to persist. Despite policy changes, disinformation remains widespread, particularly due to limitations in platform enforcement.

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