

Disinformation Monitoring Monthly Report

- Estonia
- Month 5
- January, 2024



Key insights:

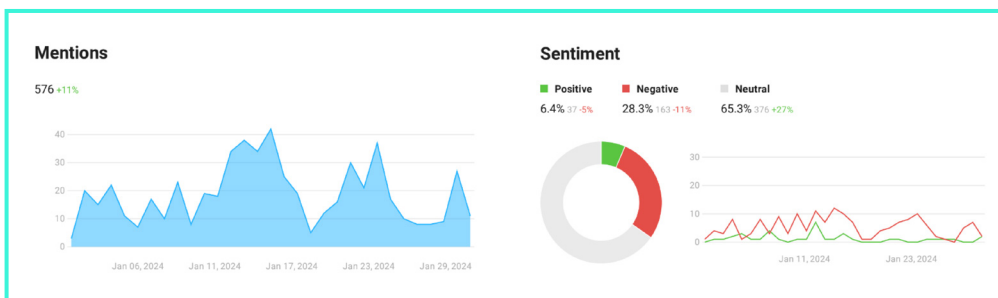
The Estonian social media and web-based media actors during the reporting month predominantly were still focused on the Estonian/Russian language policy issues, human rights issues, democracy and trust towards elected officials, and war in Ukraine as well as the international security situation in general. Accordingly, the main narratives that were spread over the social media were the following:

- The Centrist Party members switching parties to further their careers.
- Disappointment from the politicians leaving the party, and claiming it was against the will of the constituents.
- A Ukrainian missile strike purposely sent to kill civilians.
- Russian speaking teachers fearing for their jobs.
- The deportation of citizens for their thoughts and beliefs about the country.
- The Estonian government is willing to spend millions of euros on defense but neglects teacher's salaries.
- The Estonian school system is instilling 'perverted' western beliefs into the minds of children.
- A survey of Estonian citizens shows that the trust in the government is falling.

Overview of findings:



- A total of 576 social media posts were monitored on Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo and Telegram channels.
- An *Awario* media monitoring tool reveals the remaining importance of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, conflict between Israel and Palestine and importance of the language policies, as mentions of "Ukraine" and "the war", and "language", "Russian language" in Estonian media in Estonian and Russian languages (see graph above) scores near around 129 mentions. Data from the monitoring tool also shows that more than a quarter (28.3%) of these items held a negative sentiment. That signals the easy usage of war for the spread of anti-Ukrainian and anti-government narratives which are related to the language policies as well.
- *Awario* has also revealed the notable reach of the same social media pieces (see the graph below) that includes mentions of Ukraine, the war and the language policies, especially beginning and end of the month, when the war in Israel began and introduction of the Estonian language in the schools was debated by the end of the month.



Story of the month:



Yana Toom's opinion on the politicians leaving the Estonian Centrist Party



This January, in the Estonian government, a group of nine Estonian politicians decided to leave the Estonian Centrist Party. The article is an opinion piece by EU parliament member Yana Toom, which is posted on: <https://yanatoom.ee/in-press-i.php?lang=ru&id=10628>. The version of the same interview in Estonian language is published on "Maaleht" – web based news outlet (<https://maaleht.delfi.ee/artikkel/120260868/jana-toom-ma-ei-ole-riigivaenlane-mul-oli-juba-noukogude-passis-rahvuseks-eestlane>). In this publication, Yana Toom expresses her opinion on the members leaving the Estonian Centrist party. She says that she considers this a betrayal, and the defectors went to support Kaya Kallas's cabinet. She stated that these people were recently

collecting signatures for Kallas's resignation and today they support her. Yana Toom then goes on to say she is looking forward to the next vote of confidence in the Riigikogu and claims that the former party members are lying. She claims that people are becoming tired of members in parties splitting into different groups and changing the party narratives. Yana Toom claims that Estonian policies have become unkind and cruel and are not developing into the European political culture that was wanted.

Yana Toom is backing up one of the most frequently utilized narratives, that are spread by Kremlin propaganda supporters, that Estonian politics is somehow a disho-

nest and one that cannot be trusted: "Our politics have become very unkind and cruel. It's a pity that European political culture is not being instilled in us. Kaja Kallas worked in the European Parliament for four years - it is unthinkable that anyone there would push something through using such methods, but in Estonia all this is somehow forgotten", says Yana Toom.

Here is how exactly Yana Toom comments on those who left the Center Party: "I would like to think well of people, but I still consider it a betrayal. The party is 13 thousand people, the majority are "ordinary party members," as they say, those who campaign, go out into the streets in any weather, stand in tents, on whose shoulders our party positions rest. The defectors actually left to support the cabinet of Kai Kallas. Just yesterday they were collecting signatures for Callas' resignation, and today they support her government. Honestly, I'm looking forward to the next vote of confidence in the government in the Riigikogu: how will these people vote? For me, the biggest disappointment is that they lie, that they behave dishonestly."