

Disinformation Monitoring Monthly Report

- Estonia
- Month 10
- June, 2024



Key Insights:

In June, social media and other web-based media actors primarily focused on spreading disinformation narratives about the Estonian government (and its leaders), NATO, the U.S., and the European Union. Discussions surrounding security issues and the war in Ukraine have also increased this month. Narratives surrounding the suppression of the Russian language and Russian-speaking individuals in Estonia remain present, although less so than in previous months. Some of the most prominent narratives spread in June include the following:

1. Estonia is becoming a surveillance state and is raising taxes to increase its control over citizens.
2. U.S. and NATO troop's presence in Estonia heightens the risk of conflict with Russia.
3. Russia is simply waging war in Ukraine to protect Russian-speaking people in Ukraine.
4. The USA and its NATO allies are responsible for the war in Ukraine.
5. The Western values espoused by the EU are incompatible with Estonian culture; moving to join the EU will work against Estonia.
6. Prime Minister Kallas is unqualified to work in the EU parliament.

Detailed narratives:

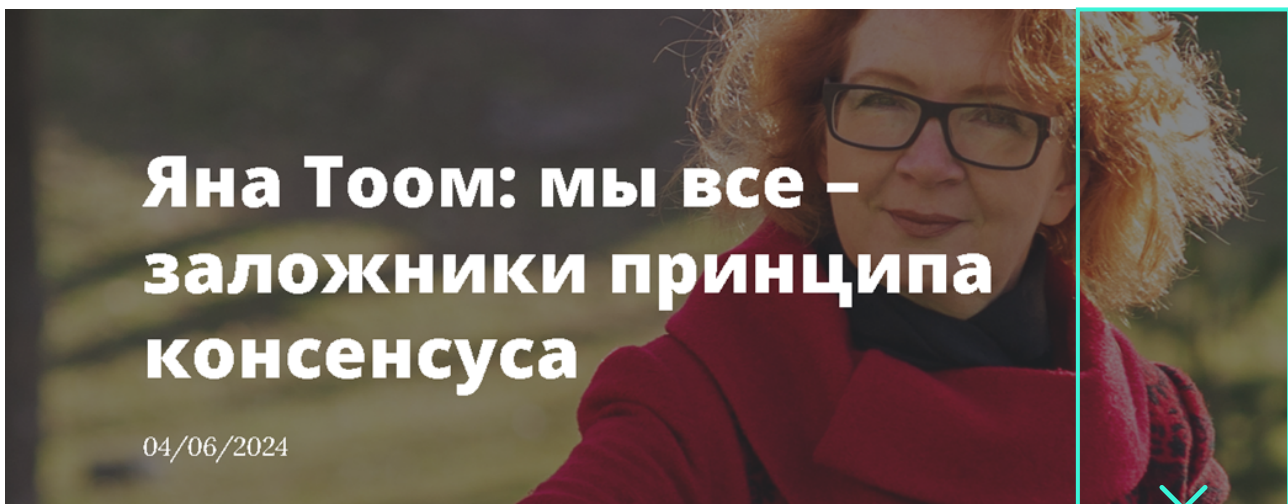


- The individual monitoring on social media sources like Facebook uncovered the following narratives, including but not limited to claims that:
 1. Tax organizations are trying to influence the passing of a law to gain access to more information on Estonian citizens.
 2. The attack against the Russian language continues to gain momentum, with calls for it to be eradicated and calling it the language of the enemies.
 3. Liberals have stagnated the government and economy of Estonia and Europe, with lower living standards and a lack of sovereignty.

Story of the month:



"Yana Toom: we are all hostages of the consensus principle."



In this opinion piece, Yana Toom, an Estonian politician and member of the European Parliament, argues against the principle of consensus found in both the EU and NATO. According to the author, the principle of consensus (found in some spheres of EU decision-making) is not democratic. It may hinder any initiatives the EU Council may want to push through. For example, she states: "The topic of federalisation of Europe – is it relevant? "It depends on what is considered federalisation. As I have already said, our decision-making system is crooked". According to Toom, Viktor Orban and other more unpredictable EU leaders may hinder the passing and implementation of any EU legislative or political initiatives.

Although the author's argument(s) about the potential pitfalls surrounding the EU decision-making process may have some merit, where the author begins to lead readers astray is in her discussion of NATO. She writes, "We all walk around waving the fifth article of the NATO treaty - on collective defence. At the same time, for some reason, we do not want to remember that the activation of this article requires the consensus of 32 NATO countries". This is a false claim and is a dangerous misrepresentation of Article 5. If a NATO member becomes a victim of an armed attack, then Article 5 would automatically come into effect, as such that other NATO members "...will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith,

individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force" ([Article 5](#)). Technically, NATO members are not forced to assist with armed forces but may use whatever is "deemed necessary". Either way, however, if Estonia were to be invaded by Russia, Article 5 would go into effect, triggering the responsibility of NATO allies to respond.

She writes, "Suppose everything is bad with us - and we need a fifth article. But in NATO, there is Erdogan, Orban, and so on. Whether they will agree is unclear... In a situation of aggression in Europe, we do not talk about military assistance; we do not have a European army". This, again, is a dangerous statement that makes it seem like Erdogan and Orban would somehow be able to prevent NATO members from responding to an invasion of Estonia. They would have no power to do so, and according to the Treaty, they would need to assist Estonia in "any way deemed necessary".

The author lacks an understanding of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. In NATO, the principle of consensus refers to a common stance adopted by the Alliance. The principle of consensus has nothing to do with Article 5, which is binding on all members. Consensus in NATO refers to a particular political stance adopted by NATO. When a "[NATO decision](#)" is announced, it is the expression of the collective will of all the sovereign states that are members of the Alliance.