

Disinformation Monitoring Monthly Report

-  Lithuania
-  Month 11
-  July, 2024



Key Insights:

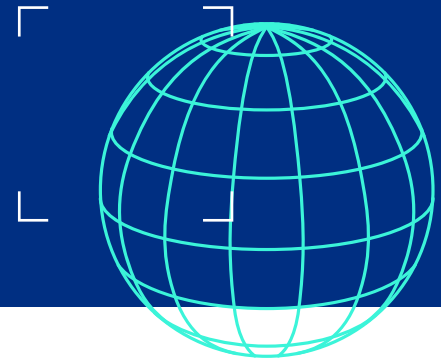
According to the social media monitoring platform "Awario", the most talked-about topics within Kremlin-aligned media in Lithuania in July were:

1. Petras Gražulis forming the "Kelkis Lietuva" coalition: three parties, "Mes Lietuva" movement, the Lithuanian Families Movement, and public figures joining it;
2. The re-elected president G. Nausėda taking the oath in the Seimas;
3. Raimundas Vaikšnoras starts commanding the Lithuanian army;
4. Former candidate for the President's post, Ignas Vėgėlė, deciding to run for the Seimas with LVŽS: the last number on the list, in case of success, he intends to become the speaker of the parliament;
5. Decision to open a new military town will be opened in Šiauliai;
6. Monika Navickienė, who has resigned from the post of minister, deciding not to participate in the Seimas elections;
7. Ursula von der Leyen's criticism towards the Prime Minister of Hungary, calling his decisions "mission of appeasement";
8. Recent law on the construction of polygons in Tauragė and Šilalė districts reaching Seimas and the minister emphasising that the need for such objects will grow in the near future;
9. Politician Viktoras Uspaskich once again returning to the Labor Party;
10. Conspiracy theory that re-elected president Gitanas Nausėda allegedly have not made it to the second round of elections at all;
11. Hungary taking over the EU presidency;
12. Gabrielius Landsbergis newly introduced sanctions against Belarus.

- A thorough examination of Lithuanian media with Kremlin affiliations using media monitoring tools uncovered a notable concentration on Ukraine-related topics. The topic resulted in a high percentage, averaging around half of articles published on specific outlets (e.g. bukimeviengi.lt, ekspertai.eu). Even though some of the articles continued to carry very negative sentiments, interestingly, a fair part of the articles reshared neutral information from other outlets this month. However, original content from Kremlin-aligned media continued to mock the willingness of Lithuania and its politicians to save Ukraine while increasing the financing for it and "lead it to victory". Kremlin-aligned outlets also ridiculed the possibility of "Ukraine's admission to NATO" and discouraged support for Ukraine to emphasise Ukraine being prioritised over Lithuania and its own problems, and claiming that such active help for Ukraine will result in difficulties for Lithuania instead.

- News portal "Delfi" pays much attention to the fight against disinformation and fake news in Lithuania. Its recent product – "Lie Detector" – was involved in a unique project: it joined a multilingual chatbot developed by media representatives, which uses artificial intelligence to offer users fact-checked information. The chatbot will work similarly to the popular ChatGPT, but its features will always be based on facts only. "Delfi" is one of the international partners of this project, which was chosen for financing by the European Media and Information Fund (EMIF). The European Media Information Foundation, which unites fact-checkers and organisations fighting disinformation, initiated this project to create a virtual assistant.

Overview of findings:



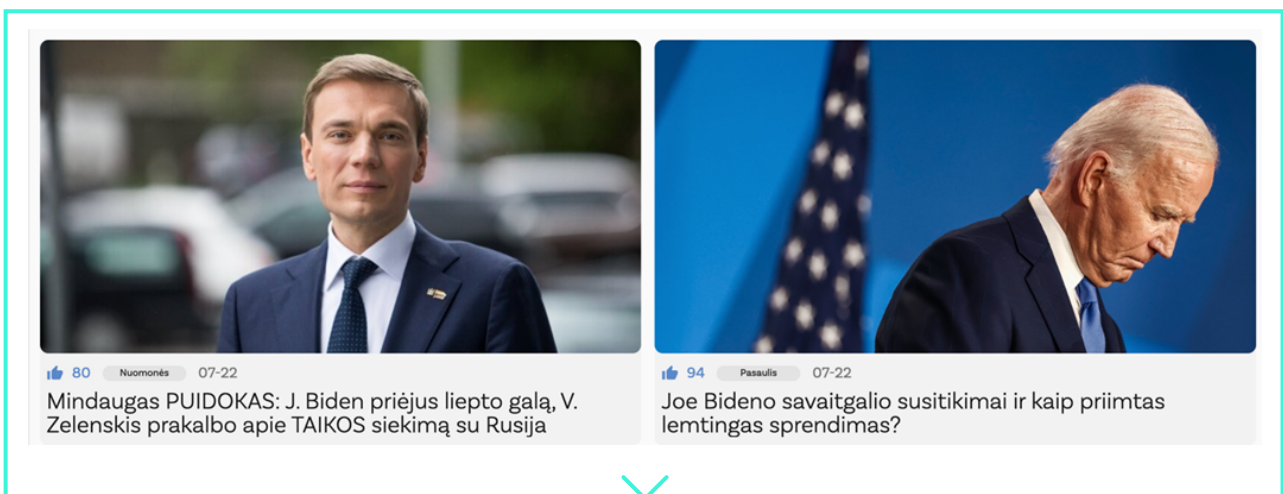
An increased number, total of 692 articles, compared to 633 articles analysed during June, were scrutinised from four Kremlin-aligned media outlets still actively operating in Lithuania: ekspertai.eu, 77.lt, bukimevieniingi.lt and laisvaslaikrastis.lt.

News outlet 77.lt further ensured its leading position in activity throughout the month, releasing even 460 articles or the absolute majority – 66% of all articles scrutinised during July.

As usual, the posts covered a variety of topics, with a heavy focus on domestic issues, yet international matters, such as Joe Biden quitting the US presidential race, were also widely discussed.

Kremlin-aligned media 77.lt alone issued a few articles covering the end of Biden's era. Articles included various conspiracy theories and some sound headlines, such as ["Shot at D. Trump, but shot dead Biden"](#).

Among the articles was [an opinion article](#) written by the controversial politician Mindaugas Puidokas (screenshot on the lower left). He claimed that after talking with Donald Trump, Volodymyr Zelensky spoke openly about "the pursuit of PEACE for the first time, as the only possible way in the current difficult situation in order to prevent senseless killings". Without providing any background information, where did he get the information from, Puidokas claimed that Zelensky had suggested Moscow send a delegation to the next peace summit, which Ukraine's President hopes to hold in November. Russia was not invited to the previous peace conference held in Switzerland last month because the same Zelensky said that any negotiations could occur only after Russia's withdrawal from Ukraine. Puidokas further warranted that "speaking to reporters on Monday, Zelensky said Ukraine was not getting enough Western aid to win the war and stressed that its outcome would be decided far beyond Ukraine's borders." He added himself that "I always said the same thing about the Peace Coalition during the European Parliament elections..." Finally,



rhetorically asking "What will Gabrielius Landsbergis [minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania] and other liberal-conservative war hawks do now?", he associated the leading politicians and political parties with the eagerness to be a part of the war. It closely relates to the pro-Kremlin narrative that the government of Lithuania is effortlessly trying to participate in the war and does not want peace, so any peace promotions coming from malign actors eventually might end up in growing support from confused or tired from the war audiences. Other outlets also issued similar articles, openly mocking the current President, calling him "[an object of ridicule](#)" and ensuring the upcoming victory for Donald Trump.

Story of the month/ July:



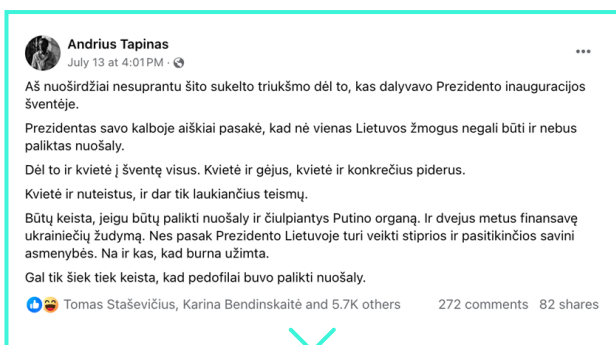
Presidential Inauguration

During this reporting month, Gitanas Nausėda was inaugurated as president of Lithuania for the second term. After taking the presidential oath and other formal procedures, an evening reception was held in the courtyard of the Presidential Palace to celebrate the president's inauguration. The latter quickly sparked many debates online.

Most attention was focused not on the President himself, but on all the different guests that were invited to the reception. A well-known journalist Andrius [Tapinas covered it in the post](#): "I honestly don't understand all the fuss about who attended the Presidential Inauguration. In his speech, the President clearly said that no Lithuanian person can and will not be left out. That's why everyone was invited to the celebration, including gays and specific fa**ots. He invited both the convicted and those still awaiting trial. It would be strange if the ones sucking on Putin's organ were left out. And those financing the killing of Ukrainians for two years. Because according to the President, strong and self-confident personalities must work in Lithuania. Despite if the mouth is busy. Maybe it's just a little strange that pedophiles were left out."

Post became one of the most engaged (see screenshot on the lower left) media pieces throughout the reporting month.

A well-known writer and social media persona, Benas Lastauskas, [in one of his posts](#), included one of the guests of the Presidential Inauguration that was also referred to in Tapinas' post as well – Visvaldas Matijošaitis. Mayor of Kaunas, often criticized for his close ties to his family's businesses operating in Russia, featured in a photo with his wife, with an ironic description: "Tell your children this was Mikhail Gorbachev", again referring to his relations with Russia (see screenshot on the lower right).



Among the comments under the post, a photoshopped picture of Matijošaitis with Gorbachev's port wine stain appeared as well as a lot of Russian medals of honour added to his chest (see screenshot on the lower left). The picture quickly went viral, while other commenters were disgusted with such guests at the presidential inauguration, claiming that the original medals on his jacket were "for sucking Russian organ".



in parliament due to his antisemitic statements) caused a lot of heated debates and criticism towards the Presidential institution in general, therefore, towards the whole ruling government. Such events create a fertile ground for Kremlin-aligned actors to spread malign narratives targeting strongly divided society.



Meanwhile, Kremlin-aligned media also covered the inauguration party. E.g. outlet laisvas.info published an article with a sound headline "[Nauseating party of Nausėda](#)" (see screenshot on upper right). The author of the article not only questions the legitimacy of the elections in Lithuania but also is extremely disgusted by the whole idea of the inauguration party, as he states: "We live in a country where [elections are falsified](#), and because of such elections, the person appointed as the president organizes a ball to which he invites 2000 guests and celebrates electoral fraud at the expense of impoverished citizens." The author further criticised President Nausėda and undermined his oath given „to work for the benefit of Lithuania” and compared him to “crazy Queen Marie Antoinette of France, who told the starving and rebellious French: "If they don't have bread, let them eat cakes.”

Controversially treated guests (besides Matijošaitis, Žilvinas Tratas – an actor who openly praised Russia or Remigijus Žemaitaitis, a politician who lost his mandate