

Disinformation Monitoring Monthly Report

- Latvia
- Month 13
- September, 2024



Key insights:

During the reporting month, the content primarily examined topics such as the incompetence of the Latvian government and the corruption within it. The main narratives are as follows:

- EU Green Deal goals are unachievable and disadvantage Latvia;
- The coalition parties do not act in the interest of citizens;
- Vaccines are tools of oppression used by the government.

Overview of findings:



- In the reporting month, TikTok, Telegram, Facebook, and X/Twitter platforms were monitored. Content in video format achieves the most engagement, making TikTok and Facebook the primary channels for disseminating disinformation. Activity has notably increased in X/Twitter and decreased on Facebook. A total of 250 posts were examined, and the number of posts has increased by approximately 30 compared to the previous examined month.
- Similar to prior months, the content primarily revolves around domestic issues such as corruption, public health policies, and economic development. In the examined month, a substantial amount of content has focused on vaccines both in the context of Covid-19 and diphtheria. The content examined shows mistrust in the Latvian government, the European Union and World Health Organisation by the disinformation actors questioning necessity of Covid-19 and diphtheria vaccines.
- Within the examined platforms, engagement on TikTok and Facebook is largely supportive indicating that the target audiences are more susceptible to the disinformation narratives. Additionally, TikTok is the platform with the most engagement from Russian speakers. In contrast, the content examined on platform X usually receives more critical engagement often fact-checking the content posted.

Story of the month:



“!!VĪRIEŠI MEITEŅU ĢĒRBTUVĒS!!” / Men in women's changing rooms

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?bid=3884308895115744&set=a.1394425340770791>

X/Twitter: https://x.com/maija_armaneva/status/1883754598995055057

The post published by a member of the opposition party LPV (Latvija Pirmajā Vieta/Latvia in First Place) Maija Armaņeva displays an AI-generated picture of a man entering women's bathroom with the title “!! VĪRIEŠI MEITEŅU ĢĒRBTUVĒS !! ” (Men in women's changing rooms). The primary aim of the post however is to seed mistrust in the presidential campaign of Kamala Harris. The author claims that if Kamala Harris were to become the president of the United States, she would pass the “Equality Act” which would give men access to women's private spaces and advertise gender reassignment surgery for young adults. The author further refers to giving context to the post indicating that the information is taken from the political programme of Kamala Harris, however, the Equality Act promotes neither of the points made. Rather the Equality Act “prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity with respect to businesses, employment, housing, federally funded programs, and other settings.”¹

The narratives expressed by the author highly resemble

the discourse that surrounded the Istanbul Convention earlier this year. The Convention similar as the Equality Act was both misinterpreted and misrepresented to portray it as creating disadvantages or even unsafe environments for women or in any way encouraging gender reassignment surgeries in adolescents.

The post published on Facebook received 182 likes, 47 comments and 52 shares. The engagement on Facebook was primarily positive showing mistrust in “liberal values” and support for Donald Trump's presidency. In contrast, the same post was published on X/ Twitter where it received 62 likes, 24 retweets and 53 comments majority of which were negative, questioning the intellect of the author and the sources relied upon.

Image attached to the post:



¹ Equality Act, available on: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/5/all-info>

Comments from Facebook:

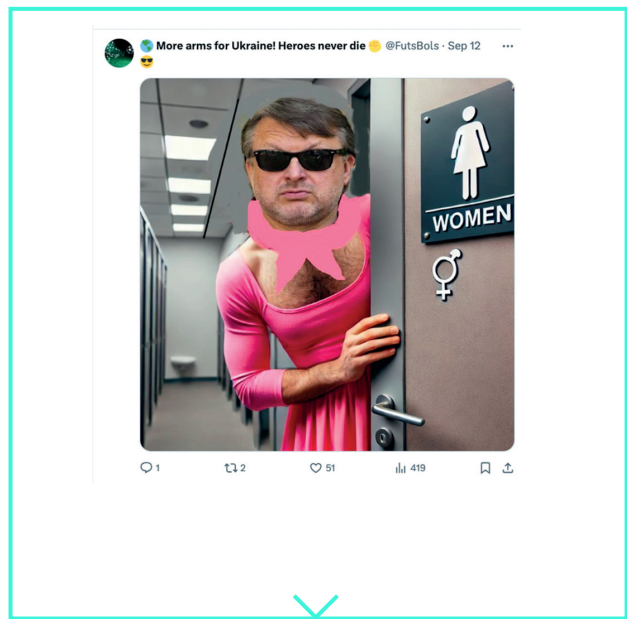
1. "What equality are we even talking about? If some moral cripple identifies as a woman then he should be institutionalised against his will not given some equal treatment."



2. "I would rather ask whether Latvia needs such equality? I personally think not."



3. The original image attached to the post but replaced with the face of the leader of the political party:



Comments from X/Twitter:

1. "Conservatives love AI art because in reality, their nonsense do not exist."



2. "Fascinating how during all these years you don't get tired of being so stupid."