

Disinformation Monitoring Monthly Report

- Latvia
- Month 15
- November, 2024



Key insights:

By mixing kernels of truth with dramatic exaggerations and outright fabrications, disinformation narratives throughout November aimed to undermine Latvia's democratic institutions, international relations, and social cohesion.

- Exaggerating economic challenges, portraying the country as a failing state with high inflation, rising unemployment, and ineffective government policies.
- Spreading conspiracy theories about healthcare, US diplomatic relations, and social issues, deliberately creating divisions, and undermining public confidence in Latvian institutions.
- Exploiting social tensions and spreading false claims about Latvia's governance and international relations.

Overview of findings:



- Russian-aligned disinformation campaigns are systematically targeting Latvia through a multifaceted propaganda strategy designed to undermine the country's reputation and sow social discord. These coordinated efforts primarily focus on painting Latvia as a failing state by amplifying economic challenges, criticizing government policies, and spreading inflammatory narratives about social issues.
- Economic narratives form a core component of this disinformation strategy, with Kremlin-aligned channels dramatically exaggerating Latvia's economic difficulties. They portray the country as facing imminent economic collapse, highlighting high inflation, suggesting widespread unemployment, and characterizing infrastructure projects like Rail Baltica as wasteful investments. The messaging consistently frames these economic struggles as a direct result of governmental incompetence, deliberately creating a narrative of systemic failure.
- Simultaneously, these propaganda channels attack Latvia's social and political institutions by portraying the government as indifferent to its citizens' welfare. This includes spreading conspiracy theories about healthcare, such as claiming that medical services are simultaneously unaffordable for Latvians while being "unfairly" provided to Ukrainian war casualties. The narratives also fabricate stories about discrimination, using isolated incidents to suggest widespread Russophobia and intolerance.
- US-related conspiracy theories constitute another significant thread in this disinformation tapestry. False claims about US diplomatic intentions, potential embassy service reductions, and misleading interpretations of American political developments are strategically deployed to create uncertainty and erode trust in international alliances.

Story of the month:



Disinformation increased after Trump's Victory

Kremlin-aligned channels and local conspiracy networks have been exploiting political uncertainty to spread rapidly evolving disinformation narratives. Telegram channels were the primary vectors for these narratives. Donald Trump's election has contributed to a significant increase of misleading narratives about US-Latvia relations as well as US foreign policies, particularly towards Ukraine. Conspiracy theorists and pro-Kremlin channels are exploiting the uncertainty and vagueness of Trump's statements by painting the most negative picture possible to sow fear of the US abandoning this region.

Key disinformation strategies have included fabricating claims about US embassy service reductions in Riga and Kyiv, spreading false narratives about US government policies, and creating elaborate conspiracy theories about "globalist" influences. Particularly alarming are claims suggesting the United States would not defend Latvia in a potential military conflict, deliberately playing on historical geopolitical anxieties.

Local conspiracy theorists have seized on these narratives, portraying Trump as a mythical figure fighting against perceived global conspiracies. Completely unfounded claims, such as alleged US government expenditure cuts and invented stories about international political conspiracies, have found fertile ground among susceptible audiences.

As geopolitical tensions continue, with Trump as US president, US-related disinformation and conspiracy narratives will likely only increase.