

EaP Monthly Bulletin

#4-5
June - July 2020

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CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

The EaP Monthly Bulletin is the initiative of the Centre for Policy Studies. Its purpose is to exchange information about the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries, to facilitate cooperation between experts and civil society institutions interested in the region, and to provide analytical products for different stakeholders.

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Editor's note

Dear readers,

Because of technical reasons, the publication of the EaP Monthly Bulletin in the previous month was postponed, so we now introduce this double issue.

This issue presents some articles by researchers participating in our joint project with the Experts for Security and Global Affairs Association (Romania) and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, *Protecting Democratic Values by Tackling Pandemic-related Disinformation*.

We also present the opinion of a prominent Belarusian expert, Dr Aliaksei Kazharski, about the post-election situation in Belarus. We would like to thank the *1in.am Armenian News & Analyses* for the kind permission to reproduce the material.

Armen Grigoryan

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Internet shut down and people injured in Belarus: 'Solidarity of leaders frightened by "colour revolutions" against the peoples'

By Mariam Grigoryan

The article was originally published on 10 August by the 1in.am Armenian News & Analyses in [Armenian](#) and [Russian](#)

After the presidential elections in Belarus on 9 August, the situation rapidly escalated in an unprecedented way. In a number of cities including the nation's capital Minsk a number of people joined protest demonstrations, demanding departure of President Alexander Lukashenka who's been occupying the office for over a quarter century. The police used force including rubber bullets, stun grenades and water cannons. Dozens of protesters were injured, according to the reports. The demonstrations have been going on.

Lukashenka's principal challenger, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, called upon the police to stop violence and asked the protesters to avoid provocations. From the election day, internet service in Belarus has been limited.



1in.am interviewed Dr Aliaksei Kazharski, faculty member of Charles University (Prague), who considers the 9 August elections historical: *'The authorities have never before faced such a level of rejection by the society. Previously, a lot of people also did not take the official results – always showing about 70-80% support for the incumbent – for*

granted. But never before the Belarusians showed such strong readiness to stand up for their choice. Very importantly, there have been demonstrations in the capital and in smaller towns as well – previously, protests only took place in Minsk. There is a widespread feeling that the incumbent authority is outdated and is not supported by the majority.'

At the same time, it is not yet clear how well coordinated and organised the protest movement can be, and what role may the opposition's presidential candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya play: *'This morning some contradictory statements came from the headquarters of the united opposition. The internet is effectively cut off in Belarus; several means of communication are also unavailable. Certainly, the authorities will carry on, having no retreat strategy. Last night, they already showed readiness to use any available means; unfortunately, several people were injured.'*

This morning, Russia's President Vladimir Putin already congratulated Lukashenka. In his letter he particularly expressed hope that Lukashenka would continue to support the two states' cooperation in all spheres, including 'deepening the integration within the Eurasian Economic Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as military-political cooperation within the Collective Security Treaty Organisation' which 'undoubtedly serves brotherly nations' best interests'.

We asked Dr Kazharski if Putin's congratulation means support to Lukashenka's possible actions, including an

illegal crackdown on the protesters.

‘Essentially, yes. If Putin was a democratic European leader, he would have to condemn the violence, but he is a dictator himself, and he is paranoid, frightened by so-called ‘colour revolutions’. This is the dictators’ solidarity against the peoples. So, that was an expression

of support, even though a covert one. Possibly, the Kremlin would try to distance itself from the Belarusian authorities’ most outrageous actions, also keeping in mind the worsening of the bilateral relations in the recent period. But for sure it will not condemn’.

Editor’s note: In the meantime, the violent crackdown on the protesters has been going on; apparently, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was illegally detained, forced to record a video asking to stop the protests, and forced into exile. We shall try to cover the events comprehensively in the further publications.



Project announcement

*We are pleased to introduce the project **Protecting Democratic Values by Tackling Pandemic-related Disinformation**. The project is implemented by the **Centre for Policy Studies in cooperation with the Experts for Security and Global Affairs Association (Romania) and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs**, with support from the **Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation**, a project of the **German Marshall Fund**.*



The project purpose is to monitor and analyse disinformation and media manipulations related to the novel coronavirus pandemic, and possible use of pandemic-related fake news and propaganda in order to influence or destabilise the situation in Central and Eastern Europe.

The project will compare manipulations, particularly by means of electronic media and social media, with attention to the general and more specific, country-related narratives and methods, as well as possible connections between involved proxy groups.

The first event within the project framework, the international roundtable discussion *COVID-19 Conspiracies as Component of Hybrid Threats in the EU and Eastern Partnership*, took place on 31 July. Other roundtable

discussions with distinguished experts, as well as papers and interviews related to the project topic, will follow in the coming months.

The articles following in this issue of the *EaP Monthly Bulletin* present some of the project findings by researchers from the participating institutions. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Black Sea Trust or its partners.

For additional information please visit the [project page](#), which also features an online library (currently, the video of the *COVID-19 Conspiracies as Component of Hybrid Threats in the EU and Eastern Partnership* roundtable discussion is available), and also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Armen Grigoryan

Project introduction: Protecting Democratic Values by Tackling Pandemic-related Disinformation

Already during the early stage of the pandemic, signs of a hybrid operation of influence (or rather operations running parallel) could be observed. As other hybrid operations, coronavirus-related ones use existing problems to aggravate the situation, manipulate the audience's consciousness and potentially destabilise the situation.

The significance of the issue has been noted by EU policymakers on a number of occasions, e.g. in High Representative Borrell's op-ed *The Coronavirus pandemic and the new world it is creating* published in March, mentioning 'a geo-political component including a struggle for influence through spinning'; in the European Commission's joint communication *Tackling COVID-19 disinformation - Getting the facts right* released on 10 June, particularly urging online platforms to step up the fight against a wave of online disinformation triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, accusing China and Russia of mounting propaganda campaigns to undermine democracy and improve their own images; and so forth.

The EaP countries have been subject to essentially the same propaganda campaign, with similar false narratives used, though in some cases with country-specific additions. For example, there are general allegations about COVID-19's artificial origins, which have been **compared** by some researchers to the joint Soviet-East German *Operation Infektion* – the one which in the 1980s ascribed the HIV/AIDS to American biological warfare; now, in case of some countries, similar allegations additionally **point** at US-sponsored biological research laboratories – so the propaganda narrative is adapted to the local specifics.

The *EaP Monthly Bulletin* previously

reviewed some allegations about the biological research laboratories established in Armenia and Georgia with support from the United States. Since March, the allegations about the laboratories became a part of a coronavirus-related disinformation campaign, including claims that the COVID-19 could not appear as a result of a spontaneous genetic recombination, so it is a biological warfare agent originating from the U.S. Recently, one of the active proponents of that view in Armenia, leader of the Integral Health coalition Grigor Grigoryan, presented as an 'international expert on zoonotic diseases', went on with such allegations, this time in an **interview** with the agency *Krasnaya Vesna* (which has several features of a propaganda outlet). This time, he alleged that a Pentagon-controlled agency was secretly collecting bats in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and yet again claimed that COVID-19 was created artificially.

Generally, one of the preferred methods of propaganda related to COVID-19 in Armenia is using non-governmental organisations or other civil society structures which have somebody with a medical degree as a frontman promoting anti-vaccination narratives, advocating against using masks, and so on. In May, *OpenDemocracy* **exposed** one of such NGOs – the Armenian Association of Young Doctors, founded by urologist Gevorg Grigoryan – which has been running a website (initially created with funding from the U.S. Democracy Commission Small Grants programme, as well as from an EU-funded project which aimed to enhance Armenian civil society organisations' capacity and influence over the public policy) calling COVID-19 a 'fake pandemic' and opposing vaccinations, and managed to get over 131,000 views of an anti-vaccination article –

a huge number for Armenia. Gevorg Grigoryan is also the founder of the Armenian National Health Council, which campaigned against the HPV vaccine, and of the so-called 'Fact-Finding Group for COVID-19', which also involves a member of a radical far-right anti-government group. The Fact-Finding Group's preferred **narrative** is that the health authorities have not been reporting truthful information about the number of infection cases and deaths.

Another example is Paracelsus NGO led by Nuneh Nersisyan, who also **claimed** that the COVID-19 was artificially created already in February, before the first case was registered in Armenia. In several interviews with [Hayeli.am](#), [LiveNews.am](#) and other media closely related to ex-president Robert Kocharyan, Mikayel Minasyan (the son-in-law of another former president, Serzh Sargsyan) and the wider far-right movement, she has been claiming that the official information about the coronavirus-related deaths was not truthful, that a visit of a group of French doctors experienced in treatment of COVID-19 was rather useless, advocated against possible vaccination, and reiterated other conspirological narratives.

In late July, another such NGO – the National Council for Strategic Reform represented by Gor Vermishyan, a pharmacist – **claimed** that wearing masks causes respiratory problems related to the reduced flow of oxygen, as well as fungi-related diseases. As usual, this claim was also amplified by a huge network of media and social media accounts related to the former officials and related groups.

Among other narratives, sometimes requiring even less adaptation to the local specifics, the allegations about the lack of solidarity, wish and capacity to support each other among the EU members, suggesting that only China and Russia may help, can be mentioned, along with attempts of panic mongering about imminent hunger and riots, etc.

In one recent example, a lengthy article in [Gazeta.ru](#) yet again alleged about the lack of the EU's solidarity with Italy and speculated about a rationale for 'Italexit', using conspirological narratives, including one that

the Italian government has been extending the state of emergency in order to make vaccinations mandatory. This is the same kind of argument – nearly word for word – that certain circles in Armenia have been **using** for a couple of months (the quoted Facebook status was republished by a number of websites as factual material – this is also one of the **preferred methods** of the mentioned network of media and NGOs as regards disinformation and influence operations).

There may be numerous other examples of propaganda narratives, concerning not only the pandemic-related issues. Although in Armenia disinformation campaigns are mostly funded from within, their narratives usually follow already familiar lines.

As **noted** before, several false narratives used by *Sputnik Belarus* – presenting the Baltic States as larger Western countries' serfs or puppets, vilifying the U.S., the so-called 'Anglo-Saxons' and the West as a whole, etc., have also been regularly promoted by several Armenian media, along with their Russian counterparts. Moreover, concerning the *Sputnik Belarus's* and other Russian media's narrative about Ukraine being a 'failed, foreign-controlled state', the media and social media accounts related to the propaganda network mentioned above have been spinning the same narrative about Armenia, **claiming** that the planned appointment of EU high level advisors for implementation of some sectoral reforms as part of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, and also the planned appointment of an anti-corruption advisor by the U.S. Department of State make it a 'foreign-controlled state'. In fact, the more radical proxy groups have been **claiming** that Armenia is a 'foreign-controlled state' for over two years now, ascribing control to George Soros.

Other similarities of the propaganda methods used in the EU and the EaP countries may be observed as well. Such methods, as well as narratives which can also be adapted to different national contexts, will be among the issues analysed during the Protecting Democratic Values by Tackling Pandemic-related Disinformation project.

Angela Grămadă, Cătălin Gabriel Done

Main trends in disinformation in the COVID-19 era. Study cases: the Republic of Moldova and Romania

The full article is available at the [Experts for Security and Global Affairs Association website](#).

Executive Summary¹

This policy paper aims to identify the main topics of misinformation in the Republic of Moldova and Romania, which formed the basis of a broad campaign to manipulate public interests and promote political or economic interests. The research offers the opportunity to deepen thematic analysis at a later stage. Also, an important stage in the elaboration of this analysis is the identification of the main actors that promote fake news to obtain more benefits, which distort, modify or influence the behavior of the public opinion.

The document starts from the hypothesis that although most of the themes and topics for the disinformation campaigns promoted in the two neighboring states seem to intersect or coincide, there are also particularities that require different approaches.

Deepening the issues of misinformation and their subsequent analysis will not only help to identify trends in manipulating public opinion by promoting deliberately distorted messages by different actors but will offer a platform to identify solutions or recommendations to support internal resilience to external propaganda or of misinformation for political purposes.

¹ This policy paper is elaborated within the project "Protecting democratic values by tackling pandemic-related disinformation", implemented by the Centre for Policy Studies, Armenia, in cooperation with the Experts for Security and Global Affairs Association, Romania, and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Latvia, with the support of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Black Sea Trust or its partners.

Purpose Statement

During the last few years, the phenomenon of misinformation has become particularly widespread. Most opportunities for the expansion of disinformation appear in times of crisis. COVID-19 has shown once again that not only issues of political origin can be used to launch large-scale propaganda campaigns. Also, domestic and foreign political actors spread false information or manipulate data to control public opinion or the decision-making process of foreign partners. Both, in the case of internal misinformation, and the case of external propaganda, the goal is only one: to control the process of adopting public policies.

Counteracting disinformation involves a complex partnership between experts who identify false, distorted content, and present to the public the methods of applying false news, technical experts who analyze the tools used to promote these campaigns (social media, cyber attacks, etc.), and policymakers, who develop policies aimed at strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions to meet these challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a direct impact on the democratic values of our societies and, at the same time, posing a great risk to the safety and security of the citizens of Romania and the Republic of Moldova. This analysis also offers the opportunity to study the phenomenon of misinformation both in an EU member state and in an Eastern Partnership member country, taking into account the specific realities and challenges they faced during the pandemic.

Through this policy paper, the authors aim to

address the phenomenon of misinformation in the Republic of Moldova and Romania, the main themes and topics that serve for large misinformation campaigns, to identify actors who have formulated interests to get involved in such campaigns, to explain their objectives, and to formulate recommendations for countering the phenomenon of fake news in the time of COVID-19. The study will also serve civil society experts, representatives of public institutions, and other actors to document common and specific issues of misinformation so that these beneficiaries can meet the challenges associated with the phenomenon of misinformation.

Why is it important to have a multi-stakeholder approach to fight disinformation?

The year 2020 will go down in modern history as the one when the world has been hit by one of the most dangerous plagues, but also as the year in which, the most numerous factual fake news about social realities spread.

During the last decade, there's been a hard shift in the collective rhetoric concerning social reality, political perspectives, and who we are. The explosion of cases of diseases with the new coronavirus (COVID-19), but also the acceleration of protection and prevention measures adopted by states have created a real social hysteria, thus causing a colossal volume of misinformation and mass manipulation. The Republic of Moldova and Romania, as well as other countries in the region, were no exceptions to this phenomenon. Moreover, since March 2020, many political and non-political actors have turned this pandemic crisis into an opportunity to spread propaganda messages or even extensive disinformation campaigns to promote certain political interests or to obtain certain economic benefits.² Regardless of the objective, the impact of the disinformation campaigns during COVID-19 greatly affected both the authorities' efforts to deal with the crisis and the psychological readiness of the societies to cope with this challenge.

² RISE Project Moldova. Laboratorul de Fake News (I). Creatorul, July 30, 2020, <https://www.rise.md/laboratorul-de-fake-news-i-creatorul/>

The topics included in disinformation campaigns or propaganda strategies are multiple, from forced vaccination and population chipping to the preparation of NATO military operations, which are ready to invade new states and regions. Our aim for this policy paper was to highlight the most important thematic areas for disinformation and to continue in the future to deepen certain topics.

Although misinformation is not a new phenomenon in both states, or for the region, exposure to this phenomenon is different. Both in the Republic of Moldova and Romania, civil society is the one that implements initiatives that monitor and analyze the exposure of the population to false messages, propaganda, and hybrid threats. Particular attention is paid to the origin of misinformation (internal or external) and who are the actors promoting these campaigns? Of course, the activity of public institutions in combating hybrid threats cannot be minimized, but their messages reach the population more difficult. In this context, cooperation between experts becomes essential for managing the phenomenon.

Combating misinformation has become part of many initiatives and programs promoted by NGOs. However, civil society cannot meet these challenges alone. The phenomenon requires that complex approach, in which there should be a lasting partnership between authorities, experts, media representatives, and civil society. Each actor has a distinct function (management, monitoring, education, etc.), which alone cannot produce the desired efficiency. This is when dialogue and partnerships need to be understood and supported by all stakeholders involved in developing strategies to combat these threats and risks.

Ignoring aspects related to education and critical thinking, national, local, and regional specificity, the tools through which misinformation or propaganda messages are transmitted, and the impact on national security increase the level of exposure and reduce resilience.

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

Artūrs Bikovs, Aleksandra Palkova

Prevailing themes in disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracy theories during the COVID-19 pandemic: Latvian case analysis

Disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracy theories almost always surround global events. Whether it be the first Moon landing, which, according to some conspiracy theorists, was faked by the U.S. government, the spread of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s, when various public figures and opinion leaders misinformed a significant part of the American society about the disease, or the annexation of Crimea in 2014, when Russian President Vladimir Putin disinformed the world about the participation of Russian troops in the operation. SARS-CoV-2 or Covid-19 global pandemic is no exclusion. Moreover, being so impactful and wide-scale, it is surrounded by all three — disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracy theories. Considering that the virus is registered in almost every country of the world, how it is covered and described becomes especially relevant. Hence, within this article, authors will analyze the prevailing themes in disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracy theories in the Latvian context.

The period from March to July was chosen as the time frame. One of the main sources for examples were compilation articles by the investigative project The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism “Re:Baltica”, which specializes in fact-checking and media monitoring.

First, it is necessary to clarify terminology. Disinformation is false information, usually with a malicious intent to mislead. Sometimes it takes the form of propaganda issued by a government organization or media with an aim to directly discredit a rival power or glorify oneself. For instance, in order to vilify the Ukrainian government Russian outlets either close to or owned by the Kremlin have

been spreading disinformation. One of the most infamous examples is the “crucified boy” case — a report of the state-owned Channel One Russia about public crucifixion of a three-year-old boy by Ukrainian soldiers. Later, independent investigative journalists confirmed that it was a fake. Unlike disinformation, misinformation is not deliberately shared. It is still false or inaccurate information, for instance, false rumors. Yet, in most cases misinformation is spread without evil intentions. On the contrary, sometimes people are sharing with the aim to help. Finally, conspiracy theories are attempts to explain events as a result of actions of a small, powerful group. It also tries to tie various actors, which are often not connected, in order to find an underlying motive and meaning of the action. Such explanations reject the accepted narrative surrounding those events; indeed, the official version may be seen as a further proof of the conspiracy. Apart from already mentioned Moon landing, one of the most popular themes amongst conspiracy theorists is the September 11 attacks. Despite various proofs of the terror act and rejected claims of conspirologists, there still are people who believe, for instance, that the collapse of the Twin Towers was the result of controlled demolitions.

Latvian case analysis showed that three themes prevail in disinformation, misinformation, and conspiracy theories — the origin of coronavirus, its treatment, and humiliating information about Latvia and its actions in the context of Covid-19.

Starting with the least common of the aforementioned — the origin of coronavirus. In most cases these are conspiracy theories

translated into Latvian. Moreover, there is no evidence of a local conspiracy theory that gained a massive following. For example, one family used their Facebook group to spread conspiracy theories about coronavirus created by Ivo Sasek, a lay preacher and founder of the Swiss-based religious sect "Organic Christian Generation".¹ According to his channel "kla.tv", Covid-19 is an artificial business project to sell tests and destabilize China. These ideas are later translated into Latvian and mostly shared on Facebook by either ordinary users or lesser-known public figures with a reputation of a conspiracy theorist. For instance, one entrepreneur, who sells structured water, claimed that coronavirus was artificially created and originally distributed in the United States, as well as in some way related to Bill Gates' profit interests, and was introduced to China during military sports games.²

Regarding the theme of treatment of Covid-19, in most cases it is misinformation with either unclear motivation or due to honest delusion. For example, a national scale outlet published an article, which stated: "Before the coronavirus reaches the lungs, it stays in the throat for four days. During this time, the person has a sore throat and has a cough. Drinking plenty of water and rinsing your throat with hot saltwater removes the virus."³ Later, the article's author emphasized that she did not wish to spread dubious recommendations and that the main call was to consider dangers of the disease and to limit its spread as much as possible. Disinformation exists, but rather with the aim to sell alternative medicine. In general, they tell how with the help of homeopathy, ozone therapy, or dietary supplements, it is possible to cure

the virus itself, not to get sick, and to overcome the consequences of Covid-19.⁴

As for conspiracy theories, they are mostly "imported", i.e., people are translating them and spreading via social networks, usually Facebook. The movie "Plandemic", in which Judy Mikovits, a former American research scientist, who is known for her discredited medical claims, argued that wearing a mask and a flu vaccine increases the risk of getting sick with Covid-19, while hydroxychloroquine, which is supposed to treat it, is banned from the public.⁵ This film was also translated into Latvian and spreading on Facebook.

Finally, humiliating information about Latvia and its actions in the context of coronavirus. This theme became the basis for the most cases of disinformation and misinformation. The former was mainly spread by Latvian opposition politicians with the aim to undermine the government's solutions and promote themselves. One criticized the government for not abolishing utility bills for everyone, as was done in France. In fact, only part of France's residents was exempted from paying such bills.⁶ Various Russian outlets that are close to Kremlin and have a history of spreading propaganda, were disinforming about Latvia's actions. One argued that only Russia could help Latvia's "failing economy" because more than 35% of its residents are over the age of 65, but annual European funding accounts for 15-20% of Latvia's GDP. Actually, only 20% of the population is over 65 years old, and co-payment of the European Union funds in various projects in 2018 was 1.1 billion Euros or slightly above 4% of the GDP.⁷ In addition, there were several

¹ S. Bērziņa, E. Puriņa, "Apustulis, kas Hitleru pielīdzina Jēzum. Kas tiražē melus par Covid-19?" *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica*, 18.03.2020, <https://rebaltica.lv/2020/03/apustulis-kas-hitleru-pielidzina-jezum-kas-tiraze-melus-par-covid-19/>

² S. Bērziņa, E. Puriņa, "Atmiņūdens tirgotājs maldina par koronavīrusu," *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica*, 21.03.2020, <https://rebaltica.lv/2020/03/atminudens-tirgotajs-maldina-par-koronavirusu/>

³ E. Puriņa, "Nav taisnība – karsti dzērieni un tīšanās dvielos neārstē no Covid-19," *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica*, 01.04.2020, <https://rebaltica.lv/2020/04/nav-taisniba-karsti-dzerieni-un-tisanas-dvielos-nearste-no-covid-19/>

⁴ E. Puriņa, "Koralli, ozons un pretgripas zāles no Krievijas – kā tirgotāji mēģina sabiedrību," *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica*, 16.03.2020, <https://rebaltica.lv/2020/03/koralli-ozons-un-pretgripas-zales-no-krievijas-ka-tirgotaji-mana-sabiedribu/>

⁵ S. Bērziņa, "Neslavā kritusi pētniece izplata nepatiesību: gripas vakcīna un maskas nevar aktivizēt koronavīrusu," *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica*, 11.05.2020, <https://rebaltica.lv/2020/05/neslava-kritusi-petniece-izplata-nepatiesibu-gripas-vakcina-un-maskas-nevar-aktivizet-koronavirusu/>

⁶ E. Puriņa, "Petrovs no Alternative maldina par valsts atbalstu krīzes skartajiem," *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica*, 30.03.2020, <https://rebaltica.lv/2020/03/petrovs-no-alternative-maldina-par-valsts-atbalstu-krizes-skartajiem/>

⁷ E. Puriņa, "Slīgst nabadzībā un atgriežas pie Krievijas – kā par Latviju Covid-19 laikā ziņo kaimiņvalstī," *The Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica*, 01.05.2020, <https://rebaltica.lv/2020/05/sligst-nabadziba-un-atgriezas-krievija-ka-par-latviju-covid-19-laika-zino-kaiminvalsti/>

misinformation cases with unclear motivation or honest delusion about the government's decisions.

To sum up, in most cases three themes of misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories prevail: the origin and treatment of Covid-19, as well as humiliating information about Latvia and its actions. The share of disinformation is smaller than misinformation and conspiracy theories. It could be explained by the government's and state agencies' decisions. For instance, officials were quick to react in debunking

various lies about Covid-19, explained and communicated their solutions in an understandable manner. Usually, disinformation was spread by either opposition politicians with the aim to undermine government's actions and promote themselves, or by business owners trying to sell alternative medicines. Some disinformation about situation in Latvia was spread by Russian outlets close to the Kremlin. Conspiracy theories, which gained public attention, were mostly translated, and not originated locally.

The EaP Monthly Bulletin is published by the Centre for Policy Studies, a Yerevan-based think tank.

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The logo for the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) features the letters 'CPS' in a large, blue, serif font. The letters are outlined in red, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

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