

DISINFORMATION ABOUT UKRAINE IN EUROPE 2024-2025



VOX CHECK

SUMMARY

Changes in narratives compared to 2022–2023

Russian propaganda has adapted its messages to changes in the international political environment. In 2024, the focus shifted to promoting the following narratives:

- Ukraine is plagued by "total corruption", with officials allegedly embezzling international aid, making it pointless to support Ukraine.
- Ukraine has already lost the war.
- The war must end on the Kremlin's terms.

Channels for spreading disinformation about Ukraine

• Media

Russian-controlled media outlets such as RT, Sputnik, Pravda, and NewsFront continue to play a key role in spreading disinformation. Despite being blocked, they are still accessible via VPNs and mirror sites, i.e. copies of blocked pages at new web addresses. As before, messages in line with Russian ones are being promoted by a network of local media outlets that have not been proven to be affiliated with Russia.

• Pseudo-experts

Some European experts, analysts, and bloggers promote harmful narratives about Ukraine, often arguing that supporting Ukraine is a "mistake". Whether intentional or not, this activity could disrupt international aid in repelling Russian aggression.

• International platforms

Russia uses international organizations, conferences, and forums to promote its narratives by simulating expert opinions.

• Politicians

In 2024, radical political forces gained more influence in Europe. Populist parties such as "Alternative for Germany" and "Fidesz" in Slovakia openly spread anti-Ukrainian rhetoric and seek to

undermine support for Ukraine. In the European Parliament, the "Patriots of Europe" bloc has emerged, consisting of nationalist parties that disseminate false messages about Ukraine that are in line with Russian propaganda.

Methods and tactics of Russian propaganda

- Increased use of AI to generate deepfakes and fake news.
- Creation of lookalike websites and fake reports imitating Western media to spread propaganda.
- Activation of bots and fake social media profiles using AI to scale disinformation.
- Establishment of pro-Russian websites (e.g., "Voice of Europe") that reprint Russian propaganda, attempting to undermine Europe's unity in supporting Ukraine.

Forecast for 2025

- AI-generated deepfakes will become more frequent, making detection more difficult even with specialized tools.
- Propaganda will increasingly disguise itself as "independent analysts" or "concerned Europeans".

✖ TOP RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA NARRATIVES OF 2024

In 2024, the core narratives of Russian propaganda remained unchanged, but their emphasis shifted according to new political realities. Narratives about total corruption in Ukraine, Ukraine's defeat, and the necessity of negotiating on the Kremlin's terms became louder. Russian propaganda actively used current events, such as the Kursk Operation and elections in the U.S. and Europe, to reinforce its messages and adapt them to different audiences. Below are the main Russian propaganda narratives of 2024.

"Ukraine is the most corrupt state in the world"

This narrative is constructed by exaggerating existing problems and manipulating data to portray Ukraine as the world's most corrupt country. Propagandists depict corruption in Ukraine as pervasive and unsolvable while ignoring anti-corruption initiatives and positive developments. This narrative also seeks to paint Ukraine as an unreliable partner undeserving of aid.

Examples include claims of "total corruption" in Ukraine, which allegedly force European countries to reconsider their support for Kyiv.

In 2024, pro-Russian sources frequently spread fakes that President Volodymyr Zelenskyi had purchased luxury real estate abroad. Additionally, propagandists fabricated a story claiming that eight homes belonging to Ukraine's top military leadership burned down in California wildfires.

"Ukraine does not want to negotiate"

Within this narrative, several fakes are often repeated:

- The Ukrainian government does not want peace because it benefits from ongoing hostilities.
- Ukraine could have signed an agreement in 2022, but Western partners discouraged it.
- The EU does not want peace and instead seeks to prolong the war.

- The agreement proposed by Russia is the best option for ending the war.

The dissemination of this narrative serves multiple purposes. First, it shifts responsibility for continuing hostilities onto Ukraine and the West. The claim is that they, not Russia, refuse peace, even though Russia is supposedly ready to end the war at any moment. However, propagandists ignore the fact that Russia is not proposing negotiations but demanding Ukraine's capitulation. The Kremlin is not looking for compromises but seeks to end the war on its ultimatum-based terms.

Second, this narrative ties into another false claim promoted by Russia: that the West controls Ukraine and its leadership does not make independent decisions. According to this narrative, Ukraine did not sign the Istanbul Agreements in 2022 because the West forbade it, casting doubt on Ukraine's sovereignty and agency.

Russian propaganda also asserts that Russia's proposed agreement was the most favorable and fair way to end the war and should be revisited. Combined with prolonged fighting, this claim aims to push Ukraine toward accepting Russia's terms.

In 2024, pro-Russian media spread fakes claiming that in 2022, Ukraine was ready to sign a deal with Russia, but the West prevented it; that the EU is now also obstructing Ukraine from negotiating; and that Russia seeks peace while its proposed agreement is the best solution for stopping the war.

"Ukraine has lost the war"

This narrative, like the previous one ("Ukraine does not want to negotiate"), is aimed at forcing Ukraine into unfavorable negotiations or even capitulation. Allegedly, Russia is invincible, Ukraine has already lost the war, and both Ukrainians and Europeans are tired of resisting Russian aggression. The "arguments" most often used include military, territorial, and financial losses due to the war, as well as Russia's numerical advantage in weapons and soldiers.

While returning to the 1991 borders is indeed unrealistic in the near future, fakes within this narrative exaggerate Russia's advantages and downplay Ukraine's achievements. For example, they significantly inflate Ukrainian army losses, call the Russian army the "second strongest in the world", and spread apocalyptic scenarios about the "complete takeover of Ukraine".

"Russia was forced to attack Ukraine"

Although this narrative has been circulating in the media space for three years, it remains relevant. Propagandists claim that the full-scale invasion was inevitable and that Putin was "forced" to go to war. Various justifications are used: some argue that Russia wanted to "protect the people of Donbas, whom Ukrainians had been shelling for eight years", while others claim that Russia was trying to prevent Ukraine's militarization by the West and its eventual NATO membership.

The goal of this narrative is to justify Russia's renewed aggression, shift responsibility onto the West, and even blame Ukraine itself. Examples of this narrative include fakes that Russia tried to negotiate with the West, demanding guarantees that Ukraine would never become a NATO member. However, the West allegedly ignored these demands and continued to arm Ukraine, forcing Russian leadership to take measures to ensure its security and protect "Donbas".

"Ukraine is a failed state"

Propagandists spread this message to portray Ukraine as a country incapable of functioning as an independent state. This leads to the belief that providing aid to a failed state is futile and that Ukraine should not receive support. Additionally, they attempt to create the impression that Ukrainians are incapable of governing their own country.

The most striking examples of this narrative include statements by Russian politicians claiming that Russia will not negotiate with Ukraine because it is not a sovereign state.

"Ukraine is not a democracy"

As of early 2025, the main claim within this narrative is Zelenskyi's illegitimacy and the absence of elections in Ukraine. For instance, Russian propagandists justified the peace conference in Switzerland as an attempt to grant Zelenskyi legitimacy. They also spread disinformation about violations of freedom of speech, the banning of opposition media and parties, the church, and the Russian language. Within this narrative, Zelenskyi is labeled a "dictator", and Ukraine's government is described as "authoritarian" or even "totalitarian".

In reality, despite the difficult wartime conditions, Ukraine remains a democratic state that defends its sovereignty and national interests. Zelenskyi was democratically elected in 2019 and remains a legitimate president under wartime conditions, as Ukrainian law prohibits elections during martial law. Opposition parties and media continue to operate in Ukraine, with restrictions affecting only pro-Russian parties (moreover, most former members of these parties continue their parliamentary activities). The ban on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is also not about restricting religious freedom but rather about the role this institution plays in supporting Russian aggression.

"Ukraine is dragging EU countries into the war"

This narrative is primarily used against Ukraine's neighboring countries – Poland and the Baltic states. Propagandists claim that Ukraine has nothing to offer the EU except continued war. Therefore, Ukrainian leadership is allegedly provoking Belarus into military retaliation, which would ultimately justify the deployment of allied troops.

This narrative aims to worsen relations between Ukraine and the governments of neighboring states, undermine trust, and negatively impact cooperation between countries. Most EU citizens support Ukraine but fear military escalation and do not want to participate in direct combat. This narrative aims to reduce support for Ukraine not only among the governments of these countries but also among their citizens. By doing so, Russia seeks to portray Ukraine as a "problematic ally" to decrease the level of support from other European nations.

Examples of this narrative include claims that the Ukrainian government is deliberately directing drones at Belarus to provoke its leadership into military action. This would supposedly help Zelenskyi convince allies of the need to deploy Polish or Baltic troops into Ukraine.

"Ukrainian refugees are a burden on the EU"

Russian propagandists spread fakes depicting Ukrainian refugees as criminals and idlers who allegedly receive only state aid in the countries they arrive in. They are portrayed as a threat to EU citizens. This narrative aims to sow discord between Ukrainian refugees and the populations of host countries.

Some fakes are designed to instill fear among Ukrainian refugees, including stories about hostility from local residents and "black market organ traffickers" supposedly waiting for them in EU countries.

An example of this narrative is a fake claiming that Ukrainians beat up Poles because they refused to say "Glory to Ukraine". Another disinformation message sought to undermine trust in the German government by spreading claims that Berlin was deporting over a million Ukrainian refugees. Propagandists also spread fakes that in Warsaw, Wi-Fi networks were named with anti-Ukrainian slogans.

"Ukraine is a terrorist state"

Russian and pro-Russian media spread fakes to promote the narrative that Ukraine resorts to terrorism to achieve its goals. The objective of such disinformation is to discredit Ukraine internationally and undermine trust from its partners, which in turn

could lead to a breakdown in relations with EU countries.

As part of this narrative, a fake was circulated claiming that Ukrainian intelligence services, together with British intelligence, attacked Crocus City Hall in Moscow. Propagandists also alleged that Ukraine was behind the assassination attempt on Trump.

"Ukraine commits war crimes and accuses Russia of them"

This narrative is based on the tactic "the best defense is an offense". Thus, pro-Russian bloggers and media accuse Ukraine of "committing war crimes to attract global attention and demonize Russia". The goals of this narrative are to shift responsibility for Russian military crimes onto Ukraine and to undermine trust in Ukraine from its partners.

A striking example of this narrative is the fake that Ukraine staged mass killings in the city of Bucha, which propagandists have been spreading for the third year in a row. They allege that Kyiv deliberately orchestrated this to derail peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine in 2022. In January 2025, a false message was spread online claiming that Ukraine intentionally attacked the Chornobyl nuclear power plant with a drone to disrupt peace talks.

"The Ukrainian government supports Nazi ideology"

Pro-Russian sources tirelessly promote the narrative that Ukraine's leadership is Nazi, glorifies Third Reich leaders, and operates using Nazi methods by eliminating dissenters.

Nazis have become a symbol of absolute evil, fought against by the entire world. Third Reich soldiers are associated with mass killings and torture, so drawing parallels with the Ukrainian government aims to demonize it. This narrative primarily targets Western audiences since most Ukrainians do not believe this false claim. Instead, the continuous spread of this narrative by pro-Russian media in Europe is intended to create negative perceptions of Ukraine's leadership and reduce the amount of aid provided.

Additionally, this is one of the ways to justify the "necessity" of Russia's invasion, as Putin named "denazification" as one of its goals. First, Russians fabricated the claim that Nazism exists in Ukraine, and then they justified the start of the full-scale war with the need to eliminate it.

A vivid example of promoting this narrative is the fake that the Ukrainian government glorifies Hitler's collaborators.

METHODS AND TACTICS



Russians use various methods to spread propaganda in the West. Below are the main ones.

Artificial Intelligence

One of the most significant differences in the fakes that Russians spread in the EU in 2022-2024 was the use of artificial intelligence. In 2022, Russians used AI minimally, mainly in fakes targeting a Ukrainian audience.

For foreign audiences, deepfakes began to be spread more actively starting in 2023, continuing throughout 2024 and early 2025. Since at least September 2023, Russians launched the disinformation campaign "Matryoshka" in the EU. As part of this campaign, they spread deepfakes discrediting Ukrainian refugees, portraying them as greedy and ungrateful.

A common technique is altering the appearance of well-known figures, particularly politicians. A frequent target of disinformation is Volodymyr Zelenskyi. In 2024, a viral video allegedly showed the Ukrainian president performing an Eastern dance. In reality, it was a different person in the footage, but AI was used to change the face. The deepfake was accompanied by captions like "This man is sending Ukrainians to die" or "And this man stole billions from us". That is, typical Russian propaganda messages were spread alongside AI-generated content.

Russians also used AI to fake the voices of famous figures. For example, propagandists distributed an altered excerpt of an interview with former Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba for the France 24 channel. In it, he allegedly stated that Europe should have imposed all sanctions on Russia at once because gradual implementation allowed Russia to adapt, ultimately harming Europe's economy the most. However, Kuleba never made such a statement, the audio was AI-generated.

In addition to videos, Russians used AI to generate fake photos. After the "Oreshnik" medium-range ballistic missile strike on Dnipro on November 21, 2024, they spread a photo supposedly showing the crater from the strike. In reality, the missile was launched without explosives, so there was no significant destruction. The crater photo was AI-generated.

Operation "Doppelgänger"

Since May 2022, Russians have been running the "Doppelgänger" operation in the EU. The operation remained active in 2024–2025, using some of the most common methods for creating fakes. The idea is to disguise propaganda as publications from Western sources. Russians duplicate the style and logos of European media (hence the name "Doppelgänger") and create fake photos, videos, and websites.

Fake videos fully mimic the style and include the logos of recognizable media outlets (DW, BBC, Euronews, etc.) or organizations. These videos are mainly tied to current events and use standard narratives. For example, after the Russian shelling in November 2024, propagandists disseminated a fake video with the UNESCO logo to English and Russian-speaking audiences, claiming that Ukraine had allegedly destroyed more cultural monuments than the Taliban in Afghanistan. In this way, Russia is, first, shifting the responsibility for the shelling onto Ukraine, and, second, once again comparing Ukrainians to terrorists.

Beyond videos, Russians also produce fake websites. In 2023, they forged French and German government websites and created at least five platforms with typical French names to mask their propaganda. These sites promoted Kremlin narratives, such as criticizing European sanctions against Russia, spreading false claims about President Zelenskyi's alleged drug addiction, and even producing short cartoons on the topic. In 2024, Russians continued copying websites. For example, in November 2024, pro-Russian English-speaking users and Russians spread a false

story claiming that Volodymyr Zelenskyi had purchased a hotel in Courchevel. As proof, they showed a screenshot of the hotel's website listing a company allegedly owned by Olena Zelenska. However, in reality, the website was fake, and the original had no mention of Zelenskyi – the French actually owned the hotel.

All fakes under the "Doppelgänger" operation are primarily aimed at foreign audiences. They are mainly created in English, mimicking foreign media and organizations. The goal of these fabrications is to discredit Ukraine in the West, reduce international support, incite hostility toward refugees, and divert attention from Russian war crimes.

In September 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice mentioned operation "Doppelgänger", which was operating in the U.S. and the EU, including Germany.

Project "Voice of Europe" – a network of pro-Russian politicians in the West

Some EU residents consume minimal news and rarely use social media. As a result, they are unlikely to be the target audience for operation "Doppelgänger". However, these individuals may trust politicians and consider their words "pure truth". The Russians understand this and amplify their propaganda in the West by using politicians for these.

In March 2024, intelligence agencies from several EU countries, including Czechia and Poland, uncovered the propaganda network "Voice of Europe". The network's goal was not only to create another pro-Russian media outlet but also to bribe pro-Russian European politicians and increase their chances of being elected to parliaments. On May 27, the EU imposed sanctions on "Voice of Europe" and its organizers.

According to Kremlin documents obtained by The Washington Post, in January 2023, Putin's administration, in close

collaboration with Viktor Medvedchuk, launched the "Voice of Europe" project in the EU. The project was designed to strengthen Medvedchuk's influence in Ukraine and position him among European public figures as an alternative to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi, promoting peace negotiations "as an alternative to a potential nuclear war".

In a comment to The Washington Post, an unnamed European intelligence officer stated that the website's status as a news organization was created to serve as a cover, making it easier to "approach politicians" under the guise of interviews about Ukraine, anti-globalism, and other issues. Michal Koudelka, head of the Czechia's domestic security service, added that operation "Voice of Europe" was also an attempt to bring more pro-Russian deputies into the European Parliament, who would then engage in classic espionage on behalf of Russia. Investigators from The Washington Post found that Petr Bystron, a leading member of the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the party's No. 2 candidate for the European Parliament, was involved in the "Voice of Europe" operation. According to an unnamed Czech intelligence representative, Bystron, who was born in Czechia, was not just a passive participant receiving money from Russia and placing propaganda in far-right publications; he also recruited other political figures into the "Voice of Europe" orbit and was a "key managing figure".

The goal of this project extends beyond spreading disinformation to foreign audiences. In addition to discrediting Ukraine abroad, Russia uses politicians to push its agenda. For example, when a European Parliament votes on aid for Ukraine, a pro-Russian politician and their coalition can deliberately slow down the process, refuse to vote, or – worse – convince their opponents that helping Ukraine "harms them." As a result, international support may decrease or even cease entirely.

CHANNELS FOR SPREADING RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION



Russia employs a wide range of platforms to disseminate propaganda. The primary tools are state-run media, which broadcast Kremlin narratives through television, radio, and the internet. Major Russian media outlets include RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik. Additionally, Russia uses conspiracy-focused platforms such as 4chan and 8kun to spread Kremlin narratives, fake news, and manipulative content. Furthermore, the Russian government actively exploits international organizations' platforms.

Russia also maintains various organizations and think tanks that promote disinformation narratives, historical myths, and justifications for its war against Ukraine. In the Baltic states, such organizations include the Russian Association of Baltic Studies, the "Historical Memory" Foundation, and the portals RuBaltic and Eurasia.Expert.

Other commonly used platforms include social media, where bots and fake accounts operate. Sometimes, social media algorithms create favorable conditions for spreading propaganda narratives similar to Russian. These algorithms, designed to maximize engagement, often amplify emotional and provocative content, which disinformation campaigns exploit.

Additionally, a study by Global Witness found that TikTok and X actively promoted content from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party during Germany's election campaign. TikTok's algorithm presented political content to new users that supported AfD in 78% of cases – far exceeding the party's actual support among voters (around 20%). On X, the figure was 64%, with even politically neutral users receiving right-leaning content. These algorithms effectively create an information bubble that enhances the influence of populist parties and Russian disinformation narratives similar to the positions of far-right forces in Europe.

Media controlled by Russia(RT, Sputnik, Pravda, NewsFront...)

RT (Russia Today) – all EU countries, officially blocked since 2022 (accessible via VPN)

RT is a Russian state-owned international television network created in 2005 and funded by the Russian government. Its mission is to cover global events from an "alternative" perspective. RT broadcasts in multiple languages, adapting its content for different audiences: English (RT International, RT UK), French (RT France), German (RT DE), Spanish (RT Español), Arabic (RT Arabic), Russian (RT на русском) and Serbian (RT Balkan).

RT operates through a hybrid content distribution model:

- Traditional broadcasting via satellite and cable TV;
- Digital platforms (YouTube, social media, a network of websites);
- Content distribution via news aggregators and partner media outlets.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EU, the UK, Canada, and other countries officially blocked RT. However, RT content continues circulating through alternative channels, including mirror websites, alternative domains, and reposts by other pro-Kremlin media and Telegram channels.

Sputnik – all EU countries (officially blocked in the EU, accessible via VPN)

Sputnik is a Russian state-owned news agency, launched in 2014 as part of the "Rossiya Segodnya" media group, whose editor-in-chief is the propagandist Margarita Simonyan. Sputnik operates via news websites, radio stations, mobile apps, and social media in over 30 languages. Before restrictions were imposed in March 2022, Sputnik was active in most EU countries, as well as in the US, Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Sputnik had multilingual websites, FM radio stations, and satellite

broadcasting to reach an international audience. Official regional branches operated in France, Germany, the US, the UK, Spain, Turkey, Serbia, and other countries. The largest European offices were in Paris, Berlin, and London. Sputnik systematically spreads disinformation, including claims that Ukrainians allegedly are shelling civilian infrastructure in Russia, Russian soldiers are tortured in Ukrainian captivity, and Russia is ready for dialogue, but Zelenskyi refuses peace.

Following its EU ban, Sputnik distributed propaganda content through alternative platforms.

Baltnews – Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia (officially blocked, continues operations from Russia)

Baltnews is a Russian-language news agency founded in 2014 as part of the "Rossiya Segodnya" media group. It operated through separate editorial teams in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, targeting Russian-speaking audiences in these countries. Due to increased regulatory oversight in the Baltic states, the agency relocated its operations to Moscow in 2018 but continued working through a network of freelance authors across the Baltics and Europe. The editor-in-chief is Andrey Starikov.

Baltnews systematically engages in disinformation, publishing manipulative materials that discredit the governments of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. A significant portion of its content promotes the image of an "oppressed Russian-speaking population" in these countries and conspiracy theories. For example, Baltnews falsely claimed that Lithuania was "glad" that the war targeted Ukraine instead of itself, and that "Mein Kampf" was more popular in Latvia than the "Harry Potter" books.

Baltnews was blocked in Latvia in 2019, and in 2020, Facebook removed its page. In February 2023, Canada sanctioned the agency as part of "Rossiya Segodnya". Following its blocking, the agency switched to baltnews.com and intensified its presence on Telegram.

Pravda – EU countries, comprising 24 websites, not blocked. Pravda.ru is a Russian online publication founded in 1999. It presents itself as an international news and analysis source. In addition to its main Russian-language site, the platform has English and Portuguese versions. In 2024, a network of 24 "Pravda" branded websites was discovered (and likely created), targeting audiences in Germany, France, Spain, the UK, Italy, and other countries. These websites pose as independent news sources but publish content aligned with Russian propaganda. Each site has Telegram channels.

Pravda regularly spreads disinformation and manipulative materials, such as: a "secret British base" in Kyiv was destroyed; Trump "issued an ultimatum" for Ukraine to withdraw from the Kursk region; Ukrainian cities were "massively attacked" and Kyiv was "burning for the seventh day"; Russia would soon "celebrate reunification with Ukraine".

As of February 2025, there is no information on an official ban of this network in European countries.

NewsFront – EU countries, blocked since February 2025

NewsFront is a Russian media outlet founded in 2014 in Bakhchisarai (occupied Crimea). It operates in ten languages, including Russian, Polish, Serbian, German, English, French, Spanish, Bulgarian, and Georgian, targeting an international audience. Before sanctions (imposed by the US, UK, Australia, Japan, and New Zealand), NewsFront actively spread content in Europe, the US, Latin America, and post-Soviet countries. The outlet was founded by Konstantin Knyrik, who also leads Crimea's branch of the pro-Russian Rodina party. Co-owner Mikhail Sinelin is a former Kremlin official. According to The Wall Street Journal, NewsFront operates under FSB coordination. Its affiliated publication, SouthFront, is available in English and German.

NewsFront systematically spreads disinformation and is part of Russia's propaganda network. It was used to interfere in

elections, including in France and Germany (2017), and to discredit Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron. NewsFront has also been involved in campaigns to discredit COVID-19 vaccines, spreading claims that the US government created the coronavirus. In 2024, NewsFront manipulated information about a supposed upcoming biopic "The Price of Victory" about Zelenskyi, using fake videos featuring actors Chuck Norris and Dolph Lundgren.

NewsFront was blocked in the EU in February 2025. It was also banned from Facebook, Twitter (X), and YouTube (2020–2022) for violating platform policies. In 2021, the US Treasury sanctioned the outlet. After the bans, NewsFront moved to alternative platforms like RuTube and Telegram to continue spreading Kremlin narratives.

RTR-Planeta – EU countries, Latin America, Asia, US, Canada (blocked in the EU, accessible via VPN)

RTR-Planeta is an international TV channel launched in 2002 by the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company as a global version of Russia's state-owned "Rossiya-1" channel. Before sanctions, RTR-Planeta was broadcast in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and other European countries via cable and satellite. It also reached Asia, North and South America. RTR-Planeta offered a wide range of content, from news to entertainment programs and documentaries, adapted for an international audience, promoting Russian culture and state opinion on world events.

RTR-Planeta systematically spread disinformation and pro-Russian propaganda, leading to multiple bans. In 2015, Lithuania suspended its broadcasts for three months for inciting hatred and portraying Ukrainians as enemies of Russia. In 2019, Latvia also temporarily blocked it for hate speech after on-air calls to "hang Ukrainians for their political views". In 2024–2025, the channel continued to spread fakes about alleged Western-

funded biolabs in Ukraine to develop biological weapons, as well as discrediting materials about opposition politicians and independent media, accusing them of collaborating with foreign intelligence.

In June 2022, the EU officially blocked RTR-Planeta as part of its sixth sanctions package against Russian propaganda. The channel was banned from broadcasting via cable, satellite, and online platforms in the EU. After the ban, RTR-Planeta continued distributing content through alternative platforms and proxy media to circumvent sanctions.

NTV Mir – EU, US, Israel, Australia (blocked in the EU)

The international version of the Russian TV channel NTV, founded in 1993, was broadcast in the CIS countries, Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, Israel, and the Middle East. The channel has adapted its content for Russian-speaking audiences abroad, offering news, analytics, entertainment programs, series, and documentaries. The channel is broadcast via cable networks and satellite.

NTV Mir systematically disseminates pro-Kremlin propaganda and disinformation, including about the war in Ukraine. The channel uses anti-Ukrainian narratives, accusing Ukrainians of Nazism, terrorism, and creating biological weapons in cooperation with the West. In 2024-2025, it also aired manipulative stories about Ukrainian refugees in Europe, accusing them of increasing crime.

In August 2022, the French media regulator Arcom stopped broadcasting NTV Mir due to hate speech and disinformation. In December 2022, the EU Council banned the channel from broadcasting in Europe. Despite the blocking, the resource continues distributing its materials through online platforms and Telegram, trying to circumvent the sanctions.

CHANNELS OF DISINFORMATION DISSEMINATION SIMILAR TO RUSSIAN NARRATIVES



MEDIA

The previous sections listed the narratives spread by Russian propagandists in Europe. The following section discusses sources and individuals whose rhetoric often resembles Russian messaging. Whether intentional or accidental, such activity can damage Ukraine's image abroad and undermine international support.

According to a study by InformNapalm, the most active media outlets spreading narratives similar to Russian ones are concentrated in Germany and France. These outlets justify criticism of the West, spread conspiracy theories, and call for an end to support for Ukraine. They also promote disinformation about "Nazis in Ukraine", "the bombing of Donbas", and "Russia's self-defense against NATO", fueling anti-Western and protest sentiments in Europe. Below are some examples of such media outlets.

Germany:

Pi-News – supports AfD and disseminates far-right and extremist views. In 2021, it was recognized as extremist by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution of Germany. The site also features narratives similar with Russian ones, including publishing an interview of Tucker Carlson with Lavrov, disinformation about "Nazism in Ukraine," and "shelling of civilians by the Ukrainian army".

Telepolis.de – an online publication managed by Euroskeptic journalist Florian Rötzer. It covers the Russian-Ukrainian war from a far-left perspective that is hostile to the West.

Among its authors is Ulrich Heyden, who works in Russia. It has published articles about Ukraine's alleged imminent collapse and depicted the Russian-Ukrainian war as "assisted national suicide". Politikstube.com – a far-right media outlet linked to AfD. The publication frequently cites Russian state and pro-Russian media. It promotes narratives that Zelenskyi is allegedly provoking a world war by striking key Russian oil facilities, publishes fakes that NATO poses a threat to Russia, and accuses the West of reckless spending of billions on a "hopelessly corrupt, unstable country torn by tensions resembling a civil war".

France:

Egalité et Réconciliation – an ultra-right media outlet founded by Alain Soral, known for his antisemitic and conspiratorial views. French courts have repeatedly found him guilty of inciting racial hatred, denying the Holocaust, and justifying war crimes. The site spreads materials about global conspiracies and republishes propaganda videos about the war in Ukraine, often featuring Xavier Moreau, a former French military officer living in Moscow, who was seen unfurling the flag of the so-called "DPR".

The publication refers to Ukrainian soldiers as "Ukro-Nazis" committing mass murders and promotes conspiracy theories about a "secret alliance between Ukrainian nationalists and US neoconservatives".

Reseau International – republishes Sputnik materials, spreads fakes about "neo-Nazis in Ukraine", "American biolabs", and other disinformation narratives about Ukraine. It claims that Ukraine is supposedly "betraying" its Western partners, that Estonia is plunging into an economic crisis after leaving Russia's energy grid, and that the US has placed dangerous weapons in Ukraine threatening Russia.

Spain:

Rebellion.org – a media outlet with communist and anti-Western views. The platform demonizes the West, NATO, and the EU, spreads narratives about "neo-Nazis in Ukraine", and justifies Russia's invasion by calling it a "special military operation". The site accuses NATO of starting the war and spreads disinformation about the Ukrainian government. For example, it promotes the claim that Ukraine, not Russia, provoked the war. In another article, it justifies Russia's invasion, portraying it as "defending Donbas", and asserts that the war in Ukraine benefits only Kyiv.

Italy:

FarodiRoma – an online publication established as a non-profit editorial initiative. It covers various topics, including religion, politics, and international events. It systematically spreads narratives similar to Russian ones. For example, it promotes claims of alleged armed clashes between Polish and Ukrainian troops in Donbas. In another article, the authors depict Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi as interested in prolonging the war for his political ambitions.

Occhi sul mondo – an Italian news site covering international events with a strong bias against the West and NATO, often spreading narratives similar to Russian ones. For example, in an article on military actions in Donbas, the site claims that the Ukrainian army is carrying out massive attacks on civilians. Another article spreads the false claim that Volodymyr Zelenskyi allegedly offered €500 million to Slovak Prime Minister Fico in exchange for support for Ukraine's NATO accession. The publication also wrote that Ukraine is running out of ATACMS missiles and condemned mobilization in Ukraine, portraying it as "total conscription of all men to the front".

Czechia:

CZ24.news – a publication that claims to spread "truthful information" but actively publishes disinformation about the Russo-Ukrainian war. The site promotes narratives about "Russia's inevitable victory" and "the decline of the West". It publishes materials from Russian officials and propagandists, reprints news from TASS, RIA Novosti, Sputnik, NewsFront, and other Kremlin sources.

PravyProstor.net – spreads narratives similar to Russian disinformation messages. The publication claims that EU countries are "tired of the war" and "do not adhere to sanctions", undermining Western unity in supporting Ukraine. The resource also actively criticizes the Czech government and mocks President Petr Pavel's decisions regarding support for Ukraine. The publication proposed "10 changes for the EU", in which it declared the decline of the European Union. Additionally, it manipulates information about the economic situation, emphasizing the alleged negative consequences for Czechia from severing ties with Russia.

EUROPEAN POLITICAL FORCES PROMOTING FALSE MESSAGES ABOUT UKRAINE

Party Fidesz (Hungarian Civic Alliance) – ruling party of Hungary
The party founder and current Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, has refused to supply weapons to Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion and has blocked joint EU initiatives for military assistance to Kyiv. Orbán also calls for an immediate ceasefire and peace negotiations. However, he does not specify under whose terms and ignores that Russia is unwilling to make concessions in negotiations, instead presenting ultimatums to Ukraine.

Actions that may harm Ukraine:

- Blocking aid to Ukraine: Orbán has repeatedly vetoed financial and military support for Ukraine from the EU, including a €50 billion aid package for 2023-2024.
- Undermining the EU's sanctions policy: Hungary has threatened to block sanctions against Russia and has advocated for maintaining economic ties with Moscow, particularly in the energy sector.
- Blocking Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO: opposes Ukraine's membership in these structures, claiming it "threatens Europe's security".
- Blames the West for "fueling the war" between Russia and Ukraine, arguing that EU sanctions do not work and only harm the European economy.
- Maintains personal contacts with Putin. In October 2024, he visited Moscow, becoming the first EU leader to meet with Putin since the war began.

Smer-SD («Direction – Social Democracy») – ruling party of Slovakia

The leader of the party and Prime Minister of Slovakia, Robert Fico, denies the possibility of Ukraine's military victory and calls for "peace negotiations", using rhetoric that echoes Kremlin

narratives. He refuses to supply weapons to Ukraine and opposes sanctions against Russia. Fico has also claimed that the war in Ukraine started due to the oppression of Russian speakers.

Actions that may harm Ukraine:

- Halting military aid: officially declared that he would not support military assistance to Ukraine, even refusing to transfer ammunition that the previous government had already approved.
- Threatening Ukraine with energy supply cuts: After visiting Moscow on December 22, 2024, Fico accused Kyiv of stopping Russian gas transit and threatened to cut off electricity supplies to Ukraine, openly engaging in energy blackmail.
- Blocking financial aid to Ukraine: obstructed the allocation of €50 billion in assistance to Ukraine in 2024, citing "lack of transparency in expenditures".

Fico regularly blames the West for "fueling the war", thereby justifying Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He claimed that Russia "reacted" to Ukraine's push for NATO membership and compared this to U.S. actions, effectively justifying the invasion. He also called the Ukrainian Azov Battalion fascist and described the war in Donbas as having "started due to the killing of the Russian population by Ukrainian Nazis". On December 22, 2024, he visited Moscow for talks with Putin.

Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland) – 20,8% in the Bundestag

Party leaders

- Alice Weidel – co-chair of the party, known for her anti-immigration and Eurosceptic rhetoric.
- Tino Chrupalla – co-chair of the party, advocates for lifting sanctions against Russia and restoring Nord Stream gas pipelines.

Opposes military support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. In 2019, one of the party's leaders, Alexander Gauland, stated in an interview with Russia's "Komsomolskaya Pravda" that the war in Donbas should be considered "an internal matter of Ukraine" and that Germany should not interfere. In September 2024, Tino Chrupalla called for the resumption of Nord Stream gas pipelines, blaming "opponents of energy independence" for their destruction. In November 2024, the party included a pledge to lift sanctions against Russia and recommissioning the Nord Stream in its election program.

Actions that may harm Ukraine:

- Visiting occupied territories: In 2018, a delegation of eight AfD members visited occupied Crimea. Berlin AfD deputy Gunnar Lindemann traveled to occupied territories of Ukraine.
- Participation in Russian events: In February 2023, AfD Bundestag member Steffen Kotré participated in a Russian TV show hosted by Vladimir Solovyov, where he criticized arms supplies to Ukraine.
- Reports of ties with Russian intelligence services: In July 2023, German media reported that Vladimir Sergeyenko, a Bundestag staffer for AfD, had close contacts with Russian officials.
- AfD openly calls for lifting sanctions against Russia, arguing that it protects German economic interests. Party leaders also claim that supplying weapons to Ukraine prolongs the war.

Since the party's founding, media reports have suggested that the Kremlin funds AfD. Political analysts note that Russia supports AfD and other far-right forces in Europe, such as Marine Le Pen's National Rally in France. According to Spiegel, in 2014, AfD leaders visited the Russian embassy in Berlin for consultations with Russian diplomats regarding sanctions policy and the situation in Ukraine. Reports indicate that Moscow offered the party "strategic consulting" and "regular information exchanges".

Rassemblement National, France – 26.6% of Parliament

Party leaders

- Marine Le Pen – long-time party leader, known for her anti-European rhetoric.
- Jordan Bardella – party president since 2022, has declared support for Ukraine while emphasizing the need to avoid escalation with Russia.

The party opposes EU sanctions against Russia, claiming they primarily harm France. It criticizes anti-Russian sentiments in the West. The party's program included intentions to withdraw from NATO's integrated command and abandon several joint military projects with Germany. Marine Le Pen supports the idea of France's "neutrality" regarding the war in Ukraine and opposes arms deliveries.

Actions that may harm Ukraine:

- Support for Crimea's annexation: Marine Le Pen called the referendum in Crimea "legitimate" and urged recognition of Russia's occupation of the peninsula.
- Participation in Russian "observation missions": Deputies from the National Rally took part in so-called monitoring missions in occupied Ukrainian territories during the 2014 referendum on joining Russia.
- Ties to Russia: Media reported that in 2014 the party received a €9 million loan from the Russian "First Czech-Russian Bank", controlled by the Kremlin (closed in 2016). Documents published by hackers in 2015 suggest this loan was part of a deal between Russia and the party in exchange for support for Crimea's annexation.
- The media also reported on Marine Le Pen's ties with Putin. She visited Moscow in 2017 and met with the Russian president, who expressed support for his policies. Le Pen called Putin "a defender of Europe's Christian heritage."

Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance, Germany (previously in Die Linke – split into a newly formed party in 2023)

Party leaders

- Sahra Wagenknecht – founder and leader of the party, former leader of the Left Party's Bundestag faction, known for criticizing aid to Ukraine.

Promotes Germany's "peace policy" regarding the war in Ukraine. She opposes arms supplies to Ukraine, calls for "peace negotiations" considering Russia's conditions, and advocates for lifting EU sanctions against the Kremlin. In 2023, Wagenknecht and her allies organized an anti-war rally in Berlin, calling to stop supporting Ukraine, arguing that it only "prolongs the war". One party member, Andrej Hunko, contacted Russian occupation administration representatives.

Actions that may harm Ukraine:

- Blocking support for Ukraine: Wagenknecht opposed transferring defensive weapons to Kyiv and suggested halting military aid.
- Justifying Crimea's annexation: In 2014, representatives of her political faction in the Left Party called for taking the so-called referendum in Crimea "seriously" and opposed sanctions against Russia.
- Promoting Germany's neutrality: The party claims Germany should distance itself from the war, ignoring its commitments to the EU and NATO.

According to The Washington Post, in 2021, the Kremlin considered Wagenknecht a key figure for forming an "anti-war coalition" with the far-right AfD to weaken support for Ukraine in Europe. Wagenknecht's statements and those of her associates were frequently cited in Russian media, using politicians' words to justify negotiations with Putin and lifting sanctions.

Sahra Wagenknecht repeatedly spread the narrative that the West supposedly provoked the war in Ukraine and that NATO expansion caused Russia's invasion. "Ukraine needs peace, not weapons" – the politician calls for stopping military aid to Ukraine. "Sanctions harm Germany, not Russia" – she actively opposes sanctions policy, claiming it allegedly destroys the German economy.

Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) – 28.8% of Parliament

Party leaders

- Herbert Kickl – head of FPÖ, known as a Euroskeptic, critic of aid to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia.
- Norbert Hofer – former party leader, held a moderate position but opposed anti-Russian sanctions.

FPÖ officially does not support military aid to Ukraine, justifying it with Austria's neutral status. The party criticizes EU sanctions against Russia, claiming they harm Austria's economy more than the Kremlin. The party also advocates for a "peaceful settlement", without specifying whether it should be on Kyiv's or Moscow's terms.

Actions that may harm Ukraine:

- Opposing EU sanctions – FPÖ criticizes sanctions, insisting on restoring economic cooperation with Russia, especially in the energy sector.
- Refusing to support military aid to Ukraine – insists that Austria should not provide even indirect assistance to Kyiv.
- Promoting Euroskeptic rhetoric – FPÖ calls for EU reforms and reducing Brussels' influence.
-

In 2016, the party signed a cooperation agreement with Russia's "United Russia" party, indicating official ties with Moscow. Several FPÖ representatives participated in events in Russia.

FPÖ stated that money for supporting Kyiv should be redirected to Austria's domestic needs. The party called for Austria's "neutrality" regarding the Russia-Ukraine war and accused Brussels of "escalating the conflict". Members of this party walked out during Zelenskyi's speech. Actively advocates for resuming Russian gas imports and economic cooperation with Russia.

Confederation Liberty and Independence (Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość), Poland – 7.2% of Parliament

Party leaders

- Sławomir Mentzen – economist, co-chair of the party, known for his harsh anti-immigration rhetoric, called to stop supporting Ukrainian refugees.
- Krzysztof Bosak – one of the main leaders, noted for supporting the blockade of the border with Ukraine.
- Grzegorz Braun – advocates for Poland's exit from the EU and NATO.
-

Konfederacja formally condemns Russia's invasion of Ukraine but opposes large-scale aid to Kyiv, demanding that all arms supplies and financial support come with economic guarantees for Polish companies in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction. The party opposes support for Ukrainian refugees in Poland, calling for cuts to social benefits and the return of Ukrainians home.

Actions that may harm Ukraine:

- Criticism of military support: stated that Poland should not spend money supporting Kyiv as it is "not its war."
- Supported the blockade of the Ukrainian border: backed farmers who blocked the border with Ukraine. Party member Rafał Mekler called for demonstrations.
- Discrediting Ukrainians in Poland: spread myths that Ukrainian refugees take jobs, increase crime, and receive unjustified privileges.

- Popularizing anti-Ukrainian historical narratives: the party regularly raises the topic of the Volyn tragedy to incite hostility toward Ukraine among Polish voters. Sławomir Mentzen visited Lviv and recorded a video near the Bandera monument, calling him a "terrorist".

Janusz Korwin-Mikke repeatedly denied Russian war crimes and claimed the war in Ukraine benefits only the U.S. He also visited Russian-occupied Crimea. Grzegorz Braun called Russian army atrocities in Bucha fake and Ukrainian propaganda, claimed Ukraine might attack Poland after the war, and tore down a Ukrainian flag on the Kościuszko Mound in Kraków. Braun was the only deputy who did not vote for a NATO and EU appeal for help to Ukraine. He stated that Ukraine is a "fiction". According to Amnesty International, Grzegorz Braun's social media page on X is one of Poland's most popular sources of disinformation about Ukraine.

FACTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

After the 2024 European Parliament elections, there has been an increase in the influence of far-right parties spreading false information about Ukraine. The largest of them are listed below.

"Patriots of Europe", 84 seats: a newly formed far-right group led by Viktor Orban, joined by right-wing party deputies from 12 countries. The faction became the third-largest in the European Parliament, with 84 deputies. It includes, among others, France's "National Rally" and Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ). Marine Le Pen's party gained 12 additional seats, increasing its presence to 30 deputies. Meanwhile, FPÖ, which has a cooperation agreement with Russia's "United Russia" party, doubled its presence in the European Parliament from three to six seats.

Group "Europe of Sovereign Nations", 26 seats – an extreme right-wing political group in the European Parliament, officially formed on July 10, 2024. It was created by "Alternative for Germany" (AfD) after being expelled from the "Identity and Democracy" group due to statements made by one of its leaders. Other far-right parties in the group include "Confederation", Bulgaria's "Revival", France's "Reconquête", and others. AfD increased its presence in the European Parliament to 15 deputies. ESN advocates for preserving the national sovereignty of EU member states, opposes further integration within the European Union, and holds Eurosceptic views. The majority of its members voted against resolutions supporting Ukraine in the context of Russian aggression.

BLOGGERS AND EXPERTS

European influencers also spread false messages about Ukraine. At the end of 2024, France accused Russia of attempting to manipulate European opinion leaders to spread false information. Some of these influencers include:

Alina Lipp – a blogger from Germany who moved to occupied Donetsk in 2021. She travels to the front line and regularly gives interviews to Russian media. She also runs a Telegram channel called "News from Russia", where she publishes posts justifying pseudo-referendums in the occupied territories, refers to Ukrainian soldiers as "Nazis", and speaks about "NATO mercenaries". International media have repeatedly debunked her false claims.

Graham Phillips – a British video blogger and former civil servant of the now-defunct UK Central Office of Information (COI), which was dissolved in 2012. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, he worked as a freelance journalist for Russia Today, reporting from occupied Donetsk region and covering the fighting from the Russian side. In 2022, the UK imposed sanctions on Phillips for spreading content that undermines Ukraine's territorial integrity. In 2024, Russia granted him temporary asylum.

Sonja van den Ende – a journalist and political activist from the Netherlands who spreads false claims about Ukraine. She has repeatedly visited temporarily occupied territories such as Mariupol and Volnovakha, where she falsely attributed the destruction of a hospital by Russian forces to the Ukrainian army. She also served as a so-called "foreign observer" at Russia's pseudo-referendums in the temporarily occupied territories, accused Ukraine of "mass killings in Olenivka", and denied Russian involvement in the killings of civilians in Bucha.

Thomas Röper – a journalist born in Germany who has lived in Russia since 1998. He frequently travels to the front lines in

Donetsk and Kursk regions. Röper runs a blog on Anti-Spiegel, where he spreads false information about the Russia-Ukraine war, including claims that Ukraine allegedly shelled an IAEA mission at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in February 2025. In other articles, he writes about "Nazism" in Ukraine, discusses Ukraine's so-called "escalation" before the invasion, and argues that Russia had "serious reasons" to start the war.

Laurent Brayard – a French historian and correspondent. In 2012, he worked for the French service of Voice of Russia, and since 2015, he has actively covered events in Russian-occupied Donetsk region, which he has visited multiple times. Even back then, he called Ukraine a "fictional country that does not really exist", described the 2014 events as a "coup", and shifted responsibility for shelling in Donetsk region from Russia to Ukraine. Today, he runs a Telegram channel where he continues to spread the same false narratives about Ukraine as he did in 2015.

Wilhelm Domke-Schulz – a German filmmaker and producer who directed the 2020 film "Remember Odesa – We do not forget and we do not forgive". The film portrays the May 2, 2014, riots in Odesa but inaccurately presents events, falsely claiming that "nationalists" started the clashes. In reality, Anti-Maidan participants tried to disrupt a patriotic march by Euromaidan supporters, whom Domke-Schulz calls "nationalist killers", while portraying Anti-Maidan participants as "victims". In April 2022, he released another film about Ukraine, "Living and dying in Donbas", which he co-produced with Thomas Röper. This film justifies Russia's pseudo-referendums in Donbas, claims that Donbas residents suffered for eight years, and spreads false information about the 2014 events in Odesa.

Christoph Hörstel – a German political activist, former ARD correspondent and presenter, and publicist. In 2013, he founded the Deutsche Mitte (German Center) party. After leaving it in 2017, he founded and led the Neue Mitte (New Center) party. Hörstel has appeared multiple times as a guest on German-language

programs of the Russian state broadcaster Russia Today. During preparations for Russia's pseudo-referendums in 2022, he approached a German publication with an offer to travel to Donbas, stating that Russia's Defense Ministry had asked him to assemble a "group of internationally recognized correspondents".

Hörstel's statements and articles are frequently similar to Russian narratives. He claims that Europe is fueling the war in Ukraine while Russia is "protecting the Russian people from bloody persecution and oppression". He also uses language commonly employed by Russian politicians, such as "Kyiv regime", "Nazis", and similar terms. All his publications are collected on his website.

Alain Corvez – a retired French colonel and political commentator for Russia Today. He refers to Russia's full-scale invasion as a "special military operation" and falsely claims that Ukraine and NATO have lost the war, as Russia allegedly controls the entire front line and is capturing new territories.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche – German politician, activist, founder of the Schiller Institute and the party "Civil Rights Movement Solidarity" (BüSo), whose YouTube channels are her main platforms for promoting narratives similar to Russian propaganda. She claims that Western weapon strikes on Russia threaten to escalate the conflict to a global scale.

Chay Bowes – Irish publicist, journalist, and entrepreneur, recently a correspondent for RT. He actively manages his page on X, where he spreads fakes about Ukraine. In 2024, the Canadian disinformation monitoring platform DisinfoWatch debunked a post by Bowes in X, in which he questioned NATO's legitimacy. DisinfoWatch referred to Bowes as an "Irish influencer ... spreading Kremlin disinformation".

Javier Blas – Bloomberg journalist specializing in energy and commodities. He spreads false claims, including the assertion that Ukraine has no rare-earth metals, only scorched earth.

Alastair Crooke – former British diplomat and ex-MI6 intelligence officer, founder of the "Conflicts Forum" analytical center. Crooke's texts are regularly published on the Russian platform Strategic Culture Foundation, and he is a member of the Russian "Valdai Club". He has claimed that the West benefits from escalating the conflict in Ukraine. He has also promoted the narrative that the situation of the Ukrainian army on the battlefield is catastrophic and that Ukraine is heading toward capitulation. As early as 2021, the Global Influence Operation Report mentioned Crooke's participation in the Russian Strategic Culture Foundation events, which is part of Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem.

Glenn Diesen – Norwegian political scientist, professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway, and regular commentator on Russia Today. He is also a Russian "Valdai Club" member and worked at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow until 2020. Diesen runs a blog on Substack and maintains an active page on X. He has criticized sanctions, calling them ineffective and claiming they harm Europe more than Russia. He has also blamed NATO for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, he wrote the book 'The Ukraine and the Eurasian World Order', arguing that Ukraine is merely a pawn between the West and Russia. In 2022, the fact-checking platform Myth Detector debunked a false claim about Ukrainian battlefield losses, mentioning Diesen's exaggerated casualty figures. The report also noted that he frequently appears on RT.

Alexander Mercouris – British analyst and editor-in-chief of the media outlet The Duran, which Media Bias/Fact Check rates as dubious and biased. He spreads disinformation about the collapse of the Ukrainian armed forces on the front lines, about financial problems in Germany allegedly caused by aid to Ukraine impacting the German budget, and about sanctions supposedly harming Europe more than Russia. The investigative outlet VSquare, which focuses on debunking fakes in Central Europe, has reported on The Duran. According to them, The Duran regularly publishes conspiracy theories and pro-Russian content.

Thierry Mariani – French politician, member of the far-right party National Rally. He frequently speculates on Europe's financial aid to Ukraine, trying to push the narrative that Europeans are spending too much on the war in Ukraine. Fact-checkers from Voice of America pointed out as early as 2018 that Mariani falsely claimed that elections in Russia were becoming more transparent and open. In 2024, Politico, in an article titled "Know your pro-Russia peeps before it's too late", described Mariani as "close to Russia and even jokes about it". France 24 called him a "longtime Putin admirer" and recalled his 2015 visit to Crimea, where he justified Russia's annexation.

Jan Oberg – Danish scholar. He frequently gives interviews to Russian TV channels. He has promoted the claim that the war in Ukraine will mark the end of "Western dominance in the world" and that inviting Ukraine to NATO was the alliance's biggest mistake.

Alexander Rahr – German political scientist. He has pushed the narrative that Ukraine has already lost the war and that Europeans, especially Germans, receive a distorted picture of events in Ukraine. He also promotes the idea that more and more European countries do not want to continue supporting Ukraine.

Boyan Chukov – Bulgarian professor, political expert, and former diplomat. He justifies Russian strikes on Ukraine and on "objects outside Ukraine that serve as weapons hubs". He has also spread disinformation about Ukraine allegedly using a so-called "dirty bomb". Experts from the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) have pointed out that Boyan Chukov was an observer at Russia's undemocratic presidential elections in Bashkortostan on March 15-17, 2024.

Stefi Déri – Hungarian journalist. She promotes the ideological foundations of Fidesz, Viktor Orbán's party. For example, she argues against economic and military support for Ukraine and pushes a policy of appeasing Russia. She also tries to popularize

the discourse that Ukraine is not the EU's problem and that "this is not their war", as Ukraine is neither an EU nor a NATO member. She has also mockingly commented on Ukraine's decision to stop Russian gas transit through its territory to Europe. Fact-checkers from Lead Stories debunked her claim that Ukraine bans Hungarian students from speaking Hungarian in schools, even among themselves.

CONCLUSION: WHAT CHANGED IN 2024

In 2024, the shifting global political landscape created numerous challenges for Ukraine. The year was primarily labeled as the "year of elections" – for the first time in history, nearly half of the world's adult population in over 70 countries went to the polls within a single year.

In Europe, elections highlighted the growing influence of right-wing populists, including the intensification of Slovakia's Robert Fico's rhetoric, which is harmful to Ukraine, the rising popularity of the Alternative for Germany party, and the formation of a new bloc in the European Parliament, "Patriots of Europe", consisting of victorious nationalist parties. This bloc became the third most influential in the body, with most of its constituent parties ranking among the top three in national elections. For example, in Belgium, the elections led to the resignation of Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, while in France, Emmanuel Macron dissolved parliament and called for snap elections.

With their rhetoric, right-wing populist political forces sought to undermine European unity in supporting Ukraine. At the same time, Europe was forced to take a more active role due to the delay in approving the \$60 billion aid package in the U.S. Congress, which resulted in a suspension of military aid to Ukraine from January to April 2024. Additionally, Donald Trump's return to the Oval Office pushed European nations to assume a greater share of responsibility for supporting Ukraine.

Interruptions in supplies and uncertainty about continued international support allowed Russia to reinforce its resource advantage and intensify its offensive in the Donetsk region. Chronic war fatigue, the absence of timely mass mobilization, and organizational problems weakened Ukraine's ability to counter threats effectively. Russian propaganda actively exploited this to discredit the Ukrainian military and its leadership.

The narratives promoted by Russian propaganda shifted alongside strategic developments. In 2024, the Kremlin increasingly argued that supporting Ukraine was unprofitable for Western countries. During the election process, Russia sought to introduce the narrative into the information space that aid to Ukraine was a mistake by current governments and was allegedly being embezzled due to "total corruption" in the country. Moreover, propagandists claimed that Ukraine's leadership was interested in prolonging the war to continue misappropriating international aid. Russian propagandists also insisted that, for this reason, Ukraine refused to engage in peace negotiations.

Another key narrative claimed that Ukraine's victory was impossible, suggesting that the Ukrainian army was exhausted and losing public support, making prolonged resistance unsustainable. This was traditionally accompanied by fake reports of Russian military successes and exaggerated claims of Ukrainian failures.

In 2024, Russian propaganda significantly intensified its use of artificial intelligence and forgery tactics under the "Doppelgänger" operation. Russians generated thousands of fake reports from Western media, fabricated statements from politicians and public figures. Over the year, AI improved, accelerated, and the number of deepfakes increased significantly compared to 2023. Additionally, Russia massively deployed AI-powered bots to create fake news websites and profiles on social media platforms.

In Ukraine, the civil sector remains a key player in countering disinformation about the country. Due to its agility, it rapidly responds to challenges and adapts to new Russian tactics, including stricter moderation of propaganda content in collaboration with social media platforms. Their work in monitoring, fact-checking, and education has significantly strengthened Ukrainian society's resilience against disinformation. However, issues persist, including insufficient coordination between the civil and state sectors and a lack of transparent

communication on pressing social issues. Failure to address topics of public concern creates an information vacuum, which Russian propagandists exploit.

Additionally, there is an evident need to expand communication with the European audience. First and foremost, there is a need for high-quality and engaging media with active social media pages and YouTube channels. A dedicated television channel could serve a specific audience segment, positioning itself as an alternative to Russian propaganda abroad. Such a channel should centrally produce high-quality, timely content. However, Ukraine's previous attempts to create such a channel have been unsuccessful. The FreeDom channel had questionable results in reaching Russian-speaking audiences abroad – its influence was mostly limited to Ukrainians and failed to promote the Ukrainian agenda in any other country. There was also an attempt to launch the English-language media platform The Gaze to subtly and engagingly introduce Ukraine to foreign audiences, but it turned out that the funds were spent on content that lacked demand.

Ukraine cannot compete with the financial resources the Kremlin allocates to disinformation campaigns. Therefore, its strategy must focus on strengthening international cooperation. Only by joining efforts with partners – through the creation of joint fact-checking platforms, the development of tools to counter deepfakes, shutting down fake mirror websites in Europe, and ensuring that Russian news sites cannot be accessed via VPN – can Ukraine effectively counter Russian propaganda and false narratives within the unified European space.

FORECAST FOR 2025



- Increased use of AI for generating video, photo, and audio fakes. Over time, the quality of deepfakes will improve, making their debunking more difficult, even with specialized tools.
- Masking propaganda. Fake information will increasingly be spread not directly by Russians but by so-called "independent analysts" or "concerned Europeans". This trend is already visible in operations like "Doppelgänger" or networks like Voice of Europe. It will likely intensify, with Russians more frequently generating fake photos, videos, and websites that mimic legitimate European media content. There is also a risk of new websites emerging, similar to Voice of Europe, that promote pro-Russian politicians.
- Strengthening of populist politicians. While it is unlikely that populists will gain a majority in the European Parliament or national legislatures, some of their narratives – such as "Ukraine is the most corrupt country", "Ukraine has lost the war", or "Ukraine refuses to negotiate" – may gradually become more mainstream rather than remaining marginal.