

Countering Russian Propaganda - Recommendations for State Policy

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Introduction

Disinformation, invented news and attempts to manipulate public opinion arguably existed in every epoch, although simplification of spread of information in the contemporary world shows the outstanding severity of this problem.² This challenge has become particularly evident for the Western society during the 2016 US presidential elections where active interference of the Russian propaganda machine was detected.³ Similar to many other countries, Georgia is also a target of the modern Russian propaganda. There were numerous works, mostly authored by the NGO sector, published about this threat over the course of the last decade. As analysis of relevant sources illustrate, the Government of Georgia is also well-informed about this issue. This is reflected on multiple strategies or reports of the different Georgian government agencies. In 2018, Strategic Communication Departments were established in the ministries whose daily work should consist of fight against the Russian disinformation. However, as monitoring of public communication and positioning of these StratComs shows, instead of countering the Russian disinformation, they mostly fight Georgia-based media outlets which are critical of the government.⁴ At the same time, there are active discussions in the Western democracies on how and with what policy should the governments counter the Russian propaganda.

This document presents those major recommendations that were accumulated as a result of analysis of the Russian propaganda by multiple scholars. Naturally, implementing all of them into the Georgian reality would be a mistake, although this document to a certain extent offers a broader vision in what direction the Government of Georgia's policy can be guided if there is an appropriate political will.

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² Kutidze, D. (2020). Why real and verified stories struggle to counter disinformation?! Research Institute Gnomon Wise. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3EGKlZG> (28.02.2023).

³ Mueller, R. S. (Special Counsel). (2019). *Report on The Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election*. U.S. Department of Justice. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3ltHonm> (28.02.2023).

⁴ Kutidze, D. (2023). Public Communication of Government StratComs: Mismatch Between Strategy and Practice. Research Institute Gnomon Wise. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3maUSNt> (28.02.2023).

Propaganda as part of Russia's Hybrid Warfare and Ways to Counter It

Speaking of the Russian propaganda it is important to elucidate a few important aspects which make it a rather difficult challenge. Firstly, this is weaponization of information. Pomerantzev and Weiss argue that the Kremlin exploits the idea of freedom of information to inject disinformation into society. The effect is not to persuade or earn credibility but to sow confusion via conspiracy theories and proliferate falsehoods. The Kremlin exploits the openness of liberal democracies to use the Orthodox Church and NGOs, largely funded and run by Moscow, to further its aggressive foreign policy goals. The Kremlin erodes the integrity of investigative and political journalism and seeks to produce a lack of faith in traditional media. Weaponization of information is a vital instrument of modern Russia's hybrid warfare.⁵

According to Jacob Janda, a prominent propaganda scholar, one of the most important components of the Russian "hybrid warfare" is support for political extremism. In pursuit of its goal to destabilize liberal democracy, Russia fuels and abets extremist sentiments and political movements in Europe on both the far left and the far right by providing funding and supporting various disinformation campaigns against the so-called political elites. On top of that the Kremlin also carries out massive cyber-attacks and propaganda campaigns to undermine trust in democratic institutions (that is, elections and referenda) and civic cohesion. In addition, Janda argues that Russia carries out "export of corruption", provides illegal funding to political parties in different countries and seeks to enhance influence in this manner.⁶

According to the Rand Corporation scholars, major features of the Russian propaganda are rapidity, continuity (spreading incessantly) and lack of consistency, acting in view of a specific reality on the ground. In addition, these messages, some of which are completely detached from an objective reality, is promoted through different channels which contemporary media and social networks allow. It is possible to say that the Russian propaganda operates in a state of unending war, not constraining itself from producing and disseminating even the most outrageous conspiracy theories.⁷

⁵ Pomerantsev, P. and Weiss, M. (2014). *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money*. Institute of Modern Russia, Inc. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3vzHva0> (28.02.2023).

⁶ Janda, J. (2018). *How to boost the Western response to Russian hostile influence operations*. European View 2018, Vol. 17(2) 181–188. Accessible at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1781685818803524> (28.02.2023).

⁷ Paul, C and Matthews, M. (2016). *The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model*. RAND Corporation. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3kmnL4X> (28.02.2023).

Drawing on studying of abovementioned methods, numerous recommendations were prepared in the Western academic domain on how to counter Russia's information warfare. Bellow we will highlight precisely those recommendations.

One of the major findings of the Rand Corporation's study (which offers a systemic overview of literature related to the Russian or other types of propaganda) is that changing government policy is often the most recommended way to counter propaganda.⁸ The same study discussed those general recommendations which according to many authors will help countries targeted by the Russian propaganda to protect themselves. Support of the democratic institutions is mentioned as the most important within this context (Fly, Rosenberg, and Salvo, 2018).⁹ More specifically, it is important to have support for human rights, rule of law and economic development from relevant internal and external actors. The aim of such efforts should be institutional capacity building of those countries targeted by propaganda and limiting Russia's opportunities to sow discord. In addition, one of the most vital ways to counter Russia's malign influences is fighting corruption. As stated by the author of this recommendation, important challenge for the eastern European countries is for instance work on internal resilience, since corruption and lack of rule of law have made these countries weaker.¹⁰ Indeed, as mentioned earlier, corruption is one of the most important weapons of Russia's "hybrid warfare". It is important to highlight another finding within this context that Russia mostly does not create some kind of weaknesses from the scratch in different countries, but seeks to exploit already manifested weaknesses. This can be weak and corruption-prone government institutions as well as lack of legitimacy of any government. Therefore, strengthening of democratic governance and institutions is not only a matter of politics, but security as well¹¹ for countries that are targeted by the Russian "hybrid warfare".

In regard to those direct instruments that can be used to counter propaganda, field experts believe that the very first step of any government should be recognition of Russian disinformation as a main threat for democracy.¹² At the same time, a common national strategy should be drafted to provide

⁸ Helmus, T. C. and Kepe, M (2021). *A Compendium of Recommendations for Countering Russian and Other State-Sponsored Propaganda*. RAND Corporation. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IYx73T> (28.01.2023).

⁹ Fly, J., Rosenberger, L. and Salvo, D. (2018). *The ASD Policy Blueprint for Countering Authoritarian Interference in Democracies*. Alliance for Securing Democracy. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/41vqlq2> (28.02.2023).

¹⁰ Bond, I. (2017). *Contested space Eastern Europe between Russia and the EU*. Center for European Reform. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3SE4fkW> (28.02.2023).

¹¹ Galeotti, M. (2017). *Controlling Chaos: How Russia manages its political war in Europe*. European Council on Foreign Relations. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IEDc4j> (28.02.2023).

¹² Janda, J. (2018). *How to boost the Western response to Russian hostile influence operations*. European View 2018, Vol. 17(2) 181–188. Accessible at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1781685818803524> (28.02.2023).

detailed action plan, instruments and period of implementation.¹³ Recommendations of scholars on action instruments are diverse and incorporate hard and soft measures. In particular, many authors note that precise and specific warnings are needed for the creators of the Russian propaganda that their activity will not go unpunished. It is assumed that public warning, communicated by the German government and intelligence agencies, probably played a role that Russia decided not make use of intelligence information collected as a result of 2016 cyber-attack against the German parliament.¹⁴ According to Galeotti,¹⁵ lack of clear and forceful response to their actions, is considered as a sign of extreme weakness in Moscow which perceives it as some kind of “green light”. In addition, the scholar argues that disinformation campaign coming from Russia can be punished by sanctioning the political leaders or even by expelling the diplomats. This recommendation is mostly intended for such international actions as the USA, big powers of the EU or the latter itself. According to the recommendation of the same author, apart from sanctions imposed against the Kremlin in general, it is important to expose specific individuals running the disinformation campaigns, use name and shame approach and punish them personally with different sanctions. It is important to note within this context that after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which changed many things in modern international agenda, sanctions are periodically¹⁶ announced¹⁷ against specific purveyors of propaganda. Recommendations about use of different technical equipment, to curb the scale of the Russian propaganda, can be considered among relatively harder methods. There is a completely logical argument to justify such actions. In particular, if information is used as a weapon to interfere in information domain of a specific countries, destroy arguments there, usurp and degrade it, why should not all methods in the internet, social networks and other domains be used to counter these attempts? In other words, weaponized information should be blocked.¹⁸ It is possible to say that after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine this approach was given a broader legitimacy which was reflected in relevant actions,

¹³ Spaulding, S., Nair, D. and Nelson, A. (2019). *Beyond the Ballot HOW THE KREMLIN WORKS TO UNDERMINE THE U.S. JUSTICE SYSTEM*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IL59IT> (28.02.2023).

¹⁴ Polyakova, A. and Boyer, S. P. (2018). *THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL WARFARE: RUSSIA, THE WEST, AND THE COMING AGE OF GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPETITION*. The New Geopolitics – Europe. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3J1R1LG> (28.02.2023).

¹⁵ Galeotti, M. (2017). *Controlling Chaos: How Russia manages its political war in Europe*. European Council on Foreign Relations. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IEDc4j> (28.02.2023).

¹⁶ Pertaia, L. (18 October 2022). Canada imposed sanctions against Tina Kandelaki and “agents of propaganda”. Netgazeti. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3Zah4pq> (28.02.2023).

¹⁷ European Commission. (2023). *Statement by President von der Leyen on the 10th package of sanctions against Russia*. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3SwZbPf> (28.02.2023).

¹⁸ Paul, C and Matthews, M. (2016). *The Russian “Firehose of Falsehood” Propaganda Model*. RAND Corporation. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3kmnL4X> (28.02.2023).

too. In particular, major mouthpieces of the Russian propaganda, RT and Sputnik,¹⁹ were blocked in the EU followed by block in the internet by the Google.²⁰

Limiting propaganda in social networks or traditional media to a maximum possible extent can really have some tangible results. On the other hand, however, as opposed to the Russian state companies RT and Sputnik whose aims are manifested, it is difficult to identify and restrict all sources of disinformation. It is also extremely difficult in this process to find a golden medium which will sharply differentiate information as a weapon of the Russian “hybrid warfare” and simply different thought from each other. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to counter the Russian propaganda with restrictions alone. This is particularly true when there are myriad alternatives in the modern world for spreading the information and disinformation messages are always one step ahead to the watchdog.²¹ Therefore, complex methods of fighting propaganda are needed which mostly means studying them properly. To this aim, constant study of the Russian propaganda messages is necessary. Among other things, public opinion surveys should be conducted (on a regular basis to better discern the trends) to identify where the Russian messages are most successful. It important to have detailed data which demographic groups are more susceptible to the Kremlin propaganda, what affects their beliefs, etc.²² Analysis of media environment, most particularly of the Russian media, is also central to expose disinformation campaigns and understand what sources shape societal perceptions.²³ In accordance with the recommendations of various scholars, security services of those countries that are targeted by the propaganda, should be also involved in in-depth analysis of disinformation, because they are capable to identify threats at early stages and respond to them.²⁴ This approach may also enable identification of specific persons pulling the strings of disinformation campaign. As mentioned earlier, bringing their names into a public spotlight, is one of the most important instruments to counter the Kremlin’s propaganda.

¹⁹ Council of the European Union. (2022). *EU imposes sanctions on state-owned outlets RT/Russia Today and Sputnik’s broadcasting in the EU*. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3lz41H3> (28.02.2023).

²⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. (2022). *Google Blocks RT, Sputnik YouTube Channels in Europe As EU Readies Sanctions Against the Media Outlets*. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IYVBKk> (28.02.2023).

²¹ Kutidze, D. (2020). Why real and verified stories struggle to counter disinformation?! Research Institute Gnomon Wise. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3EGKlzG> (28.02.2023).

²² Janda, J. (2018). *How to boost the Western response to Russian hostile influence operations*. European View 2018, Vol. 17(2) 181–188. Accessible at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1781685818803524> (28.02.2023).

²³ Lucas, E. and Pomeranzev, P. (2016). *Winning the Information War - Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe*. A Report by CEPA’s Information Warfare Project in Partnership with the Legatum Institute. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3ELe6Qa> (28.02.2023).

²⁴ Helmus, T. C. and Kepe, M. (2021). *A Compendium of Recommendations for Countering Russian and Other State-Sponsored Propaganda*. RAND Corporation. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IYx73T> (28.01.2023).

The abovementioned recommendation – early study and identification of disinformation campaign – is vitally important, since according to different experimental psychological studies, modern Russian propaganda model has a potential of being very effective. Firstly, because they feed the audience with the initial version of the event – in other words they are ahead of truth. In addition, fabricating falsehoods takes less time as compared to their verification by the responsible journalists and dissemination of accurate facts. Therefore, initial effect of fake news is very high in the recipient individual's mind whereas to replace it with accurate information requires more effort. It is also very important that after some time, people find it difficult to recollect which piece of information about this or that event was accurate and which one was not.²⁵ However, responding disinformation with truth is necessary but this method alone may not bring intended consequences. Therefore, audience should be warned pre-emptively with respect to expected disinformation campaigns. According to numerous recommendations about propaganda, public should be explicitly and permanently cautioned with respect to the Kremlin's propaganda in general as well as specific disinformation campaigns. This recommendation pertains both government structures as well as media and companies managing social networks. Furthermore, it is important that updates on measures and achievements in terms of fight against propaganda are published regularly and transparently.²⁶

As mentioned earlier, verification of disinformation is not the only solution to counter the Kremlin's machine of lies. However, it should be emphasized that it is the most important instrument in this fight. In particular, deconstruction of fake news, making clear distinction between facts and opinions in such news, debunking myths, countering falsehoods with verified facts, showing right context and exposing trolls are all necessary activities.²⁷ According to different recommendations this can be done by specific official agencies as well as through broader cooperation with fact-checking organizations, media, social networks, civil society and private sector. Such type of cooperation, among other things, will promote early disinformation warning practice, because scholars believe that it is of paramount importance to regularly provide society with verified and alternative information.²⁸ This strategy should

²⁵ Paul, C and Matthews, M. (2016). *The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model*. RAND Corporation. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3kmnL4X> (28.02.2023).

²⁶ Helmus, T. C. and Kepe, M (2021). *A Compendium of Recommendations for Countering Russian and Other State-Sponsored Propaganda*. RAND Corporation. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IYx73T> (28.01.2023).

²⁷ Lucas, E. and Pomeranzev, P. (2016). *Winning the Information War - Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe*. A Report by CEPA's Information Warfare Project in Partnership with the Legatum Institute. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3ELe6Qa> (28.02.2023).

²⁸ Paul, C and Matthews, M. (2016). *The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model*. RAND Corporation. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3kmnL4X> (28.02.2023).

also imply study of historical myths, in particular setting up task forces on historical traumas, as separate and equally important direction. It is not a secret that the Kremlin's one of the most effective propaganda messages successfully employs the legacy of the WW2. In particular: "Stalin fought Nazis and therefore everyone who fought Stalin was a Nazi" and links them with today: "Everyone who is against Russia today is a fascist". Therefore, working group that would gather psychologists, historians, sociologists and media specialists should create something like a "factory of ideas" to churn out ways needed for countering historical and psychological myths".²⁹

Support and development of free and well-balanced media play a special role in fighting the Kremlin's disinformation, since one of the main objectives of the Russian propaganda is to discredit the so-called mainstream media and denigrate its role. In this manner, propaganda seeks to foster doubts in public that media "serves elites", it cannot be trusted and alternatives need to be found. As an alternative, the Kremlin offers its own propaganda mouthpieces to the people across many different countries. Therefore, one of the most important recommendations of the field scholars is supporting the media. In the first place, it is important for a country to have a free media environment where journalists are not subjected to any type of pressure or censorship. At the same time, it is important to ensure broad dissemination of the pro-Western sources.³⁰ On top of that, some scholars believe it is a priority to support local (regional) and independent media outlets, because they could be more credible at a local level as compared to national broadcasters.³¹ One of the ways to show support of the media can be delivering relevant trainings for the journalists to enhance their skills for fighting the disinformation.

Scholars also highlight the role of Public Broadcaster in terms of fighting the Russian propaganda.³² To this aim, they should be freed from the government influence in some countries and make more emphasis on support of the pro-Western ideas. According to various recommendations, it is also important to re-consider the idea of public broadcasting. In a polarized media environment, strong and independent Public Broadcaster can become a reliable source which not only imposes standards of

²⁹ Lucas, E. and Pomeranzev, P. (2016). *Winning the Information War - Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe*. A Report by CEPA's Information Warfare Project in Partnership with the Legatum Institute. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3ELe6Qa> (28.02.2023).

³⁰ Eisentraut, S. and de Leon, S. (2018). *Propaganda and Disinformation in the Western Balkans: How the EU Can Counter Russia's Information War*. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/41vL8xc> (28.02.2023).

³¹ Fly, J., Rosenberger, L. and Salvo, D. (2018). *The ASD Policy Blueprint for Countering Authoritarian Interference in Democracies*. Alliance for Securing Democracy. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/41vqlj2> (28.02.2023).

³² Meister, S. (2016). *ISOLATION AND PROPAGANDA THE ROOTS AND INSTRUMENTS OF RUSSIA'S DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN*. Transatlantic Academy. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3Z7WPc2> (28.02.2023).

journalism, but also ensure social and civil participation. Ukraine's Hromadske TV which was founded in 2013 as an ambitious attempt to establish itself an independent public broadcaster from the scratch and free from any political and business interests as well as government's influence, is often named as an example. Hromadske TV was funded only by donors and public donations. The TV channel with only 20 full-time journalists was seeking to make independent journalism.³³ As part of the Public Broadcaster's context we should also mention a challenge which is particularly acute for those countries and regions with ethnic minorities where information is provided in Russian. In this situation, people of those countries/regions mostly have no other alternative rather than the Russian propaganda sources. Therefore, it is recommended by a number of scholars to establish and support TV channels and other media outlets that would offer reporting in languages spoken by the ethnic minorities.³⁴

In an era of social networks, particular important is attached to specific persons – the so-called “influencers”, bloggers, etc. In other words, these are the people who are popular and acknowledged by different social groups while their thoughts are respected. They can contribute to decrease polarization, restore trust between different groups and consolidate society as the Russian propaganda tirelessly works exactly for the opposite. This union may bring together people of different professions, age and background who can communicate positive and right messages to the audience. Within this context, of note is the idea of creation a charter of bloggers, whose signatories will observe ethical standards and facilitate dissemination of fact-based information in the social media.³⁵

When discussing the threats coming from propaganda, apart from sources of information, separate focus should be made on recipient of information – audience. In this regard, one of the most protracted and difficult, but perhaps the most important goal is to educate the public, that is, public's ability to critically analyze the information and avoid becoming an object which is manipulated by fake news. Therefore, principal recommendation is that first of all we should “fight naivety” ... No “myth debunking” or even counter-propaganda can be such effective as literacy.³⁶ Therefore, it is important to promote media literacy in formal and informal education. Ability to analyze and evaluate content of news

³³ Lucas, E. and Pomeranzev, P. (2016). *Winning the Information War - Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe*. A Report by CEPA's Information Warfare Project in Partnership with the Legatum Institute. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3ELe6Qa> (28.02.2023).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Galeotti, M. (2017). *Controlling Chaos: How Russia manages its political war in Europe*. European Council on Foreign Relations. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IEDc4j> (28.02.2023).

as well as sources will allow the youth to understand the role of media from an early age, think critically about messages from media and distinguish facts from invented stories.³⁷

It is rather difficult challenge to implement all the abovementioned recommendations into practice. On the other hand, quite many techniques were put to a test in various Western countries to fight the modern Russian propaganda. Close cooperation between the governments of democratic countries is important to share this experience and put it to a better use. It is necessary to create mechanisms that would ensure effective coordination in response to the Russian propaganda. This could be exchange of information about specific threats, unanimous and clear messages for the citizens, international study platforms for politicians, public servants, media, etc.³⁸ That experience which for instance Czech Republic or Estonia has, would be important to strengthen common security.³⁹ As part of international cooperation context, bolstering of NATO's⁴⁰ and EU's⁴¹ so-called StratComs and their close cooperation with the democratic governments, are also important.

Conclusion

In accordance with the recommendations discussed in this document, which were largely produced in the Western academic domain, it is most important that the governments of those countries that are targeted by the propaganda, properly understand and openly acknowledge existence of this threat. The Government of Georgia acknowledges this threat. However, today, particularly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine when the anti-Western (resembling the Russian propaganda) messages prevail in the rhetoric of the Georgian authorities and forces affiliated with the government, it is very doubtful whether or not there is a political will to fight the Russian propaganda in any form. Despite this, the threat has not gone anywhere and showcasing the ways of fighting the Kremlin's disinformation is important at least because to illustrate what the incumbent government cannot or will not do.

³⁷ Eisentraut, S. and de Leon, S. (2018). *Propaganda and Disinformation in the Western Balkans: How the EU Can Counter Russia's Information War*. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/41vL8xc> (28.02.2023).

³⁸ Janda, J. (2018). *How to boost the Western response to Russian hostile influence operations*. European View 2018, Vol. 17(2) 181–188. Accessible at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1781685818803524> (28.02.2023).

³⁹ Robbins, J. (2020). *Countering Russian Disinformation*. Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS). Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3Y5x5vt> (28.02.2023).

⁴⁰ NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence. *About NATO StratCom COE*. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3IERQsp> (28.02.2023).

⁴¹ European Union External Action. (2012). *Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force*. Accessible at: <https://bit.ly/3xYrFru> (28.02.2023).

Policy Recommendations for the Government to Counter the Russian Propaganda:

- Support and strengthening of democratic institutions – rule of law, media freedom, human rights and economic development;
- Fighting corruption – because one of the directions of the Kremlin’s strategy is “export of corruption”;
- Restricting/blocking Russian propaganda sources and fake news;
- Personal sanctions against the coordinators and purveyors of the Kremlin propaganda;
- Deconstruction of fake news, debunking myths, countering falsehoods with verified facts, showing right context and exposing trolls;
- In-depth study of local and Russian propaganda media and identification of existing trends;
- Conducting public opinion polls to understand what disinformation messages influence people;
- Constant and calibrated information efforts to raise awareness of the society with respect to the Russian propaganda in general as well as specific disinformation campaigns in particular which allows possibility not only to respond the falsehood but to prevent it before dissemination;
- Support and strengthening of media, because the Kremlin’s targets are exactly the independent media outlets and quality journalism in general;
- Participation of public broadcaster in fighting against the Russian propaganda which through balanced reporting should hinder polarization of society what Russia particularly aspires in all target countries;
- Operation of local media outlets, reporting in languages spoken by the ethnic minorities which should counter the Kremlin’s propaganda and promote fact-based news, particularly in countries or regions with settlements of the Russian-speaking ethnic minorities;
- Involvement of the so-called social media “influencers” in fight against disinformation so that they are able to deliver right messages to the public, particularly to young people;
- Particular attention should be paid to audience receiving information. In this regard, education of society is the most important. In particular, this implies formal and informal education programs fostering critical thinking;
- In order to implement the recommendations into practice, cooperation between the governments of democratic countries is necessary. This can be sharing experience, exchange of information vis-à-vis specific threats, unanimous and clear messages to the citizens, international study platforms for politicians, public servants and media as well as other proactive actions.

Of important note is that all ways of countering the Russian propaganda cannot be equally effective in all countries. Utmost caution is needed when taking such measures (particularly blocking fake news and their sources) which can potentially curb freedom of speech and expression. Such risks tend to resurface acutely in countries with fragile democracy. Therefore, to insure against some kind of side effect, it is key to take local context into consideration and measure expected outcomes as accurately as possible.