**International conference**

**Imagined Community:**

Role of Disinformation in Soviet and Russian Policy

**May 13, 2022**

**National Library of Latvia, Ziedonis Hall, Riga**

**PROGRAMME**

**Annotation:** Disinformation is currently one of Russia's types of strategic weapons, alongside nuclear weapons. However, disinformation loses its meaning if it is not believed and has no followers. Therefore, it is important for disinformers to have a lasting influence on society in fundamental, conceptual issues related to values and identity. For decades, the USSR tried to portray it as an imaginary united state with common values, and many of these ideas have now been transformed and are used in modern Russian politics. Restoring the territory and geopolitical influence of the USSR is on the agenda of Russia's current political leadership. The aim of the conference is to analyse the impact of disinformation on society in the past and today, as well as to find answers to the question of how to reduce its impact in the future.

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| 9:00 – 10:00 | Registration |
| 10:00 – 10:20 | **Opening of the Conference**  **Jānis Bordāns**, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Latvia  **Edmunds Stankevičs**, Chairman of the Commission[[1]](#footnote-2)  **Dagmāra Beitnere‑Le Galla**, Deputy Speaker of the Saeima |
| 10:20 – 10:50 | **History and disinformation: similarities and differences in the politics of the USSR and contemporary Russia**,Dr. hist. Gatis Krūmiņš, Senior Researcher and Associate Professor at the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences  **Annotation:** The USSR pursued a colonial policy in the occupied Baltic states. The territory was militarized and the population exploited, a large part of the proceeds was directed to the USSR central budget. The USSR, on the other hand, interpreted this policy as aid and investment, but the Baltic states called as underdeveloped and fascist before the occupation. Today, Russia is maintaining a narrative about the USSR's occupation of the Baltics as a "success story" and the Baltic states as failed states. A distorted history and a lie about the present are the intoxicating cocktail that the Kremlin's political leadership is forcing on Russian society and trying to deceive the people of other countries as well. |
| 10.50 – 12.10 | **Expert discussion**  **Moderator:** **Dr Ieva Bērziņa**, Senior Researcher at Centre for Security and Strategic Research Mission Statement of the Latvian National Defence Academy, Associate Professor at the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences  **Experts:**  **Olena Tregub**, the International Center for Ukrainian Victory, Secretary General of the Independent Anti-Corruption Commission – NAKO  **Mārcis Balodis**, Researcher at the Centre for East European Policy Studies  Dr.sc.comm. **Klinta Ločmele**, Lecturer in Media Literacy, Researcher at Advanced Social and Political Research Institute of the University of Latvia  Dr. hist. **Gatis Krūmiņš**, Senior Researcher and Associate Professor at the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences  **Ramona Staveckaitė-Notari**, Head of Division of Historical Research Programs at the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania |
| 12:10 – 13:10 | Break *(coffee & snacks)* |
| 13:10 – 13.40 | **Imagined community: memory, identity and story**,  Dr Neville Bolt, King’s College London, Director of the King’s Centre for Strategic Communications  **Annotation:** "Imagined community" is Benedict Anderson's definition of nation (1983). But imagined is not the same thing as false or fictionalized, it is rather the unselfconscious exercise of abstract thought. Today, this concept has been reborn in its relevance. The meaning of memory, identity and story has not disappeared and has transformed into a new reality. |
| 13:40 – 15:00 | **Expert discussion**  **Moderator**:**Nika Aleksejeva**,Lead Researcher for the Baltics at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab  **Experts:**  **Dr Neville Bolt**, King’s College London, Director of the King’s Centre for Strategic Communications  **Jānis Sārts**, Director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence  **Agnieszka Legucka**, Analyst on Russia in Eastern Europe Programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs  **Raimonda Miglinaite**, Information and Communication Officer, East Stratcom Task Force, European External Action Service |
| 15:00 - 15.10 | **With a view to the future** (key insights and ideas on how to weaken the impact of disinformation on society in the future, raise up public awareness of history)  **Sandra Kalniete**, Member of the European Parliament, Member of the Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2) |

**Conference's languages:** Latvian / English / Russian

**The conference will be live streamed**

1. Commission to determine the number of victims and location of mass graves, collect information regarding repressions and mass deportation of Latvian citizens, and calculate costs incurred by the Latvian state as a result of the USSR totalitarian communist occupation regime [↑](#footnote-ref-2)