3rd Eastern partnership e-governance conference

Disinformation in the digital age. Effects on democracy, state and society

20 May 2022, at the University of Tartu, Estonia / online

19 May 2022

20.00: Welcome reception (University of Tartu Art Museum, Ülikooli St 18, Tartu)

20 May 2022

9.00: Registration and welcome coffee

9.30: Official opening

10.00-10.30 **Keynote presentation by Toomas Hendrik Ilves, former President of Estonia**

10.30-11.00 Coffee break

11.00-12.30: **Panel 1: Challenges by disinformation in the digital age**

During this session, important global trends affecting election integrity will be explored. This includes the spread of disinformation and misinformation, the increase in threats and violence against journalists and media actors, and disruptions in electoral campaigning and communications. Misinformation and disinformation campaigns, the amplification and weaponization of hate speech, micro-targeting of voters, AI-driven campaigning and the use of automated messaging such as social bots and chatbots have been flagged as major challenges to electoral integrity and trust in democratic institutions. The onset of war in Europe and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to the management of elections worldwide, has highlighted the importance of responsible media and of access to verified information, and increased support for fact-checking initiatives. It has also led to calls for social media platforms to take faster action in dealing with political disinformation and hate speech.

Keynote presentation: Urska Umek, Department of Information Society, Council of Europe

Panel discussion with the EAP and EU representatives

Daniel VODĂ, Head of the Public Diplomacy, Strategic Communication and Press Relations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Moldova
Zaur Akbar, Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Steering Commitee member, Azerbaijan
Denys Verteletskyi, EU4Youth Alumni, Ukraine
Armen Grigoryan, Centre for Policy Studies, Armenia

*Moderator: **Rasto Kuzel**, MEMO 98*

12.30-13.30: Lunch

13.30-13.45 **"How to counter disinformation/misinformation to protect democracies and human rights" Guilherme Canela**, Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists Section, UNESCO

13.45-15.15: Panel 2: Foreign factors in digital disinformation

Information manipulation has become a global phenomenon and even more so in war situations, serving as a prominent instrument in the strategic foreign policy toolkit of many governments around the world. Foreign influence operations are by no means a new phenomenon. However, the global retreat of democracy, decline of political parties, the presence of financial scandals and recent technological developments have made it easier for authoritarian countries to quickly and maliciously interfere with democratic institutions and processes. Disinformation exploits existing divisions and leads to further polarisation. Understanding the reasons behind disinformation campaigns helps us to stop them. In this session we will discuss mitigation measures and how disinformation in different forms of media, including social platforms, can be monitored and countered.

Keynote presentation: **Armin Rabitsch**, University of Innsbruck, electionwatch.eu

Panel discussion with the EAP and EU representatives
Marcin Walecki, Democratization Department at the OSCE/ODIHR
Anna Romandash, journalist, Ukraine
Subhan Hasanli, Atlantic Council DFRL (Digital Forensic Research Lab), Open Platform initiative, Azerbaijan
Salome Tordia, Strategic Communications Division of the Administration of Government of Georgia, Georgia

*Moderator: **Marta Achler** – EUI*

15.15-15.45: Coffee break

15.45-17.15: Panel 3: Challenges and opportunities of Internet voting

The negative effects of disinformation are felt in all aspects of the electoral process, from online political discussions to campaign strategy. War, internally displaced persons (IDP), refugees and COVID-19 pandemic – the ability to govern during crisis situations has strongly highlighted the need for digital governance, including internet voting. The need to be able to make decisions from a distance in a transparent and secure way has been rapidly accelerated. Furthermore, various convenience voting methods (such as advance voting and postal voting) have become topics of intense debate. The trials and pilots of this voting method that have been and are currently conducted in various countries focus on how to ensure election integrity with technological applications in a potentially hostile cyber environment while offering the most user convenience and low participation barriers to ensure uptake and usage. Therefore, it is crucial to combat disinformation and develop trustworthy internet voting technology and ensure trust among a heterogeneous voting population. This session will discuss the increased use of remote voting methods and interest in internet voting as the ultimate form of remote and convenience voting.

Keynote presentation: **Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz**, independent expert, advisor at the European Commission

Panel discussion with the EAP and EU representatives
Dmytro Khutkyy, Research Fellow in Digital Governance, JSIPS, ECePS ERA Chair, University of Tartu, Ukraine
Victor Guzun, International negotiations lecturer, former public servant and Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova to Estonia (2010-2015)
Armen Smbatyan, Secretary of the Central Electoral Commission of Armenia
Giorgi Iashvili, Georgian Information Security Association (GISA), Georgia

*Moderator: **Dr Mihkel Solvak**, University of Tartu*

17.15-17.30: Summary & Closing words

19.00 Conference dinner (pre-registrations only)