

New Wave of Russian Disinformation Against Poland in 2026: Patterns, Tools, Responses



PROGRAM
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Introduction

The information space has become one of the key dimensions of contemporary political and geopolitical rivalry. States, political organizations, media, and non-state actors increasingly compete not only for control over territory, resources, or military capabilities, but also for the ability to shape public perception, the interpretation of events, and citizens' trust in public institutions. As a result, information, and subsequently narratives, have become an essential element of state security and resilience of democratic societies.

This process gained particular significance following the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022. The war waged on the battlefield has been accompanied by information activities aimed at influencing social attitudes both in the states directly involved in the conflict, and in the states supporting Ukraine politically, economically, and militarily. Public debate increasingly features messaging that undermines the rationale for supporting Ukraine, the credibility of Western institutions, the effectiveness of European states' energy policies, or the capacity of democracies to respond to contemporary crises.

However, this does not mean that all controversial opinions or critical stances should be treated as part of disinformation activities. Energy, migrations, and security are areas that naturally elicit political and social disputes. This is precisely why it is particularly important to distinguish between actual public debate and messaging that employs manipulation, selective presentation of facts, or false information to reinforce specific social attitudes and emotions.

The purpose of this report is to identify the dominant disinformation narratives present in the Polish- and Russian-speaking infospheres across three areas of particular relevance to state security and social cohesion: energy, migrations, and Euro-Atlantic security. These areas were not chosen at random, as each one remains directly linked to the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and is the subject of intense public debate in both Poland and Russia.

The report does not focus on individual pieces of false information, but on the broader interpretive frameworks present within the information space. Such narratives often exploit real events, genuine social problems, and legitimate concerns of citizens, while

infusing them with a specific political or geopolitical meaning. Therefore, narrative analysis provides a better understanding of the mechanisms of public opinion formation than the studies of isolated cases of disinformation.

The study was conducted using social media and online source monitoring tools, covering the timeframe from January 1 to March 31, 2026. Its objective was not to attribute intent to individual users or to identify specific influence operations, but rather to analyze the prevalence of certain narratives, their dissemination methods, and the functions they perform within the Polish- and Russian-speaking infospheres. The findings allow for a better understanding of which messages dominate public debate, which events facilitate their activation, and how they influence the perception of security, politics, and international relations.

Research Methodology

For the purposes of this report, disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading content that is created, presented, or distributed to achieve political, economic, or social gain, to intentionally mislead the audience, or which may result in public harm. This understanding draws upon the definition used by the European Commission, according to which disinformation means "verifiably false or misleading information" disseminated for economic benefit or to intentionally deceive the public, potentially causing public harm.¹

At the same time, this report distinguishes disinformation from misinformation, propaganda, oversimplification, polemical statements, and legitimate political criticism. Thus, not all criticism of the European Union's climate policy, migration policy, NATO, Ukraine, or the United States was considered disinformation. The analyzed category primarily included those messages that met at least one of the following criteria: they contained claims open to empirical verification and contradictory to the available state of knowledge, selectively presented facts in a manner leading to a false conclusion, reproduced previously recognized propaganda patterns, or aligned with narratives serving to systematically undermine trust in public institutions, international alliances, or social groups.

In the relevant literature, a common distinction is made between several forms of information disorders, in particular: disinformation, misinformation (information disseminated without the intent to mislead), and malinformation (true information used in a manipulative manner).² In practice, the boundaries between these categories can be difficult to establish drawing solely upon the analysis of content published online, as researchers lack the means to directly verify the intentions of the authors of individual messages.³

For this reason, the report uses the term "disinformation" in an operational sense and refers to repetitive narratives containing elements of falsehood, manipulation, distortion of context, or systematic oversimplification of reality, which can lead audiences to incorrect conclusions regarding the issues analyzed. The objective of the study was not to attribute intent to individual users or to determine whether every instance of disseminating a given piece of content constituted a conscious act. **The primary focus**

of the analysis was the narratives themselves, their prevalence, dissemination methods, and the functions they perform within the information space.

Category	Working Definition	Example of Application in the Report
Disinformation	Verifiably false or misleading content disseminated in a manner potentially causing public harm.	Claims that NATO is preparing a direct attack on Russia, if unsupported by facts and aimed at deflecting responsibility for Russian aggression.
Misinformation	Untrue or inaccurate content, but without a discernible manipulative intent.	Incorrect data regarding social benefit costs, energy prices, or migrant numbers spread by users.
Propaganda	Selective presentation of facts to promote a specific political interpretation.	Messaging depicting Russia solely as a stable energy powerhouse while omitting the impact of sanctions and the costs of the war.
Narrative vulnerable to disinformation exploitation	A message based partly on a real dispute or event, but framed in a manner leading to oversimplified or false conclusions.	Presenting the entire EU climate policy as the sole cause of rising energy prices.
Legitimate political criticism	Assessment, interpretation, or stance on a policy that does not in itself contain false claims.	Criticism of the costs of the energy transition, defense spending, or migration policy, provided it is not based on false data.

Table 1: *Categories of information disorder.*

The study was conducted using quantitative methods, which were subsequently subjected to qualitative analysis and interpretation. The adopted approach enabled the identification of the scale of prevalence of individual narratives, their dynamics over

time, and their dissemination methods within the information spaces. The data included the number of mentions and their type (comment, post, share, etc.), title, author, activity across individual social media platforms, periods of heightened interest (so-called peaks), sentiment of statements, as well as the visibility and reach of the published content in the form of reactions, comments, views, and interactions. These were obtained through social media monitoring covering the period from January 1 to March 31, 2026. The choice of this timeframe was dictated by the desire to capture current communication trends and ongoing information processes occurring in both the Polish and Russian infospheres. The three-month research period allowed for the identification of short-term shifts in the intensity of discussion and user reactions to political and social events that could influence the dissemination of disinformation narratives.

Scope of the Study

The study was conducted using SentiOne software,⁴ enabling the utilisation of the social listening method, which allows for the aggregation and analysis of data originating from social media, internet forums, blogs, news portals, and other publicly available online sources. This made it possible to analyze the occurrence of specific topics and to identify the dominant narratives functioning within the investigated information spaces. However, it should be noted that the analysis covered exclusively publicly accessible content. Consequently, closed groups on social networking sites and other private communication methods were not included. Materials deleted prior to the moment of data aggregation were also excluded.

The selection of keywords was done on purpose and in several stages.

In the first stage, broad terms related to the three areas of the study were chosen: energy, migration, as well as security and NATO. This allowed for the identification of the main fields of discussion, the most frequently recurring phrasing, and moments of heightened activity. In the second stage, based on an initial exploration of the material, more specific sets of keywords corresponding to particular narratives were extracted. In the third stage, the dynamics of these narratives, their vectors, sources, dominant platforms, reach, and the context of events that could influence the growth of their visibility were analyzed.

Narrative identification did not rely solely on counting individual keywords. The authors of the report **defined a narrative as a repetitive interpretive framework that linked**

specific claims, attributed responsibility to particular actors, and guided the recipient toward a specific political or social conclusion. For instance, the mere occurrence of the words "NATO" and "war" was not treated as a manifestation of a disinformation narrative. Only the repetitive linking of NATO with the alleged provocation of Russia, US control over Europe, or the inevitability of a world war allowed for the identification of a specific narrative vulnerable to disinformation exploitation.

The analysis also took into account the context of the statements. If a given piece of content invoked a controversial thesis merely to criticize or debunk it, it was not automatically classified as an element of a disinformation narrative. Consideration was primarily given to messages in which a given interpretive framework was reinforced, reproduced, or utilized to construct a false or highly manipulated picture of reality.

It should also be noted that due to restrictions on access to many Western social media platforms in the Russian Federation, introduced after 2022 by the Russian government,⁵ the structure of the acquired data differed between the Polish and Russian samples. In the case of the Russian infosphere, content originating from websites and news portals constituted a larger share than was the case in the results of the analysis of Polish-language data.

In the thematic area concerning energy, the first part of the study utilized keywords such as "energy" ("*energetyka*"), "energy security + Europe" ("*bezpieczeństwo energetyczne + Europa*"), "energy prices + Europe" ("*ceny energii + Europa*"), "gas + Russia" ("*gaz + Rosja*"), "energy crisis + Europe" ("*kryzys energetyczny + Europa*"), "sanctions + Russia" ("*sankcje + Rosja*"), "renewable energy sources" ("*odnawialne źródła energii*"), "energy transition" ("*transformacja energetyczna*"), or "nuclear energy" ("*energetyka jądrowa*"), which yielded 16 745 mentions in the Russian-language infosphere. In the second part of the study, narratives such as "blackout Ukraine" ("*blackout Ukraina*"), "Russian energy resources" ("*rosyjskie surowce energetyczne*"), "security of energy supply" ("*bezpieczeństwo dostaw energii*"), or "Europe returns to Russian gas" ("*Europa wraca do rosyjskiego gazu*") were identified. Given the timeframe of the study, which coincided with the outbreak of the war in Iran, narratives regarding the impact of the conflict and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz on European energy security were also included, totaling 8 389 mentions in the Polish sample.

Narratives regarding broadly defined "migration" mainly concerned refugees and migrants of Ukrainian origin in Poland. Keywords such as "Ukrainians + Poland" ("*Ukraińcy + Polska*"), "refugees + Ukraine" ("*uchodźcy + Ukraina*"), "aid + Ukrainians" ("*pomoc + Ukraińcy*"), "discrimination + Ukrainians" ("*dyskryminacja + Ukraińcy*"), and "social benefits" ("*świadczenia socjalne*") were examined. Subsequently, narratives derived from these keywords were analyzed, including "mass emigration of Ukrainians" ("*masowa emigracja Ukraińców*"), "Poland bankrolls Ukrainians" ("*Polska utrzymuje Ukraińców*"), and "Ukrainians have it better than Poles" ("*Ukraińcy mają lepiej niż Polacy*"), which yielded a sample of 12 289 mentions.

Narratives and keywords related to security and NATO constituted the broadest thematic group, which required specific narrowing down. First, a broad group of base keywords was examined, including "NATO", "war + Russia" ("*wojna + Rosja*"), "war + Ukraine" ("*wojna + Ukraina*"), "provocation + NATO" ("*provokacja + NATO*"), "war + USA" ("*wojna + USA*"), "Poland + NATO" ("*Polska + NATO*"), and "special military operation" ("*specjalna operacja wojskowa*"), which yielded 4 526 mentions in the Russian-language sample. Next, narratives such as "NATO provokes Russia" ("*NATO prowokuje Rosję*"), "USA controls NATO" ("*USA kontroluje NATO*"), "NATO is losing to Russia" ("*NATO przegrywa z Rosją*"), "Ukraine is a tool of NATO" ("*Ukraina jest narzędziem NATO*"), or "USA exploits Europe" ("*USA wykorzystuje Europę*") were analyzed, and the sample was narrowed down to 11 045 mentions in the Polish-language sample.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations of the conducted study should be emphasized. First, the analysis covered exclusively content that was publicly accessible at the time of data aggregation. Closed groups, private communication channels, encrypted messengers, and content deleted prior to data collection were not included.

Second, the data structure depended on the availability of individual platforms to the monitoring tools and on the content indexing rules applied by the investigated platforms. Consequently, the number of mentions should not be treated as a comprehensive picture of the entire public debate, but rather as an indicator of the visibility of specific topics within the monitored sources.

Third, data regarding reach, views, and interactions should be interpreted with caution. A high number of views does not automatically imply acceptance of a given narrative by the audience, and a large number of comments may reflect support as well as criticism, irony, or dispute.

Fourth, automated sentiment analysis has limited effectiveness in cases involving irony, sarcasm, quoting statements of other users, memes, and ambiguous messaging. For this reason, quantitative results were treated as a starting point for qualitative interpretation, rather than as standalone evidence of the presence of disinformation.

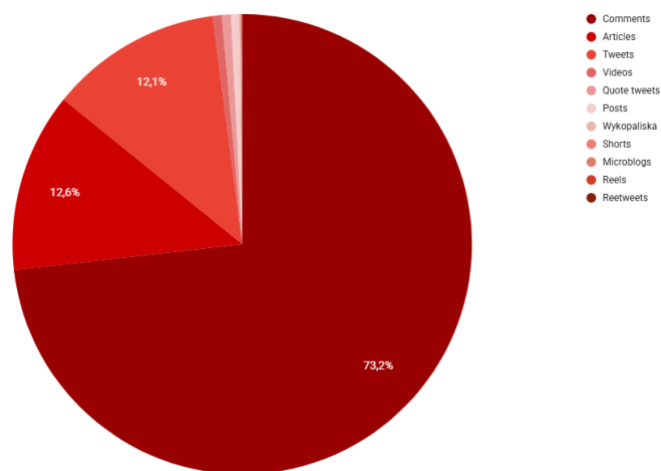
Fifth, the study does not allow for a definitive determination of the intentions of the authors of individual messages. In many cases, it is possible to demonstrate the repetitive nature of a given narrative, its alignment with recognized propaganda patterns, or its potential impact on public debate, but not to directly attribute intent to a specific user. Therefore, the report must distinguish between "disinformation narratives" and "narratives vulnerable to disinformation exploitation," and avoid automatically equating every user reproducing a given message with an actor in an intentional influence campaign.

Results

Disinformation Narratives regarding Energy within the Polish- and Russian-speaking Information Spaces

Polish-speaking Internet

The analysis of the Polish-speaking infosphere regarding the energy sector revealed that the debate during the investigated period was dominated by content of a reactive nature. Approximately 70% of all identified mentions consisted of user comments, while articles and posts on other platforms accounted for a significantly smaller share of the material. The primary mechanism of content dissemination was not the publication of new information, but rather commenting, interpretation, and further reproduction by users. During the analyzed period, energy-related content generated over 44 million views and more than 100 000 interactions.

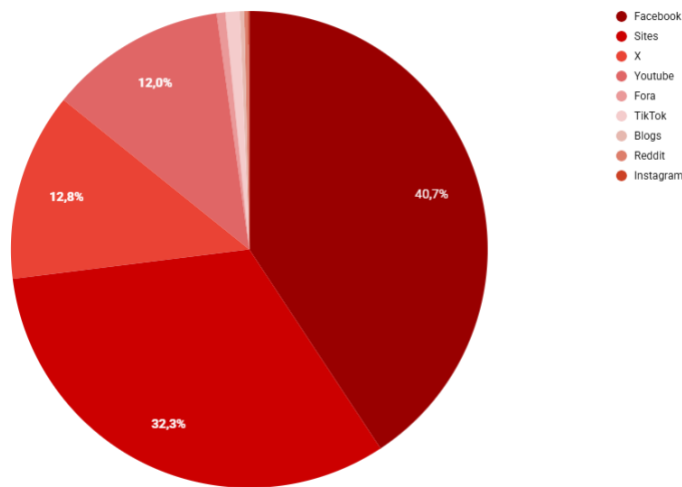


Graph 1: Structure of the mentions regarding energy in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

The most popular channel for content distribution was Facebook, which accounted for approximately 41% of all mentions, followed by news portals and X. Energy-related narratives functioned simultaneously across social media and news services; however, social media served as the main arena for their further dissemination and reinterpretation.

Content analysis indicates the presence of four dominant disinformation narratives in the energy sector. The first focused on the thesis that the European Union's climate policy is primarily responsible for high energy prices. Messages regularly featured references to the ETS system, the European Green Deal, and renewable energy sources,

while climate regulations were framed as the main cause of rising energy bills and the deteriorating economic situation of the member states.



Graph 2: Distribution channels of mentions regarding energy in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

This narrative was particularly visible at the end of January. One of the largest spikes in activity occurred on January 31, when materials from politicians depicting the energy transition and climate policy as a direct threat to households and businesses gained substantial popularity. Within the analyzed content, high energy prices were frequently presented as a direct consequence of EU policies, while

other factors influencing energy security were entirely omitted.

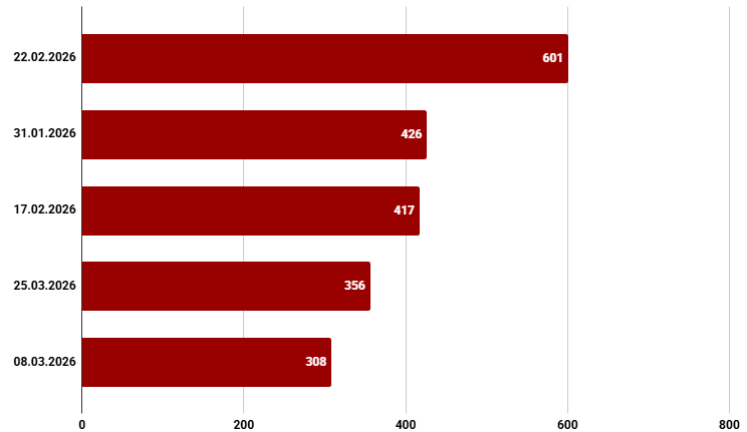
The second prominent narrative consisted of messages suggesting that Europe is suffering negative consequences from moving away from Russian energy resources.

Discussions regularly included references to natural gas, transmission infrastructure, and the impact of economic sanctions. Russian commodities were depicted as a stable and economically viable energy source, whereas the energy policies of Western states were portrayed as detrimental to citizens and the economy.

The greatest peak in the number of mentions was recorded on February 22, and was linked to the public discussion surrounding Slovak-Ukrainian relations and the issue of energy supplies. The direct trigger for the surge in online interactions came from statements made by Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico directed toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, as well as the threats to halt emergency electricity supplies to Ukraine if crude oil deliveries to Slovakia were not resumed.⁶ The debate over the security of energy supply was thus linked to the Russian-Ukrainian war and a broader dispute regarding the scope of support provided to Ukraine by European states. This correlation likely drove the increased popularity of the **third narrative, which asserts that support for Ukraine comes at the expense of European Union citizens.** The analyzed

content frequently suggested that the energy security of member states is being subordinated to Ukraine's interests, with European consumers bearing the financial costs of the policy. This narrative merged energy issues with anti-Ukrainian and anti-EU messaging, allowing it to reach broader target audiences than conventional energy sector content.

The highest reach for materials was recorded on March 20, 25, and 26. Unlike the earlier spikes in activity, these peaks were not driven by a high volume of publications, but by the high visibility of singular pieces of content. The dominant topics at that time involved the war in Iran, the Strait of Hormuz, security of global oil supplies, and the potential consequences



Graph 3: Highest volume peaks in mentions regarding energy in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

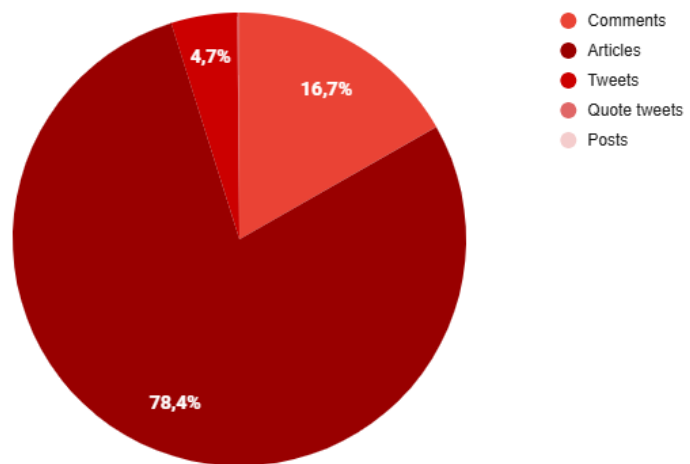
of the escalating conflict for the European energy market. The analyzed messages exploited geopolitical events to construct a narrative about Europe's acute vulnerability to energy crises. The messaging frequently suggested that European states lack energy autonomy, being entirely dependent on decisions and events in which they play no part. Consequently, the conflict in the Middle East was utilized as an argument confirming the alleged ineffectiveness of European energy policy and the European Union's lack of ability to ensure energy security for its citizens.

Russian-speaking Internet

Unlike the Polish infosphere, Russian energy debate was shaped primarily by the media and news portals rather than by bottom-up user discussions. The sample was dominated by articles published by news portals such as Rambler, Govorit Moskva, Izvestia, Interfax, and RBC, while user comments accounted for only a minor fraction of the dataset. Despite the secondary role of social media platforms relative to news services, individual publications shared on X achieved the highest reach and levels of user engagement. In total, the analyzed content generated over 434 000 views and more than 16 000 interactions.

In contrast to the Polish infosphere, which was dominated by discussions concerning energy prices, the European Union's climate policy, and the costs of supporting Ukraine, Russian information space focused primarily on the security of energy infrastructure, the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the geopolitical dimension of energy. Four groups of narratives were particularly prominent.

The first focused on the thesis of an imminent energy crisis in Europe. The materials regularly featured information regarding the depletion of gas reserves, high energy prices, and the difficulties faced by European states in ensuring stable resource supplies. Publications concerning the storage levels of gas facilities and forecasts for the European energy market were exploited with particular frequency. These messages exposed the economic difficulties of Western states while simultaneously suggesting that the source of these problems lay in erroneous decisions made by European political circles.



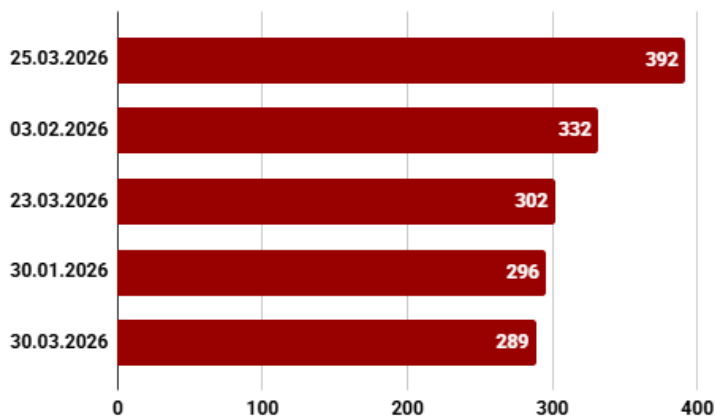
Graph 4: Structure of the mentions regarding energy in Russian-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

Unlike the Polish infosphere, where responsibility was attributed mainly to the Green Deal and the ETS system, the Russian dataset framed the source of the problem as the European policy toward Russia after 2022. The energy crisis was presented as a consequence of sanctions, the severance of economic relations, and the abandonment of Russian resources. The messaging suggested that the European Union deliberately rejected stable and cheap energy sources, replacing them with more expensive and less predictable alternatives. This narrative was particularly visible during the spikes in activity occurring at the turn of January and February. The surges on January 30, February 2, and February 3 were linked to materials concerning European gas storage facilities, energy prices, and the economic situation of EU member states. During this period, messages regularly appeared suggesting that Europe was approaching another energy crisis, while Russia maintained stability.

In contrast to the narratives depicting the crisis in Europe as a consequence of regional energy policy, the Russian energy sector was portrayed as stable and resilient against international pressure. Emphasis was placed on the functioning of "modern" Russian energy infrastructure, the development of nuclear energy, cooperation with foreign partners, and the state's capacity to maintain energy security despite sanctions and military operations. This narrative line served a legitimizing function, creating a stark contrast between an "unstable Europe" and a "stable Russia". Russian media focused on the production and technological potential of the energy sector more frequently than Polish sources, as indicated by the very structure of the keywords, which prominently featured references to power plants, energy infrastructure, and nuclear power.

This narrative was reinforced by materials concerning new investments, international cooperation, and the export of Russian energy technologies. Information regarding Russia's cooperation with states in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa appeared in high-reach materials. The development of new power plants, infrastructure investments, and cooperation with countries such as Afghanistan or Vietnam were presented as proof that the process of isolating Russia had failed, and that Russia itself is not an isolated actor, but rather one of the key participants in the global energy market. Such conviction cultivated the claim that the center of the global energy sector is gradually shifting outside the broadly defined West, simultaneously undermining the effectiveness of sanctions.

Significantly, the narrative portraying Russia as a state possessing a powerful energy sector, and viewed as an attractive partner for other nations, frequently appeared in parallel with messages about the deepening energy crisis in Europe. Consequently, the recipient was presented with a cohesive picture of reality in which Europe is gradually losing its economic and political significance, while Russia successfully builds new partnerships and maintains its position as one of the key pillars of global energy security.



Graph 5: Highest volume peaks in mentions regarding energy in Russian-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

A large portion of the discussion also consisted of content directly related to the war in Ukraine. The analyzed materials regularly featured information regarding attacks on power plants, transmission stations, and other elements of critical infrastructure. Examples include publications about attacks on Enerhodar,

the shelling of the Belgorod Oblast, or the operations of Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles.^{7 8} Energy was presented as yet another arena where Russia is forced to defend itself against Ukraine's actions. At the same time, information concerning the impact of Russian attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure appeared significantly less frequently. This produced an asymmetric picture of the conflict, wherein the threat to energy infrastructure almost invariably originated from the Ukrainian side.

This latter narrative was particularly visible during the spikes in activity at the turn of January and February, as well as at the end of March. On March 23, 25, and 30, a surge in activity was observed, precisely linked to publications regarding energy infrastructure and military operations. Among the most widely disseminated materials were reports on drone attacks on energy facilities, infrastructure shelling, and power supply disruptions. In these messages, energy issues were framed primarily through the prism of military threats and the actions of the Ukrainian side.

Conclusions

In both datasets, energy was not discussed merely as an economic sector or a technical issue of security of supply, but rather served as a tool for interpreting broader political, economic, and geopolitical processes. Although the Polish and Russian information spaces differed in structure and content distribution mechanisms, in both cases energy issues were utilized to construct specific assessments regarding the future of Europe, the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the relations between Western states and Russia.

The first significant difference concerned the way the narratives themselves functioned. The Polish infosphere was dominated by a bottom-up model. Approximately 70% of the materials consisted of user comments; thus, narratives developed primarily through the interpretation and commenting of events, resulting in a debate with a more emotional character. Conversely, in the Russian dataset, news portals played the primary role, imparting a more centralized character to the debate, where narratives were consistently subordinated to specific communication objectives.

These differences are particularly visible in the way the causes of the European energy crisis were portrayed. In the Polish infosphere, the main object of criticism was the European Union's climate policy. The Green Deal, the ETS system, and the energy transition were presented as the direct source of rising energy prices, without considering other factors affecting the state of the market. In these messages, Europe was framed as an entity creating its own problems through poor regulatory decisions. In this narrative, the portrayal of the citizen was equally important. Individuals appeared as victims of a policy imposed from the outside, deprived of influence over decisions made by EU institutions. The messages constructed a broader sense of injustice, in which the transition was supposed to serve political elites, climate ideology, or foreign interests, while its costs were to be borne by ordinary consumers. Consequently, the topic of energy merged with emotions concerning distrust toward institutions and the fear of losing control over one's own standard of living.

Furthermore, within the Polish information space, a narrative suggesting that moving away from Russian commodities had proven to be a mistake that negatively impacted Europe's economic situation was particularly active. Russian resources were presented as

a stable and economically rational solution, whereas sanctions and the process of diversifying energy sources were described primarily through the prism of costs.

The Russian infosphere utilized a similar image of the European energy crisis. In materials popular in January and February, Europe's problems were explained primarily by the severance of cooperation with Russia after 2022. In contrast to the Polish narrative, the focus was not on the Green Deal or the ETS, but on sanctions, the abandonment of Russian commodities, and attempts to restructure the European energy market. Simultaneously, Russian narratives emphasized the resilience of the state's energy sector. The narrative of an energy crisis in Europe almost invariably appeared in parallel with messages regarding new investments, international cooperation, or the development of nuclear energy in Russia. As a result, the recipient received not only information about Europe's problems but also a ready-made interpretive alternative, in which the West is losing its position, while Russia successfully adapts to new conditions and remains one of the key participants in the global energy market.

In both cases, a similar communication mechanism could be observed. High energy prices were not presented as the result of the concurrence of multiple economic, geopolitical, and infrastructural factors, but rather as the effect of a single political decision. Such oversimplified reality made it easy to point out the party responsible for social and economic problems.

A comparison of how both infospheres utilized the topic of Ukraine is particularly interesting. In the Polish debate, energy issues were frequently linked to the narrative asserting that support for Ukraine comes at the expense of European Union citizens. Here, energy functioned as an argument intended to justify broader anti-Ukrainian and anti-EU theses.

The Russian infosphere also exploited the topic of Ukraine, but did so in a different manner. The main narrative was not the cost of supporting Ukraine, but the security of energy infrastructure. At the end of March, spikes in activity were linked to publications concerning attacks on energy facilities, drone operations, and threats to critical infrastructure. In these messages, Ukraine was portrayed primarily as a source of threat to energy security. At the same time, information regarding the consequences of Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure appeared significantly less frequently, which produced

an asymmetric picture of the conflict in which Russia appeared as forced to defend its own energy system.

It is worth noting that despite differences in the form and content of the messaging, both datasets led recipients to similar political conclusions. In the Polish infosphere, the conviction was reinforced that European energy policy works against the interests of citizens. In the Russian infosphere, audiences were persuaded that Europe's policy is not only harmful but also ineffective, as it fails to weaken Russia and leads to the deepening of its own problems. In both cases, trust in the strategic policy directions pursued by the European Union was undermined.

Another noteworthy finding is the manner the narratives were deployed. In both the Polish and Russian infospheres, the largest spikes in activity were not the result of long-term information campaigns but appeared in response to specific events. Statements by politicians, reports on gas storage facilities, disputes over energy supplies, attacks on critical infrastructure, or geopolitical crises functioned as catalysts triggering previously present interpretive frameworks. This means that the analyzed narratives were not created from scratch as events emerged. Rather, events served as a pretext to reactivate existing messaging.

For instance, the tactic could be observed at the end of March, when the conflict involving Iran and the Strait of Hormuz was used in the Polish infosphere to construct an image of Europe as an area devoid of energy autonomy and dependent on events unfolding beyond its control. In the Russian infosphere, messages regarding threats to energy infrastructure related to the war in Ukraine dominated during the same time period. Although the reference points were different, both sets of narratives led to a similar effect of reinforcing a sense of uncertainty and the conviction that Europe's current energy security model is unstable and ineffective.

Both infospheres created two different but complementary pictures of reality. The Polish debate focused primarily on the social and economic costs of energy policy, whereas the Russian debate focused on the geopolitical consequences of weakened relations with Russia and on building an image of Russia as a stable energy power. Despite these differences, the final message was similar: European energy policy was portrayed as the source, rather than the solution, to problems in the area of energy security.

Disinformation Narratives regarding Migrations within the Polish- and Russian-speaking Information Spaces

Polish-speaking Internet

The Polish database regarding migration comprised 12 289 mentions. Similarly to the energy sector narratives, the debate was distinctly reactive in nature. Close to 90% of the mentions consisted of user comments, while articles, posts, video materials, and other formats appeared far less frequently.

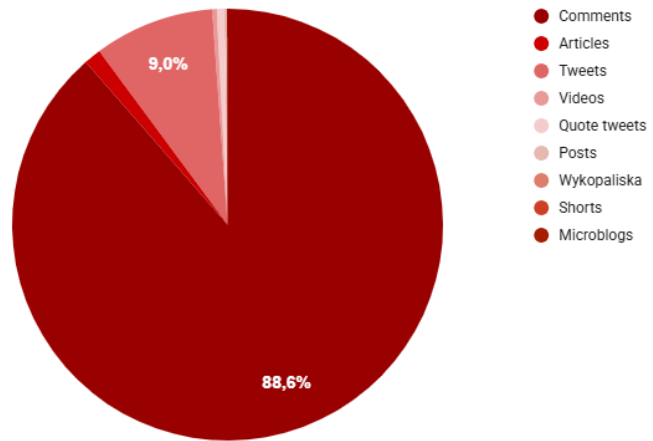
The primary channel for content distribution was YouTube, followed by Facebook, X, TikTok, and Polish forum

Wykop. During the analyzed period, content concerning migration and Ukrainian citizens generated over 392 million views and more than 173 000 interactions. This exceptionally high reach resulted primarily from the popularity of comments under video materials; therefore, these data should be interpreted as an indicator of potential exposure to the narratives rather than as a straightforward metric of audience engagement.

The most significant spikes in activity demonstrate that the Polish migration-related debate was dominated by two distinct thematic areas - the presence of Ukrainians in Poland and illegal migration at the border with Belarus. While both thematic blocks evoked different emotions and sets of narratives, they consistently converged on portraying migration as a threat to the state, national identity, and social security.

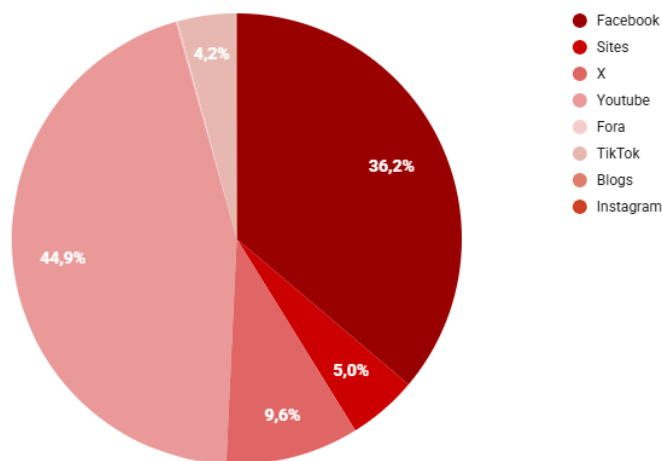
Content analysis indicates three dominant disinformation narratives. The first focused on portraying Ukrainians as a threat to Polish historical memory and national identity.

The most frequently recurring set of keywords across the entire sample consisted of phrasing linking Ukrainians with Bandera, Volhynia, and historical events aimed at eliciting strong emotional reactions. The sharpest increase in activity occurred on January 10 and 12, directly triggered by a video posted by a popular YouTube channel



Graph 6: Structure of the mentions regarding migrations in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

concerning Polish-Ukrainian relations and the shared history of both countries. The discussion in the comments section adopted a highly negative emotional tone, effectively framing the presence of Ukrainians in Poland as an identity-based problem rather than as a consequence of ongoing war and forced migration. This spike did not directly create the anti-Ukrainian narrative, but rather amplified the visibility of the pre-existing assertion that Ukrainians pose a threat to Polish historical memory and social relations.



Graph 7: Distribution channels of mentions regarding migrations in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

The alleged "Ukrainization" of Poland constituted the second prominent narrative within the sample.

Unlike the historical narrative, which appealed to collective memory, this one focused on the present day and the presence of Ukrainians in everyday social life. Its foundational premise was the conviction that the presence of Ukrainian citizens leads

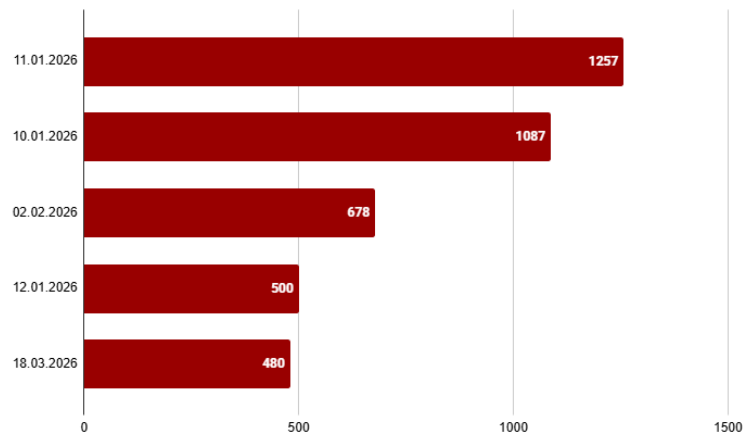
to permanent social, cultural, and political changes in Poland. Materials and comments regularly featured suggestions that Ukrainians receive privileged access to benefits, employment, and public services, and that the Polish state is gradually subordinating its own policy to their interests. The "Ukrainization" narrative translated emotions built around history into the language of contemporary social policy, portraying Ukrainians simultaneously as a historically hostile and currently privileged group.

The third dominant narrative consisted of messages depicting illegal migration as a threat to state security.

This was particularly visible in the second half of March. In this instance, the main point of reference was not Ukraine, but the Polish-Belarusian border. The primary themes concerned the training of migrants by Belarus, immigrants entering the country on forged documents, and the intensification of hybrid warfare, with migrants characterized as a group linked to criminality. The highest number of interactions across the entire sample was garnered by a video from March 17 on one of the larger Polish

YouTube channels, which reported on the withdrawal of an appeal in the trial of activists accused of facilitating the illegal stay of immigrants.⁹

Overall, migration within the Polish infosphere was framed predominantly as a threat. In the case of Ukrainians, it was presented as a threat to historical memory, national identity, and access to state resources, whereas in the case of migrants at the Belarusian border, it was depicted as a threat to public order and security. The largest surges in activity occurred when these messages could be tied to a specific media broadcast, a political decision, or an incident at the border.



Graph 8: Highest volume peaks in mentions regarding energy in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

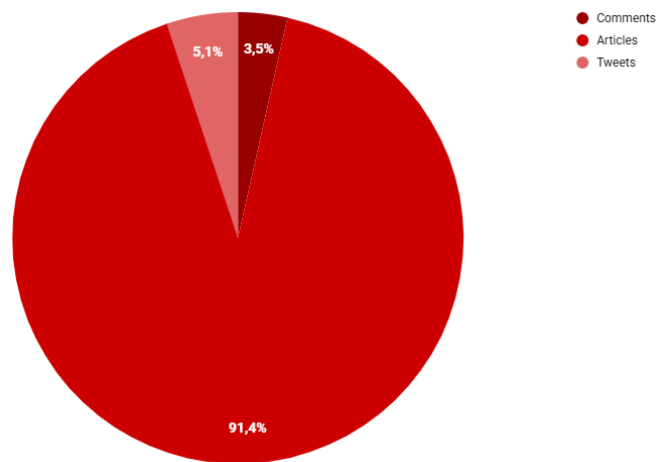
Russian-speaking Internet

Similar to the energy sector narratives, the Russian dataset regarding migration discussions was dominated by news portals rather than by bottom-up user discussions. In contrast to the Polish infosphere, video content did not play a significant distribution role here. The most important domains consisted of news.rambler.ru, Ukraina.ru, Izvestia, sputniknews.ru, Govorit Moskva, and Komsomolskaya Pravda. Despite accounting for the smallest share of the total volume, individual posts on X generated the highest reach and the most interactions. In total, the Russian sample generated 70 218 views.

Narrative analysis within the Russian infosphere revealed that the topic of migration was framed primarily through the prism of the war in Ukraine, the situation of Ukrainians in Europe, Polish-Ukrainian relations, and allegations of discrimination. **The first dominant narrative consisted of messages portraying Ukrainians as a group becoming increasingly problematic for European states.** Within this narrative, migration from Ukraine to Europe was not framed as a consequence of Russian aggression and forced displacement, but rather as a source of social tensions, political costs, and security issues.

References to Poland as a state destined to bear the consequences of the presence of Ukrainian citizens were particularly frequent.

Themes concerning an anticipated surge in crime after the end of the war, illegal weapons trafficking, and the necessity of reinforcing the border were visible in both headlines and content. The narrative manifested most strongly on February 17, when the largest daily volume of Russian-language mentions was recorded. On that day, articles titled "Poland is terrified by the prospect of the end of the special military operation" ("*Польша напугана перспективой окончания СВО*"), "In Poland, they are frightened by an unexpected consequence of the end of the conflict in Ukraine" ("*В Польше испугались неожиданного последствия окончания конфликта на Украине*"), and "Crime surge predicted in Poland after the end of the special military operation" ("*Рост преступности спрогнозировали в Польше после окончания СВО*") appeared on the Russian internet. Migration was directly linked to the prospects of social chaos resulting from an increased influx of immigrants after the end of war, while Poland was portrayed as a state that ought to fear the consequences of its own support for Ukraine.



Graph 9: Structure of the mentions regarding migrations in Russian-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

The second dominant narrative focused on the alleged instrumental treatment of Ukrainians by Western states. These messages emphasized a growing divergence between declared solidarity with Ukraine and the practical migration policies of European nations. Materials suggested that initial support for Ukrainian refugees is gradually giving way to actions subordinated to the political, economic, and military interests of individual states. Content concerning the treatment of Ukrainian men as a potential war resource, the restriction of benefits and temporary protection, and the rising social costs associated with the presence of refugees in Europe was particularly prominent. It was also stressed

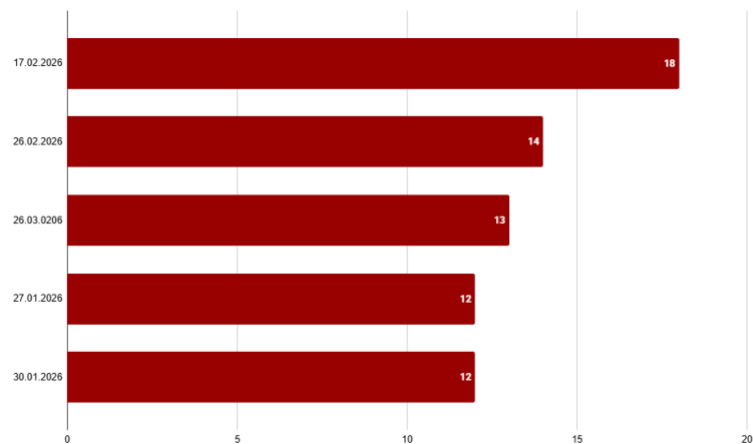
that as the war continues, European states are becoming less inclined to offer unconditional support to Ukrainian migrants.

The third dominant narrative centered on the issue of discrimination.

In contrast to the two previous thematic groups, which focused primarily on the consequences of migration from Ukraine, this narrative centered around the

discrimination of Russians in Europe. The analyzed materials regularly featured

messages undermining the credibility of European declarations regarding human rights protection and equal treatment, highlighting examples intended to demonstrate the restriction of the rights of Russians and Russian-speaking communities in European states. Materials regarding the alleged discrimination of Russian-speaking individuals in the Baltic states, as well as the restriction of the presence of Russian athletes and artists in international competitions and performances, were invoked with particular frequency. From this perspective, the actions of Western states were portrayed as a manifestation of a systemic policy aimed at Russians and native Russian-speakers, rather than as a reaction to Russian aggression against Ukraine. The migration narrative was thus integrated into a broader interpretive framework asserting that Western policy toward Russia and its citizens is selective and discriminatory.



Graph 10: Highest volume peaks in mentions regarding migrations in Russian-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

Conclusions

Although both infospheres centered on a similar point of reference, namely the war in Ukraine and the presence of Ukrainian citizens in Europe, the analysis of the Polish and Russian debates demonstrates that this topic was utilized to construct different, yet partially complementary narratives. In both cases, migration was framed predominantly as a source of social, political, and security problems; however, the nature of these problems and their primary perpetrators were defined differently.

As with the energy sector, significant differences were visible at the level of debate structure. The Polish infosphere was dominated by a bottom-up model, where close to 90% of all mentions consisted of user comments. The primary mechanism of narrative dissemination was not the publication of new information, but rather its interpretation and emotional amplification by the audience. YouTube played a particularly vital role, as the comment sections under video materials generated the highest reach and activity. In the Russian information space, the situation was reversed. The debate was shaped primarily by the media and news portals, with significantly lower user participation. Consequently, the Polish discussion was more emotional and fragmented, whereas the Russian one was more structured and anchored in media-published messaging.

Despite these differences, both infospheres largely focused on the same subject - immigrants from Ukraine. Characteristically, however, within the Polish internet, Ukrainians were portrayed primarily as a challenge to the national identity and social order, whereas in the Russian debate, they more frequently functioned as an argument to criticize European states and their policy toward Ukraine.

The most prominent narrative in the Polish infosphere was the portrayal of Ukrainians as a threat to Polish historical memory and national identity. References to historical conflicts between Poles and Ukrainians dominated the comments under popular publications. A defining feature was the transposition of historical disputes onto the assessment of the contemporary presence of Ukrainians in Poland. From this perspective, migration ceased to be viewed as a consequence of war and forced displacement and began to be interpreted through the prism of historical mistrust and unresolved conflicts of memory.

In the Russian internet, historical arguments did not play the same vital role as in the Polish infosphere. Instead, the debate centered on portraying Ukrainians as a source of ongoing social and security problems for European states. Publications suggesting that Poland fears the end of the war due to a potential surge in crime, an influx of armed migrants, and the destabilization of the internal situation generated significant reach.

In contrast to the narratives spread in the Polish infosphere, which appealed to the past, the Russian narrative focused on the future. Ukrainians were portrayed not as historical adversaries, but as a potential source of social chaos following the cessation of hostilities.

In both the Polish and Russian infospheres, the presence of Ukrainians was framed as a problem that could threaten state stability in the long run. The difference lay in the method of justifying this conviction. The Polish internet was dominated by identity-based and historical arguments, whereas the Russian internet relied on arguments related to security and public order.

The similarities between both datasets are even more pronounced in the narratives regarding the alleged costs of the presence of Ukrainians. Within the Polish debate, the narrative of the "Ukrainization" of Poland was particularly visible. Its foundational premise was the conviction that the state is gradually subordinating its actions to the interests of Ukrainian citizens. Comments featured suggestions regarding the privileged access of Ukrainians to social benefits, the labor market, or public services. This narrative was rooted in the belief that state resources are limited, and that the support provided to migrants comes at the expense of Polish citizens. In Russian narratives, however, rather than focusing on the migrants themselves, the emphasis was placed on the alleged instrumentalization of Ukrainians by Europe. Materials highlighted that initial solidarity toward refugees was giving way to political and economic calculations. In this manner, the image of Europe as an entity declaring solidarity, but in reality treating Ukrainians as a tool to advance its own interest, was constructed.

Simultaneously, within the narratives present in both the Polish and Russian infospheres, migration issues were directly correlated with their negative impact on security. In the Polish debate, this topic appeared primarily in the context of the Polish-Belarusian border, where activity centered around messages concerning hybrid warfare, the actions of the state of Belarus, and the threats associated with illegal migration. The Russian infosphere also utilized the security argument, but did so almost exclusively with reference to migrants from Ukraine. Publications featured warnings about rising crime rates or threats linked to the return of individuals with wartime experience. **In both cases, therefore, migration was presented as a potential threat to state security, but the sources of this threat differed. In the Polish dataset, the primary point of reference was the border with Belarus and migration from outside Europe, whereas in the Russian dataset, it was Ukrainian citizens and the consequences of the war.**

Against the backdrop of the other narratives, the storyline concerning the discrimination of Russians present in the Russian infosphere is particularly interesting. There was

virtually no equivalent to these claims in the Polish debate. Russian media regularly presented examples intended to demonstrate the systemic restriction of the rights of Russians and Russian-speaking communities in Europe. In this instance, migration became an element of a much broader narrative regarding the West's alleged Russophobia. In contrast to earlier messages, the goal here was not to portray migrants as a threat, but to construct an image of Russians as victims of an unfair and selective policy pursued by European states.

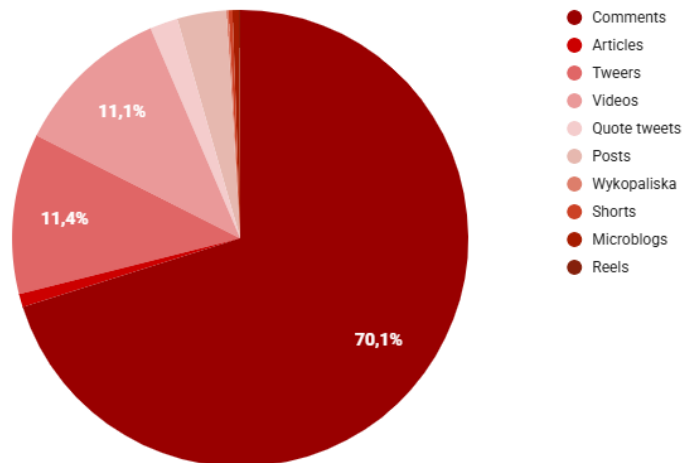
A comparison of both infospheres demonstrates that migration functioned as a universal tool for mobilizing social emotions. The Polish internet was dominated by emotions related to threats to national identity, historical memory, and access to state resources. In the Russian information space, narratives concerning Western hypocrisy, problems resulting from policies toward Ukraine, and the discrimination of Russians carried greater weight. Despite these differences, both datasets led recipients to similar conclusions. Both Poland and Europe were portrayed as increasingly unstable, heavily burdened by the consequences of war and migration, and incapable of effectively managing their aftermath.

As with the energy sector, the largest spikes in activity did not occur randomly. Narratives were activated by specific events - publication of popular video materials and media reports, political decisions, or incidents at the border. These events did not create new narratives, but rather triggered pre-existing interpretive frameworks. In the Polish infosphere, these were primarily events related to the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations and the border with Belarus. In the Russian infosphere, they consisted of publications regarding the situation of Ukrainians in Europe, the consequences of the end of the war, and the relations between European states and Ukraine.

Disinformation Narratives regarding NATO within the Polish- and Russian-speaking Information Spaces

Polish-speaking Internet

The analysis of the Polish infosphere regarding NATO indicates that the debate during the investigated period was primarily reactive in nature, heavily dependent on video materials and user comments. Within the dataset containing 11 045 mentions concerning the perception of NATO in the Polish infosphere, comments dominated (accounting for 68% of all mentions). Tweets constituted the second-largest category by volume, followed by video materials. The substantial weight of the discussion was therefore not



Graph 11: Structure of the mentions regarding NATO in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

linked to the publications, but to commenting, interpretation, and emotional processing of information by users. Within the analyzed infosphere, NATO functioned not so much as a topic of expert security debate, but rather as a point of reference for comments regarding the war, Russia, Ukraine, the United States, the European Union, and the risk of escalation.

In the data sample, the most popular content distribution channels were YouTube (67% of mentions), Facebook, and X (13% each). The discussion about NATO was thus largely dependent on the logic of video platforms, where isolated materials triggered waves of comments that subsequently consolidated and reinforced the dominant interpretive frameworks. The total number of views recorded in the sample amounted to 609 637 942, while the total number of interactions reached 4 841 317.

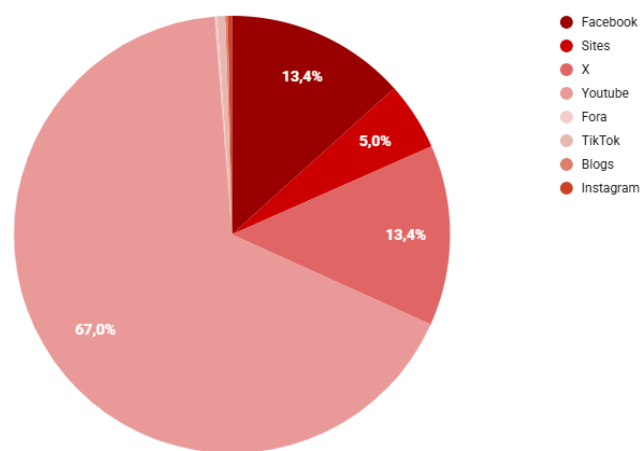
Several recurring narratives vulnerable to disinformation exploitation were visible within the analyzed material. The most significant among them was the narrative portraying NATO, or the broader West, as an entity provoking a conflict with Russia.

This message relied on reversing cause-and-effect relationships, wherein NATO's actions were presented as a factor triggering international tensions rather than as a reaction to Russia's aggressive actions. The analyzed content regularly featured references to "provocation," "escalation," and the "exploitation of Europe," suggesting that Western states are deliberately increasing the risk of armed conflict. The visibility of this narrative coincided with the sharpest increase in activity within the sample, recorded on March 12, the anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO.

NATO was also portrayed as an organization striving for direct confrontation and, consequently, full-scale war. The most frequent set of keywords across the entire sample directly linked the USA, Europe, controlled escalation, and World War III. Within this messaging, every action taken by NATO, such as supporting Ukraine, reinforcing the eastern flank, increasing defense spending, or military exercises, was deemed an escalation rather than an attempt to enhance the security of the alliance. The depiction of the US war with Iran, which cast the United States as the main source of international instability, also served this messaging.

It is worth noting that despite the narrative claiming that NATO itself is striving for another world war, disinformation messages also featured the portrayal of Ukraine as a source of threat or a burden to Europe and NATO member states.

In the analyzed materials, links between Ukraine and escalation, provocation, conflict between NATO

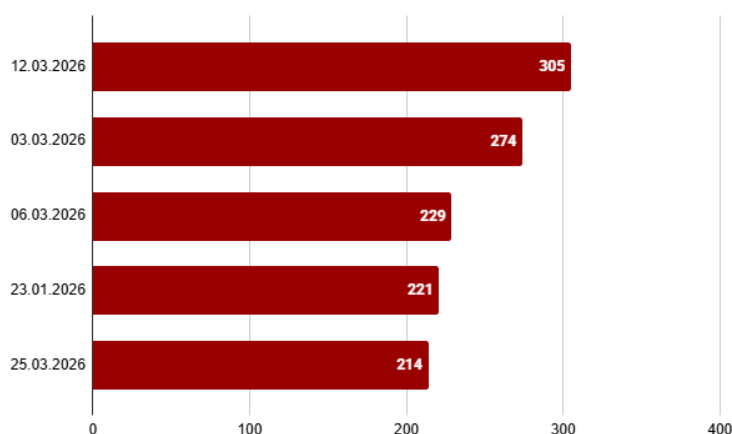


Graph 12: Distribution channels of mentions regarding NATO in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

and Russia, as well as the risk of the war expanding into Europe, appeared regularly. In this framing, support for Ukraine was directly linked to the Alliance's alleged ambitions for direct military confrontation.

Simultaneously, NATO was depicted as a tool of the United States, and Europe as an actor devoid of independence. Phrasing indicating US "control" over Europe, Washington's "exploitation" of it, and the subordination of European security policy

to American interests appeared repeatedly within the data sample. A clear spike in this narrative was visible on March 3, 2026, when the second-highest volume of the investigated period was recorded. According to the materials from that day, Europe does not control its own security policy, but merely subordinates itself to the strategic objectives of the United States.



Graph 13: *Highest volume peaks in mentions regarding NATO in Polish-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).*

Despite the fact that Europe was portrayed more frequently as an object rather than a subject within the analyzed messages, this did not limit the dissemination of the disinformation narrative concerning the alleged militarization of the continent.

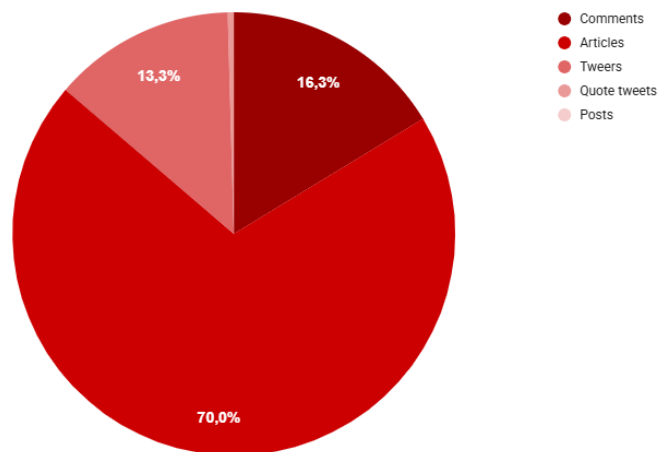
The emphasis on the costs of an autonomous security policy was visible in content regarding the SAFE program, defense financing, EU loans, and the relationship between security expenditures and support for Ukraine. These types of messages were most prominent during political disputes concerning the Polish SAFE program,¹⁰ where the narrative relied on portraying security policy as a mechanism for running up member states' debts, restricting sovereignty, and forcing citizens to bear the costs of security policy.

The aforementioned messages converged into a single, broad narrative: the West is collapsing, and the transatlantic security structure is no longer stable or credible. References to the collapse of the EU, the crisis of NATO, the loss of control over the international situation, and the weakening of Western security institutions appeared regularly in the investigated material. The materials undermined the credibility of the North Atlantic Alliance, highlighting conflicts of interest between Europe and the United States. Europe itself was portrayed as weak and incapable of independently ensuring security for its citizens, upon whom the obligation to finance their own security had fallen.

This narrative performed a significant reinforcing function toward the remaining messages. If NATO is responsible for escalating the war, Europe is controlled by the US, and supporting Ukraine increases the risk of conflict, then the next logical step is to convince the audience that the entire Western security system is in a state of crisis.

Russian-speaking Internet

Similar to the other thematic blocks, the analysis of the Russian infosphere regarding NATO reveals a different distribution model than in the case of the Polish sample. The dataset comprised 42 526 mentions, the vast majority of which consisted of articles (70% of all mentions). There were significantly fewer comments, tweets, and other publications. The most important group of domains consisted



Graph 14: Structure of the mentions regarding NATO in Russian-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

of portals, including news.rambler.ru, Ukraina.ru, Govorit Moskva, forums.kuban.ru, Izvestia, Tengrinews.kz, Komsomolskaya Pravda, alternatio.org, and ru24.net, as well as X.

At the center of the Russian debate about NATO was the war against Ukraine, most frequently referred to in the language of Russian propaganda as the "special military operation" (*специальная военная операция, СВО*). The most frequently recurring set of keywords consisted of phrases linking Russia, NATO, Ukraine, the war, and the "special operation". Within the Russian infosphere, NATO functioned primarily as an element of the state war narrative, subordinated to the Russian description of the conflict.

The most significant disinformation narrative was the portrayal of NATO as actually participating in the war against Russia. Within this messaging, Ukraine was frequently reduced to the role of a tool of the West, and the war was presented as a confrontation between Russia and the entire West, rather than Ukraine. This interpretive framework, in which NATO is designated as the actual adversary of the Russian Federation, has functioned in Russian propaganda practically since the beginning of the war. It serves

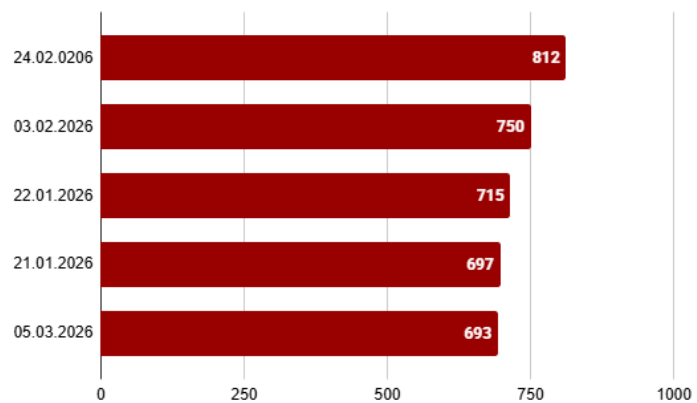
to justify the prolonged duration of the "special operation", explain military costs, and portray Russian aggression as a defensive action against Western pressure. This narrative was particularly visible during the spike in activity recorded on February 24, the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Instead of describing the war as Russian aggression against Ukraine, the prevailing discourse relied on language that normalized and institutionalized the conflict. NATO appeared in this narrative as the primary external adversary whose actions were meant to justify Russian war policy.

Similar to the Polish-language messages, the depiction of NATO as an aggressive organization that escalates the conflict and strives for direct confrontation with Russia appeared frequently within the Russian infosphere.

Messages regarding the "war with NATO," weapons deliveries, the deployment of European

troops, Ukraine's potential membership in the Alliance, and the involvement of Western states in the conflict were interpreted as proof of the West's aggressive intentions. The most popular materials featured content concerning the fight against NATO, the transfer of weapons to Ukraine "not only for defense, but also for victory", and statements by former NATO representatives regarding the potential presence of European troops in Ukraine. The narratives concerning the US war with Iran were not as prominent as in the Polish dataset; however, both datasets were characterized by a similar narrative logic, wherein NATO, and the United States in particular, is held responsible for the unstable geopolitical situation.

The narrative regarding an aggressive NATO merged with the portrayal of the organization as a tool utilized by the United States to achieve its own strategic objectives. In Russian messaging, NATO is a structure that is internally incoherent, dependent on the US, and prone to conflicts between member states. Transatlantic



Graph 15: Highest volume peaks in mentions regarding NATO in Russian-speaking internet (1.01.2026-31.03.2026).

relations, Donald Trump's statements and reactions of European leaders, as well as disputes over support for Ukraine served to construct an image of the Alliance as an organization devoid of permanent subjectivity. Within this narrative, Europe was portrayed as a weaker actor, dependent on decisions from Washington, while NATO itself was treated as meaningless without United States intervention.

It is worth noting that the narrative regarding NATO's weakness did not contradict the messaging claiming NATO's hostility. Both functioned in parallel, creating an image of "two NATOs". From one perspective, the organization was presented as a dangerous adversary waging war against Russia. From the other, it was framed as a fragile, non-autonomous structure dependent on the US. This contradiction did not weaken the messaging, as both versions led to the same goal - undermining the credibility of the Alliance. If NATO is aggressive, one must defend against it; however, if NATO is weak and dependent on the US, it is not worth treating as a stable guarantor of security.

Similarly, to the narrative lines present in the Polish sample regarding security, Ukraine was portrayed as a tool of the West used to weaken Russia. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was described primarily through the prism of Ukraine–NATO–Russia relations, and military assistance to Kyiv was interpreted as proof that the West is actually orchestrating the conflict. This messaging relativizes Russian responsibility for the war and shifts the audience's attention to the alleged agency of NATO.

Conclusions

The analysis of the debate concerning NATO confirms the findings from sections dedicated to energy and migration: the Polish and Russian infospheres differed in their content distribution structures, yet frequently led audiences to similar political assessments. Within the Polish internet, messages developed primarily from the bottom up, through user comments and reactions to video materials. Conversely, the Russian information space was dominated by articles published by news portals. This difference, however, did not signify divergent narrative directions. In both cases, NATO was portrayed as a destabilizing actor, dependent on the US, dragging Europe into conflict, and linked to the risk of further war escalation.

In the Polish debate, the Alliance was discussed mainly through the prism of fear of escalation, security costs, and the subordination of Europe to US interests. In the

Russian infosphere, meanwhile, NATO was integrated directly into the Russian war narrative, according to which Russia is fighting not Ukraine, but the entire West. Both versions differed in their starting points, but both aimed to undermine the credibility of the Western security system.

The most significant narrative in both infospheres concerned the portrayal of NATO as a party escalating the conflict with Russia. Within the Polish internet, this took the form of messaging about "provoking" Russia, "controlled escalation," and the rising risk of World War III. This was particularly visible on March 12, the anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO, when the sharpest increase in activity was recorded. In this framing, the Alliance's actions aimed at ensuring greater security in the region were interpreted not as a reaction to the threat from Russia, but as proof of the West's aggressive intentions. The mechanism was similar to the one appearing in the energy debate, where a complex security situation was reduced to a single accusation asserting that the West itself triggers the crisis, which it then uses to justify its own policies.

In the Russian infosphere, this same logic was developed significantly further. NATO was not merely portrayed as an entity risking escalation, but as an actual party to the war. Ukraine was reduced to the role of a tool of the West, and the conflict was described as a clash between Russia and NATO. This narrative was particularly prominent on February 24, the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Instead of describing the war as Russian aggression against Ukraine, the dominant frame was one in which the "special military operation" was a response to Western pressure. In this manner, NATO became the primary adversary, and Russian responsibility for the war was relativized or shifted onto Western states.

The greatest difference between the Russian and Polish internet lay, therefore, in the degree of radicalization of the same ideas. In the Polish debate, NATO was presented as an organization that could lead to a war with Russia. In the Russian debate, it was framed as an organization that is already waging this war. In both cases, however, the recipient received a similar message: "the actions of the Alliance do not enhance security, but rather create a threat". This mechanism is analogous to the one found in the migration debate, where the presence of Ukrainians was presented not as a consequence of the war, but as a problem for host nations. In both domains,

a reversal of cause-and-effect relationships occurred, wherein the response to aggression was depicted as the source of the crisis.

The second shared narrative axis was the portrayal of Ukraine as a factor dragging Europe and NATO into the conflict. Within the Polish infosphere, Ukraine appeared as a source of threat or a burden to the Alliance states. Support for Kyiv was linked to the risk of escalation, conflict between NATO and Russia, and the possibility of the war expanding into Europe. In this way, Europe's relations with Ukraine were presented as costly, risky, and contrary to the interests of its own citizens. In the Russian infosphere, Ukraine was portrayed even more instrumentally. It did not appear as an independent subject defending itself against aggression, but as a tool of the West used to weaken Russia. Military aid to Kyiv, discussions about the potential presence of European troops, weapons deliveries, or the perspective of Ukraine's membership in NATO were interpreted as proof that the Alliance is Russia's true adversary.

On the other hand, the Alliance itself was portrayed as a tool of the United States, used to achieve its own strategic objectives. In the Polish debate, phrasing regarding US control over Europe, the exploitation of European states, and the subordination of their security policies to American interests appeared regularly.

In Russian messaging, the same idea was one of the foundational elements in the description of the Alliance. NATO was presented as a non-autonomous structure, dependent on the US and internally incoherent. Relations between Washington and Europe and disputes over support for Ukraine served to construct an image of an organization devoid of permanent subjectivity. Europe was portrayed as the weaker part of the West, dependent on American decisions and incapable of conducting its own security policy. It is worth emphasizing that within the Russian-language infosphere, two seemingly contradictory images of NATO functioned in parallel. On one hand, the Alliance was portrayed as an aggressive adversary of Russia, capable of waging war and escalating conflict. On the other hand, it was framed as a fragile, divided structure dependent on the US. This contradiction did not weaken the messaging, as both versions served the same goal. If NATO is aggressive, Russia must defend itself; if NATO is weak and dependent on the US, it cannot be a credible guarantor of security.

The broadest frame connecting all these narratives was the narrative of the crisis of the West. Within the Polish infosphere, references appeared regarding the collapse of the EU, the crisis of NATO, the weakness of Europe, and the loss of control over the international situation. In the Russian debate, this image was even more consistent. NATO was presented as aggressive but internally weak, Europe as dependent on the US, Ukraine as a tool of the West, and Russia as a state forced to defend itself against external pressure.

Just as in the previous sections, the activation of narratives occurred in response to specific triggers - the anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO, the anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, statements made by politicians, discussions on defense spending, support for Ukraine, and US–Europe relations. These events did not create new messaging but rather activated ready-made interpretive frameworks. Any piece of information about NATO could be utilized as proof of escalation, Europe's dependence on the US, the crisis of the West, or the instrumental treatment of Ukraine.

Summary and Recommendations

The analysis of the three thematic areas, energy, migration, and Euro-Atlantic security, indicates that despite differences in content and distribution methods, many of the identified narratives relied on a shared mechanism. Their central element was not the dissemination of specific false information, but rather the construction of a sense of lost control over processes affecting the daily lives of citizens.

In the energy-related narratives, the recipient was presented with an image of Europe as an entity bearing the costs of decisions made by political elites or international institutions. In the case of migration, the conviction was reinforced that the state had lost control over its own borders, social policy, or demographic processes. In the area of security, messages suggesting that decisions regarding war and peace are made outside of European societies, with the states themselves becoming merely passive participants in events dominated the debate. **Regardless of the topic, the final message remained similar: citizens have no influence over the processes that directly affect them.**

The results of the study therefore suggest that the effectiveness of modern information operations stems not so much from spreading false information as from the ability to exploit existing social tensions and a sense of uncertainty. **Disinformation does not create an alternative reality; instead, it exploits the existing reality, selectively exposing those elements that amplify a sense of threat, injustice, or loss of agency.**

This also implies that resilience to disinformation cannot be built solely through fact-checking initiatives or the removal of false content. While these instruments remain necessary, their effectiveness will be limited unless they are accompanied by measures addressing the root sources of the societal anxieties exploited by disinformation narratives. Consequently, the authors of the report wish to put forward the following recommendations:

1. First, public institution communication should focus to a greater extent on explaining the costs, risks, and trade-offs associated with decision-making processes. The analyzed narratives flourished most prominently where audiences received simplified, or close to no explanations of complex processes.

2. Second, measures aimed at countering disinformation should encompass the monitoring of not only isolated false reports, but also long-term interpretive frameworks operating within the information space. It was the narratives, rather than individual messages, that demonstrated the greatest permanence and capacity for reactivation in response to current events.
3. Third, greater attention must be dedicated to the phenomenon of “opportunistic disinformation”, which entails exploiting authentic crises and events to reinforce pre-existing messages. The analysis demonstrated that the most significant spikes in activity occurred not following the emergence of new narratives, but after the events that enabled the reactivation of already existing interpretive frameworks.
4. Fourth, initiatives aimed at increasing information resilience should be treated as a component of public policy that extends beyond the security sphere. Trust in institutions, the transparency of decision-making processes, the quality of public debate, and the state’s capacity to communicate difficult decisions become just as vital to information resilience as monitoring tools and counter-disinformation measures.

In the long term, the resilience of democratic societies will be determined not only by the capacity to identify false information but primarily by the ability to sustain the public conviction that political, economic, and security processes remain understandable, predictable, and subject to democratic control.

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Endnotes

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