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RUSSIAN – UKRAINIAN WAR AND ITS PRESENTATION IN LITHUANIAN MEDIA

The Lithuanian government regularly published official reports. The Cabinet initiated proposal in the end of March of extending the authorities powers «to restrict information that incites hatred and violence or contains war propaganda through certain amendments to the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public» [1]. During the period from March 23 to April 21, 2022, the Lithuanian regulator LRTK has banned the retransmission of 32 TV channels operated by Russia's Gazprom-Media. The most popular banned TV channels include NTV Mir, Pyatnitsa, TV3, TNT and Zee TV [2]. Great attention was also paid to Lithuanian citizens who, «for the past eight years, have been engaged in an ongoing battle against the Russian disinformation» that regularly fills Lithuanian online media, social and news portals [3]. Among the bartenders, doctors, students, businesspeople, the group's members number in the thousands, includes at least one member of the Lithuanian parliament. Together, «they are a serious part of a broader coalition across different levels of society» that have made Lithuania a leader in the information war against Russia (ibid.). According to the founder Ricardas Savukynas, they have got the whimsical name of «elves», «because elves fight trolls» [3]. Besides the information war against Russia, as President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky mentioned, «Lithuania was the first country that has come to help Ukraine» [4]. In line with Petro Beshta (ambassador of Ukraine in Lithuania), «Lithuania received Ukrainian citizens, now temporarily displaced persons, in an amount that corresponds to 1.8% of the total population» (Ukraine Media Center, 2022). According to the monitoring results it is more than 50,000 Ukrainians «who were forced to leave the country due to Russia's war against Ukraine» [5].

A notable interesting finding is that the war in Ukraine has stimulated Lithuanian citizens interest in serious news. For this reason, Synopticom (a market research company), carried out the survey of 569 Lithuanian citizens aged 18-60. The company had found the increased public interest in the topic of Russia's war in Ukraine, 34% of respondents had started spending more time on social networks, while 50% of the population has not changed the

amount of time spending on social networks. More than in week of May 18-30, 2022, 34% of respondents prefer to watch TV in real time-mode, social networks took the second position (26%) and news portals (23%). In the case of blogs by institutions or professionals, according to the market research company, it is approximately 5% of the population, word of mouth for 4%, radio for 3% and newspapers for 2%. Additionally, 49% of the respondents trust information about the war published on social networks, while 30% do not. The results of the research also show that 7 out of 10 respondents trust Lithuanian social media channels the most, at the same time 31% of users consider Ukrainian channels trustworthy. More than 24% of people consider channels from other EU countries trustworthy, 23% – channels from the US and 20% – channels from the UK. In addition to this, only 5% of respondents consider Russian social media channels trustworthy [6]. That is, one third of the Lithuanian citizens spend more time on social networks and are interesting in the up-to-date information.

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