

Strengthening the identity of the Baltic Sea Region borderlands **BUILDING COOPERATION FOR THE YOUTH**



FINAL REPORT



**BALTIC SEA
YOUTH**

STRENGTHENING THE IDENTITY
IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION



The report was prepared as part of the project
“Strengthening the identity of the Baltic Sea Region borderlands.
Building cooperation for the youth”
funded by the Council of the Baltic Sea States

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The aim of the project is to serve the development of international youth cooperation as a method of supporting regional identity, promoting acceptance and tolerance in the educational and academic environment, promoting democratic values among young people. The future of every project depends on the youth, hence an important goal of the project is to activate young people and develop their willingness to actively engage in political and social processes. The Baltic Sea Region plays a significant role in today's Europe as it is an area which is currently undergoing substantial social, economic, cultural, political and security changes related to European integration processes. Forms of cooperation developed in the Baltic Sea Region may become a model solution that can be applied also in other regions.

To begin with, we should define identity. There are many definitions and for example according to *Britannica Dictionary* identity is described as “the qualities, beliefs, etc., that make a particular person or group different from others”¹. In the current turbulent times, when Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022 and unleashed a full-scale war, before which 8 years ago Russia attacked Ukraine and in 2014 annexed Crimea, identity is very important in the field of security. In the background of these events, Russia is using information influence against the whole West – especially in the Baltic Sea region – trying to create a conflict between different identities, in particular by developing the theme of Russophobia in propaganda messages.

Therefore, identity is very important also from point of view of security and resistance to harmful disinformation, especially for young people, who are particularly susceptible to outside influence during the process of forming a worldview. It is very important to find the right mechanisms, countermeasures and means to protect them from hostile Russian propaganda.

¹The Britannica Dictionary. *Identity*. <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/identity> [accessed 29 Oct 2023].

Survey analysis of Baltic identity in the borderlands

The survey has been carried out in accordance with the principles of ethics in the conduct of scientific research. It respects the principles contained in the international documents of the “Declaration of Helsinki”, the “Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union”, the “Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine of the Council of Europe” and the relevant documents of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland in this regard.

Polish case

In 2023, from May 5 to June 30, a youth survey “Strengthening the Identity of the Baltic Sea Region Borderlands. Building Cooperation for Youth” was conducted.

SURVEY SAMPLE: 141 respondents (students and schoolchildren).

DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER: 84 men (60%) and 57 women (40%) took part in the survey.

THE AGE OF RESPONDENTS: between 17 and 30 years old.

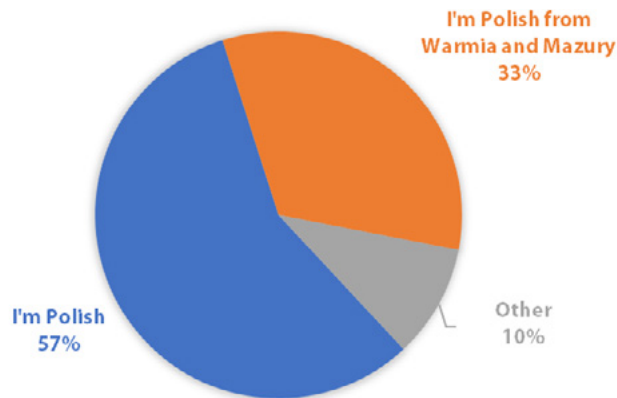
WAYS OF DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: the questionnaire was published on the electronic platform: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/162BpU2xWgE9n4O88d5SR3AXsOH5RkMeOyTtjm_tUwgs/edit?pli=1

PLACE OF RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS: The majority of respondents (37.6%) indicated that they live in a village, 22.7% respondents – in a city with 10 to 50 thousand inhabitants, 19.1% respondents – in a city with 100 to 200 thousand inhabitants, 7.8% respondents – a city with up to 10 thousand population, 6.4% respondents – in towns with 50 to 100 thousand inhabitants, and 6.4% respondents – in cities with more than 200 thousand inhabitants.

Answers (results)

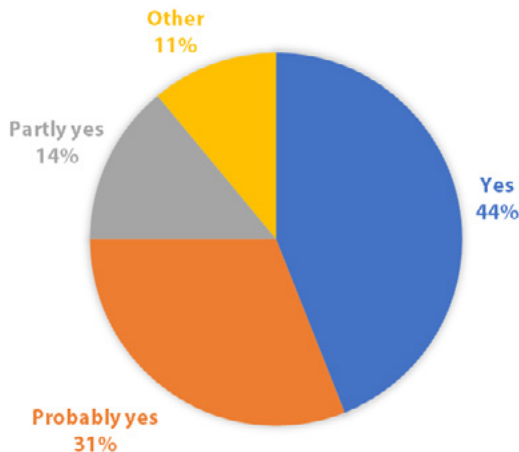
1. How would you describe your national/ethnic identity?

57% of respondents identified themselves as Polish, without any further specification. 33% identified as Polish from Warmia and Mazury Region.



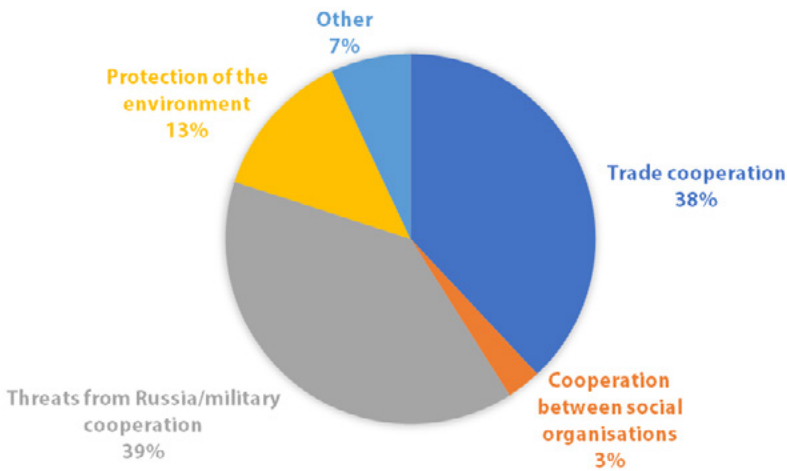
2. Do you feel connected to your place of residence?

The majority of respondents indicated connection with their place of residence – 44% answered “yes”, 31% “probably yes” and 14% “partly yes”.



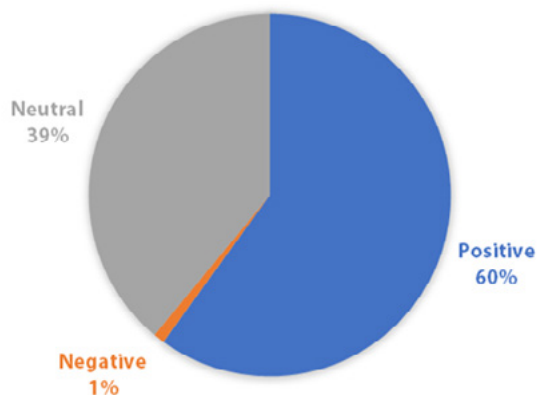
3. Which area of cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea basin is the most important in your opinion?

The respondents consider military threats from Russia and trade cooperation as the most important areas of cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea basin. Additionally, some respondents emphasized the importance of preserving the natural environment.



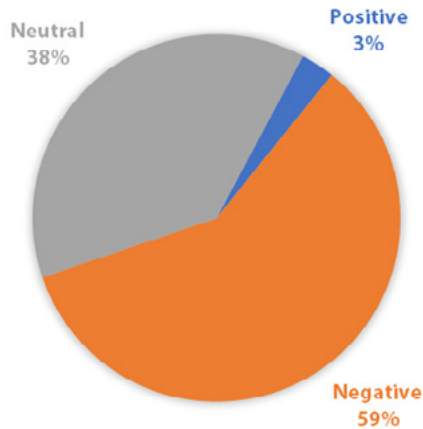
4. What is your attitude towards the societies of the countries of the Baltic Sea basin (except the Russian society)?

Most frequent answers were: „positive” (60%) and “neutral” (39%) and only 1% answered “negative”.



5. What is your attitude towards Russian society?

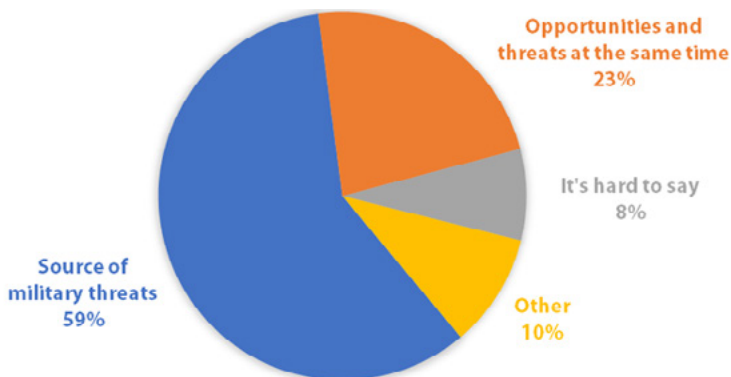
The majority (59%) answered that their attitude towards Russian society is negative, 38% answered that it is neutral and only 3% answered that it is positive.



6. In your opinion, the neighbourhood with Russia is above all:

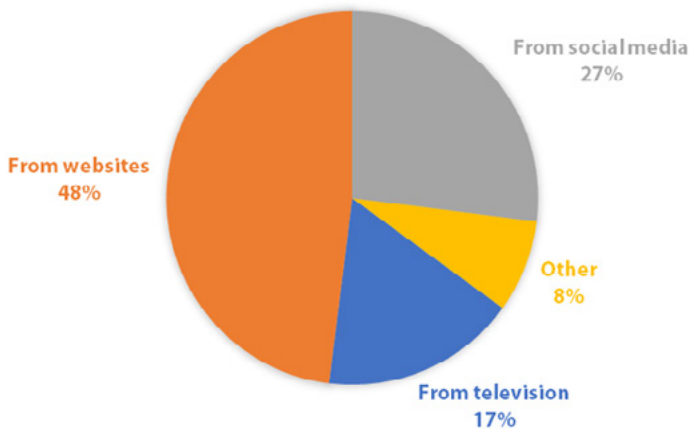
Among answers the two most popular were:

- Russia is a source of military threats – 59%;
- neighbourhood with Russia provides chances and threats at the same time – 23%.



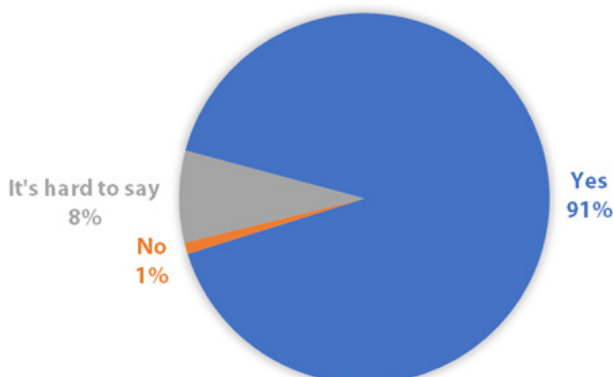
7. Where do you mainly get information about current social and political events from?

The most popular source of information was “websites” – 48%. Second most popular choice was “social media” – 27%. Only 17% students indicated that they get information from television. Newspapers and radio are used by a small number of respondents (8%).



8. Do you see the threats of fake news and disinformation in the contemporary world?

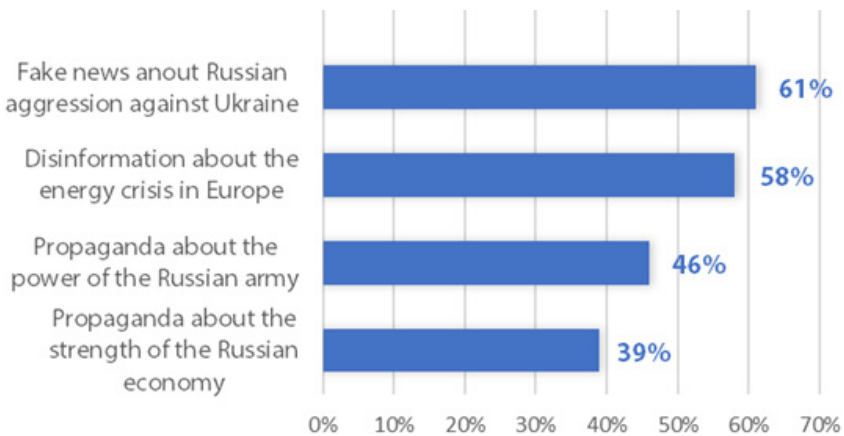
The overwhelming majority (91%) of respondents answered “yes” to the question and only 8% answered „it’s hard to say” and 1% „no”. The respondents see the threats of fake news and disinformation in the contemporary world.



9. What examples of Russian disinformation and fake news have you encountered?

The following issues were most often reported in the answers:

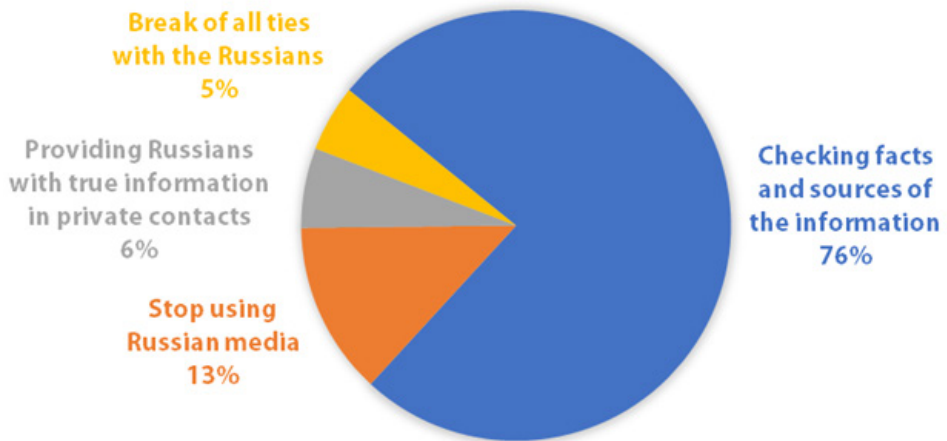
- propaganda about the power of the Russian army – seen by 61% of respondents;
- fake news about Russian aggression in Ukraine – seen by 58% of respondents;
- propaganda about the strength of the Russian economy – seen by 46% of respondents;
- disinformation about the energy crisis in Europe – seen by 39% of respondents.



10. What is the best way to combat Russian propaganda and fake news?

The most popular answers were:

- checking facts and sources of information – indicated by 76% of respondents;
- stop using Russian media – indicated by 13% of respondents.



Lithuanian case

In 2023, from April 23 to October 20, a youth survey “Strengthening the Identity of the Baltic Sea Region Borderlands. Building Cooperation for Youth” was conducted.

SURVEY SAMPLE: 211 respondents (students and schoolchildren)

DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER: 52 men (24.7%) and 159 women (75.3%) took part in the survey.

THE AGE OF RESPONDENTS: the average age was 27,4 years.

WAYS OF DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: the questionnaire was published on the electronic platform <https://www.manoap-klausas.lt/> and was distributed through previously collected e-mails of youth organizations and student groups of Klaipėda University; the survey was also conducted by submitting a paper questionnaire to students of Klaipėda University and students of Klaipėda schools. Data from the paper questionnaires was fed into the previously mentioned electronic platform.

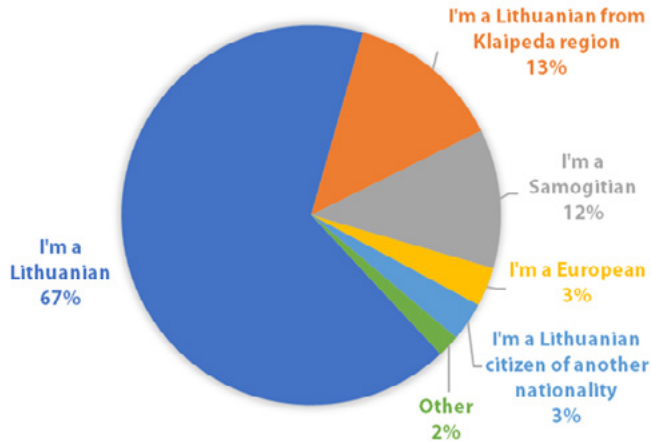
PLACE OF RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS: The majority of respondents (43.6%, N=92) indicated that they live in a city with 100 to 200 thousand inhabitants, 40 respondents (19%) indicated that they live in a city with 10 to 50 thousand inhabitants and 35 respondents (16.6%) indicated that they live in a village. 18 respondents (8.5%) live in a city with more than 200,000 inhabitants. The remaining respondents live in towns with 50 to 100 thousand inhabitants (4.3%, N=9) and cities with up to 10 thousand inhabitants (8%, N=17).

Answers (results)

1. How would you describe your national/ethnic identity?

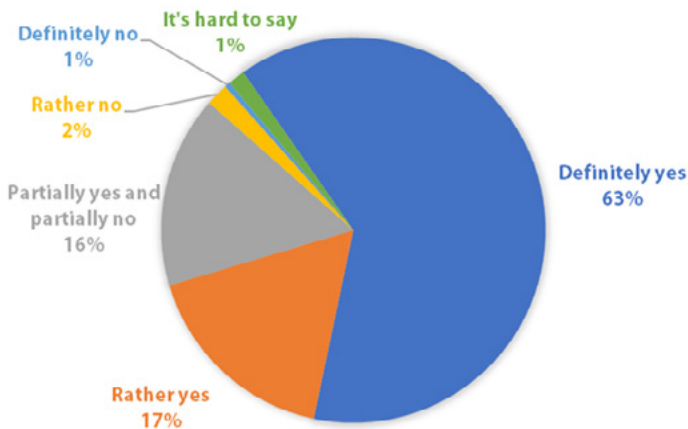
The largest number of respondents (67% – 140 answers) stated that they are Lithuanians, 28 respondents (13%) stated that they are Lithuanians from the Klaipėda Region, and 25 respondents (12%) stated that they are from Samogitia (*lith.* Žemaitija). A small number of respondents

identified themselves as Europeans – 7 said that they are Europeans, and 7 respondents noted that they are citizens of Lithuania, but of other nationalities. Only 4 respondents chose “other” – indicating that they are, for example: *Jewish, Aukštaitė, Kuršė*.



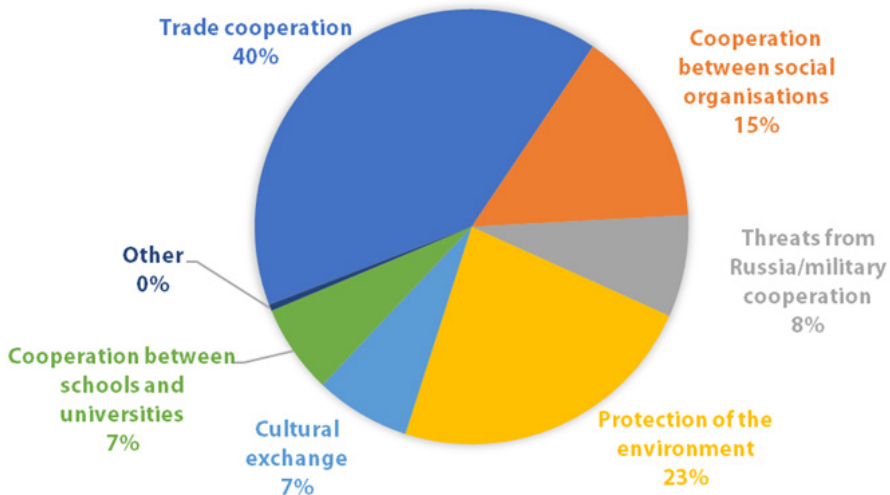
2. Do you feel connected to your place of residence?

The majority of survey respondents (63%, N=133) noted that they definitely feel a connection with their place of residence. “Rather yes” was answered by 36 respondents (17%), “partly yes” and “partly no” by 34 respondents (16%). A small number of respondents had doubts, did not know, or found it hard to say (total 4%, N=8).



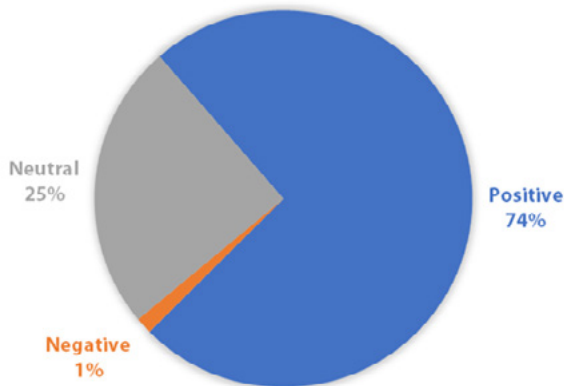
3. Which area of cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea basin is the most important in your opinion?

The survey results show that the majority of students and schoolchildren believe that the most important area of cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea basin is trade (85 respondents – 40%). 49 respondents believe that cooperation is important in the field of environmental protection, and another 31 respondents noted that it is important for social organizations to cooperate. Only 16 respondents noted that the Baltic Sea basin countries need to cooperate due to the threat of Russian/military cooperation. Cultural exchange also received few responses, as only 15 respondents chose this answer and 14 respondents believed that schools and universities should cooperate.



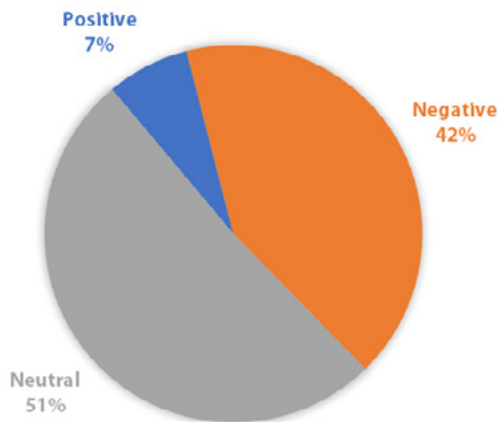
4. What is your attitude towards the societies of the countries of the Baltic Sea basin (except the Russian society)?

As many as 156 respondents (74%) indicated a positive view towards the societies of the Baltic Sea basin countries (except for Russian society). 52 respondents (25%) had a neutral attitude and only 3 had a negative attitude.



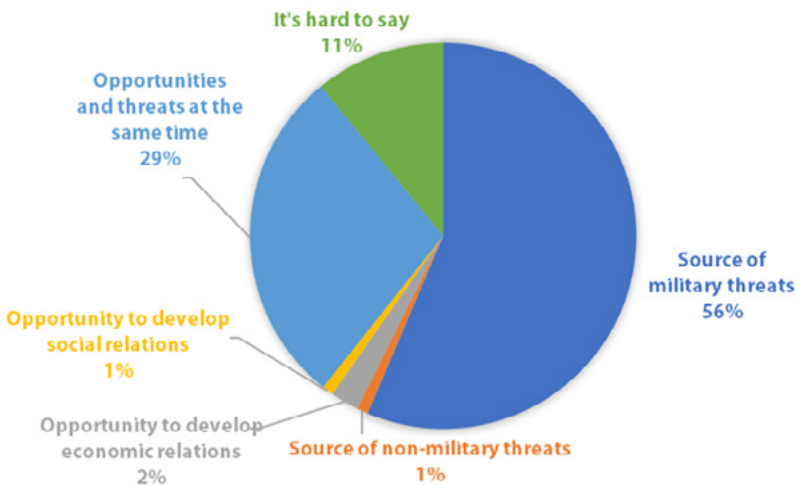
5. What is your attitude towards Russian society?

In response to this question, 108 respondents (51%) indicated that they have a neutral attitude, 88 respondents (42%) that they have a negative attitude and 15 respondents (7%) – a positive attitude.

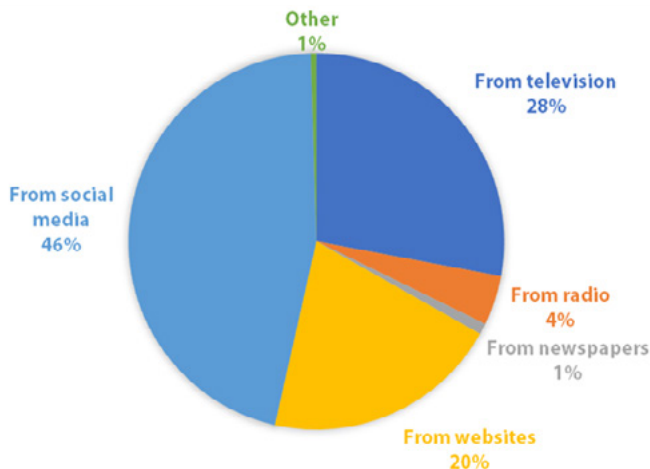


6. In your opinion, the neighbourhood with Russia is above all:

The largest number of respondents (56%, N=119) chose the answer that Russia is a source of military threats. However, it is interesting that almost 30% (60 respondents) saw both opportunities and threats in neighbourhood to Russia. Another 23 respondents found it hard to say.



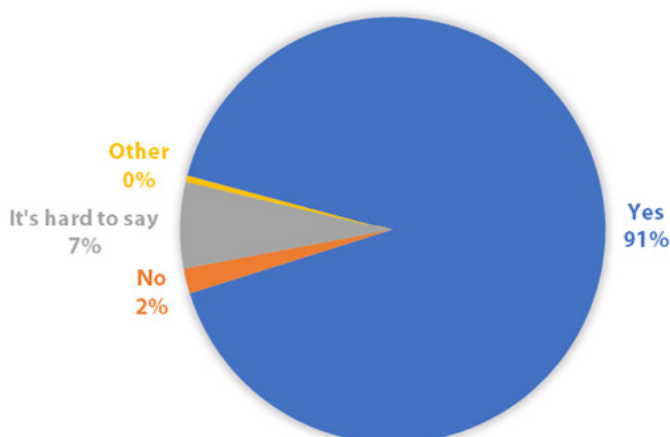
7. Where do you mainly get information about current social and political events from?



As the obtained results show, the main source of information for students and schoolchildren is social media – almost half of respondents (N=97) chose this answer. Another major source of information is television. This source of information about current social and political events was important to about a quarter of respondents (N=59). In third place are websites and this was indicated by 43 respondents. Radio and newspapers were favoured by a total of only 11 respondents (5%). The obtained results reflect similar trends that we found in the 2020–2021 survey on the political literacy of Klaipėda youth. The survey was conducted during the implementation of activities under the project “Klaipėda – European Youth Capital 2021” and most young people indicated that they get information about politics from TV news and shows, followed by social media and third by online portals².

8. Do you see the threats of fake news and disinformation in the contemporary world?

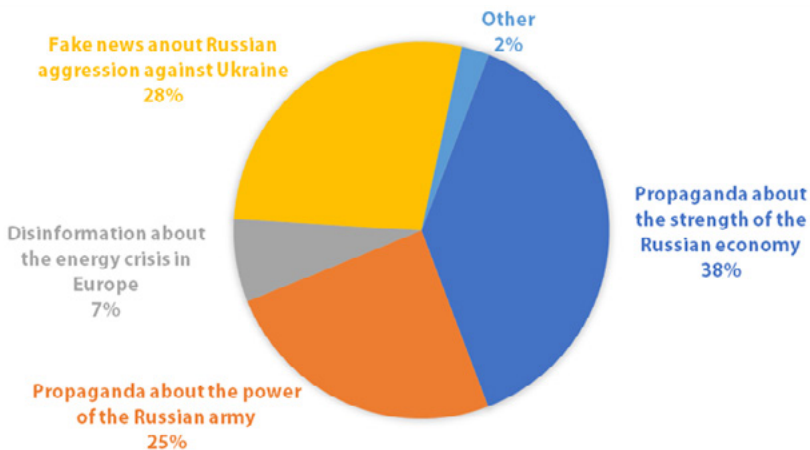
Survey respondents were asked if they see the threats of fake news and disinformation in today’s world. As we can see, 192 respondents (91%) indicated that “yes, they see”, 14 respondents (7%) indicated that “it is hard to say”, only 4 indicated that they do not see and only 1 respondent chose the answer “other” but did not elaborate what it is.



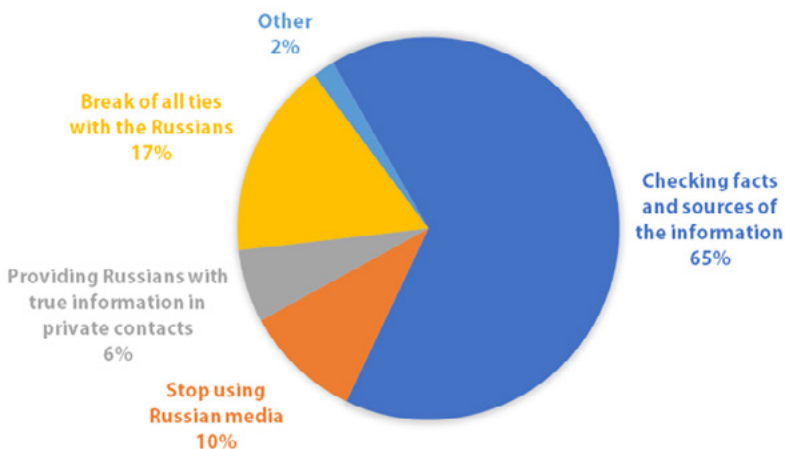
² See: *European Youth Capital*, <https://www.youthforum.org/topics/youthcapital>

9. What examples of Russian disinformation and fake news have you encountered?

Analysing the answers received, we can see that the majority of respondents (38%, N=81) believe that Russia presents propaganda about the strength of the Russian economy, further 58 respondents (28%) chose the answer that Russia publishes false news about Russian aggression against Ukraine, and 52 respondents answered that Russia publishes propaganda about the power of the Russian army.



10. What is the best way to combat Russian propaganda and fake news?



Over half of the respondents (N=138) believe that fact-checking and vetting information sources are the best way to combat Russian propaganda and fake news. 35 respondents thought that it is better to cut off all contacts with Russians, 21 respondents noted that it is necessary to stop using Russian media. Another 13 respondents indicated that it is necessary to provide real information to Russians through private channels. Those who responded with “other” did not elaborate on their choice.

Latvian case

In 2023, from the end of May to June, a youth survey “Strengthening the Identity of the Baltic Sea Region Borderlands. Building Cooperation for Youth” was conducted.

SURVEY SAMPLE: 139 respondents (students and schoolchildren).

DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER: 71% women and 29% men took part in the survey.

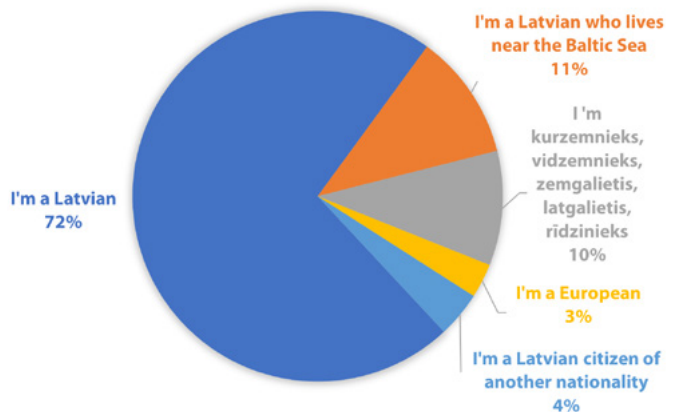
WAYS OF DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: via schools and universities.

PLACE OF RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS: the majority of respondents (46%) indicated that they live in a city with over 200 thousand inhabitants, 22% respondents – in a city with 10 to 50 thousand inhabitants and 16% respondents – in a village. 9% respondents live in a city with up to 10,000 inhabitants. 6% of respondents live in towns with 50 to 100 thousand inhabitants and 1% indicated that they live in a city with 100 to 200 thousand inhabitants.

Answers (results)

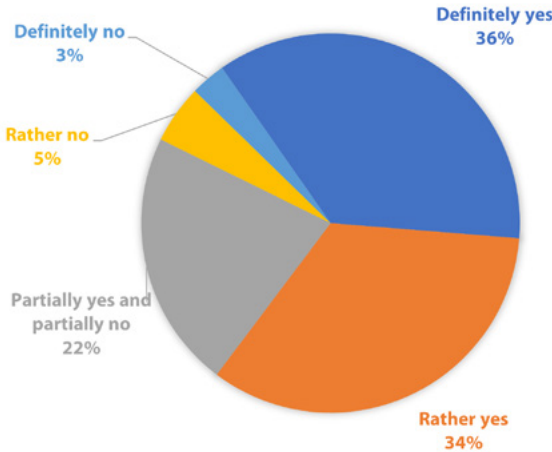
1. How would you describe your national/ethnic identity?

The majority of respondents identify themselves as Latvian (71.9%), with a significant portion also identifying as Latvians living near the Baltic Sea (11%). Additionally, a smaller percentage identifies with specific regional identities within Latvia.

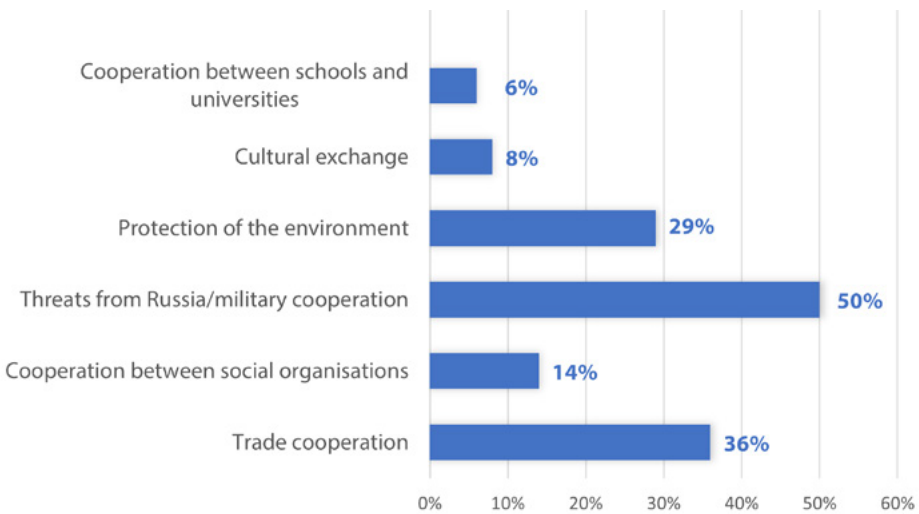


2. Do you feel connected to your place of residence?

Many respondents expressed a strong connection to their place of residence, with 70% indicating that they either definitely or rather feel connected. Conversely, a minority of respondents (8%) expressed that they either rather or definitely do not feel connected to their place of residence.

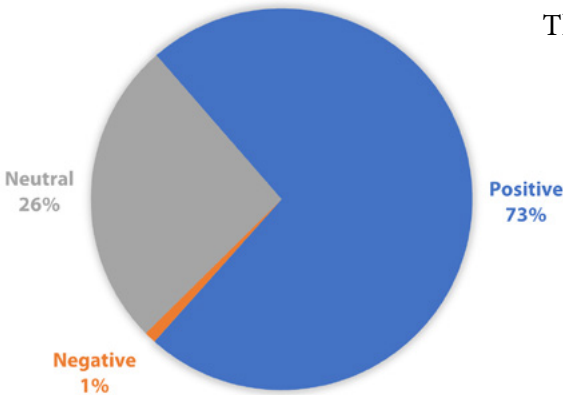


3. Which area of cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea basin is the most important in your opinion?



Considering the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the survey probed respondents about their perception of threats and the importance of cooperation between countries in the Baltic Sea basin. Notably, a significant portion (50%) highlighted “threats from Russia/military cooperation” as the most critical area of cooperation, underscoring palpable concerns about security and defence in the region. Furthermore, respondents recognized the importance of other forms of cooperation, with 29% emphasizing “protection of the environment”, 36% “trade cooperation”, 14% “cooperation between social organizations”, 8% “cultural exchange” and 6% “cooperation between schools and universities”.

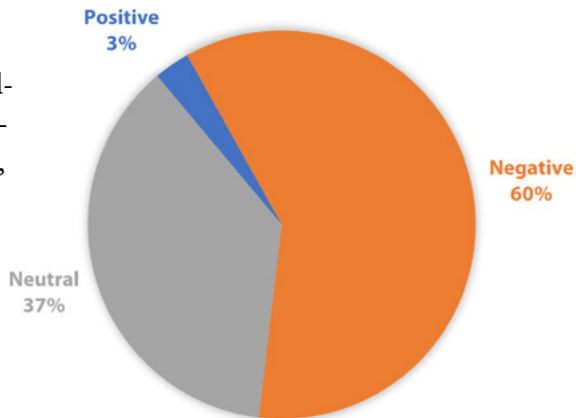
4. What is your attitude towards the societies of the countries of the Baltic Sea basin (except the Russian society)?



The majority of respondents have a positive attitude towards the societies of the countries in the Baltic Sea basin (excluding Russian society), with 73% indicating a positive view.

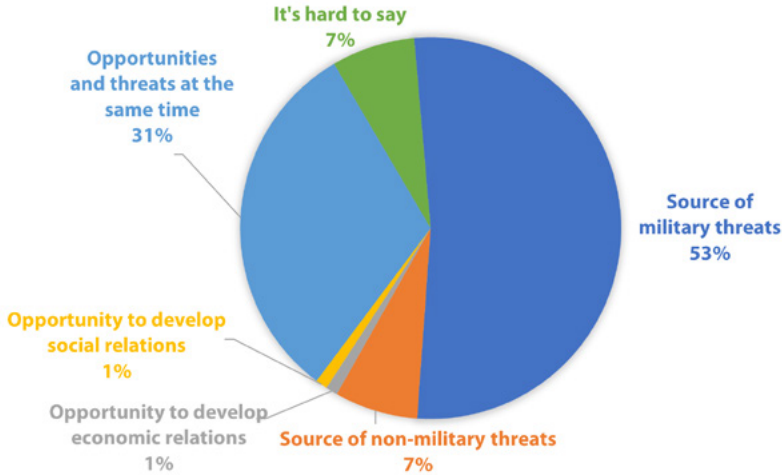
5. What is your attitude towards Russian society?

In contrast, a majority of respondents have a negative attitude towards Russian society (59.7%), with only a small percentage having a positive view (2.9%).



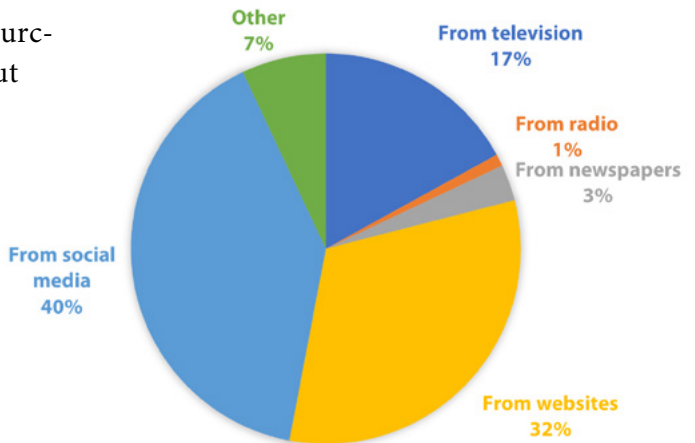
6. In your opinion, the neighbourhood with Russia is above all:

A significant percentage of respondents perceive the neighbourhood with Russia as a source of military threats (53%). 31% see opportunities and threats at the same time.



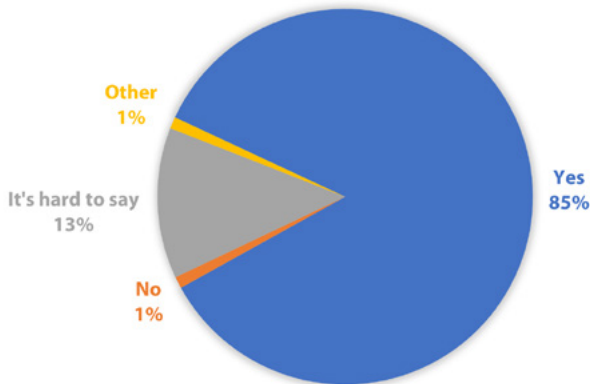
7. Where do you mainly get information about current social and political events from?

The most common sources of information about current social and political events are social media (40%) and websites (32%). Traditional media sources like television (23%) and newspapers (4%) are also used, but to a lesser extent.



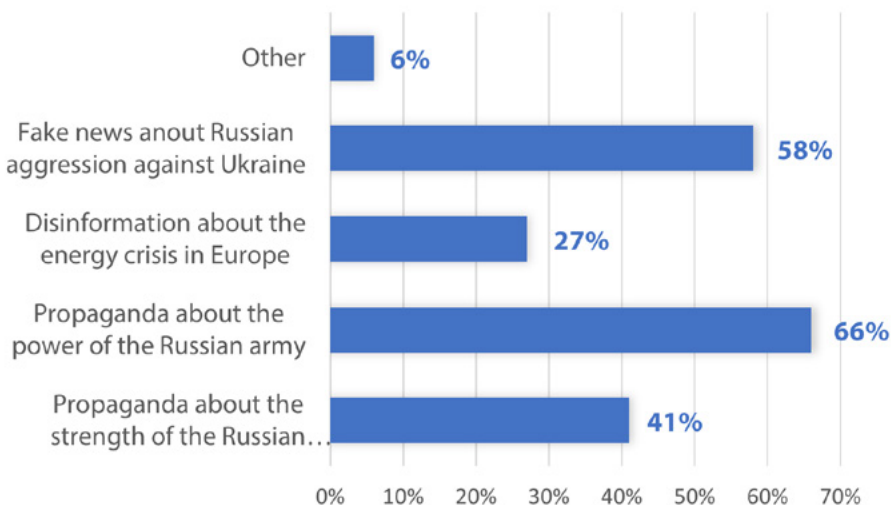
8. Do you see the threats of fake news and disinformation in the contemporary world?

The vast majority of respondents (85%) see the threats of fake news and disinformation in the contemporary world.



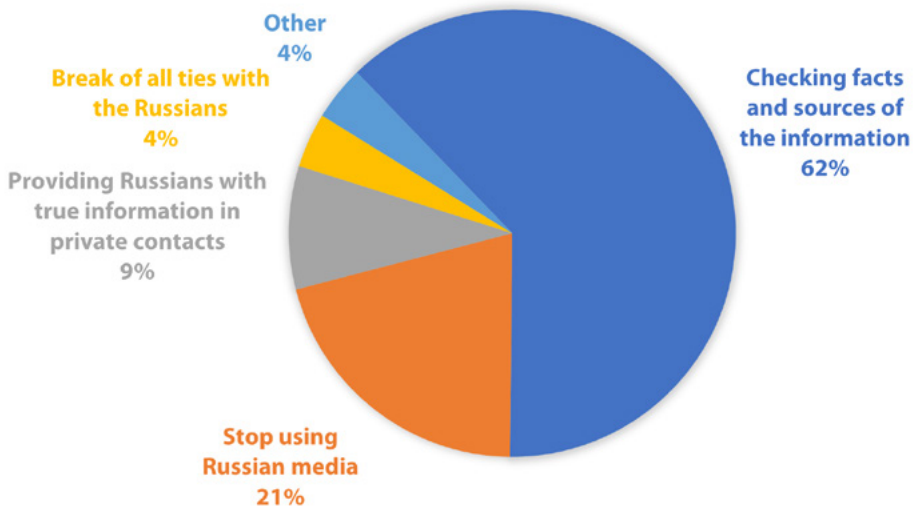
9. What examples of Russian disinformation and fake news have you encountered?

Respondents mentioned encountering Russian disinformation and fake news related to several topics, including Russian aggression in Ukraine, the Russian economy, social events, and COVID-19.



10. What is the best way to combat Russian propaganda and fake news?

When it comes to combating Russian propaganda and fake news, the survey revealed that most of Latvian youth respondents emphasize the importance of fact-checking and critically evaluating information sources as the most effective approach, with 62% supporting this method. Additionally, 21% suggest stopping the use of Russian media as a countermeasure, while 9% believe in providing Russians with accurate information through private contacts. Only 4%, advocate for breaking off all ties with Russian society as a means to address this issue.



Estonian case

In 2023, from October 1 to October 30, a youth survey “Strengthening the Identity of the Baltic Sea Region Borderlands. Building Cooperation for Youth” was conducted.

SURVEY SAMPLE: 272 respondents (students) from Estonian educational institution and students from different Estonian universities (BA, MA and PhD).

DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER: 52 men (31.9%) and 159 women (68.1%) took part in the survey.

THE AGE OF RESPONDENTS: is ca 17/18–30.

WAYS OF DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: the questionnaire was published on the electronic platform <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe9nsTOsV8EeGo-ETUouXdMdi4SOhJisO2MLkqAKYGFNwMc7g/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0&pli=1>

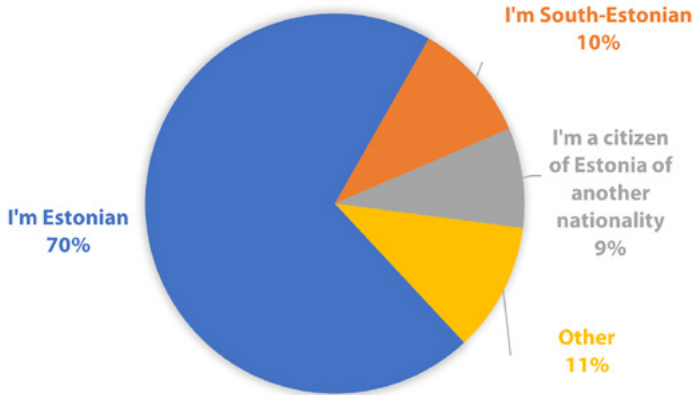
PLACE OF RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS: The majority of respondents (38.5%) indicated that they live in a city with 50 to 100 thousand inhabitants, 21.5% respondents indicated that they live in a city with more than 200,000 inhabitants, 20.4% respondents indicated that they live in a village, 12.2% respondents live in a city with 10 to 50 thousand inhabitants, 7.4% respondents live in cities with up to 10 thousand population.

Answers (results)

1. How would you describe your national/ethnic identity?

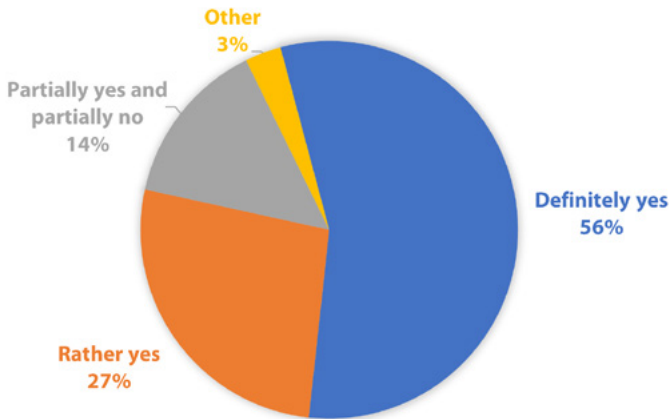
70.2% of respondents identified themselves as Estonians, without any further specification. 10.3% identified themselves as South-Estonians (*lõuna-estlane*). 8.5% identified themselves as Estonian citizen of another nationality. Only few percent of respondents identified themselves

as Europeans, as North-Estonians, and as Estonians from two biggest islands (Saaremaa and Hiiumaa). Few percent of respondents identified themselves as persons who originated from Russia, but who are living in Estonia.



2. Do you feel connected to your place of residence?

The majority of respondents feels connection with their place of residence: 55.9% answered “Definitely yes” and 26.7% “Rather yes”. Third biggest number of respondents (14.3%) answered “Partially yes and partially no”. Other answers (Rather no; Definitely no; It’s hard to say) got only few percent.

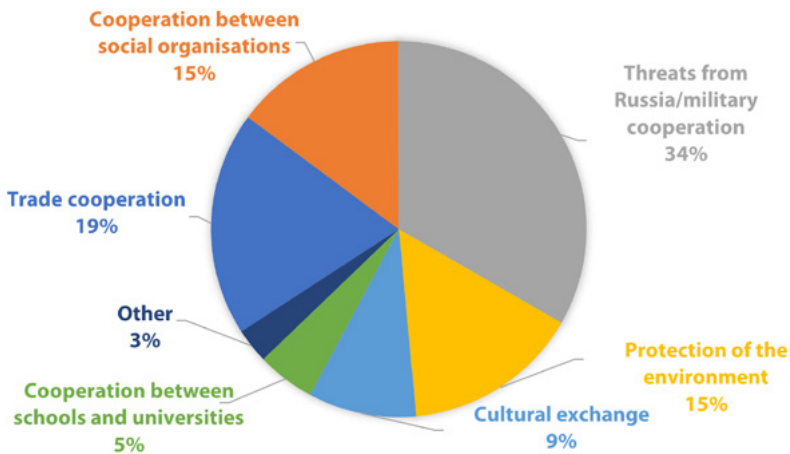


3. Which area of cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea basin is the most important in your opinion?

Most popular answers about cooperation in Baltic Sea region were:

- Threats from Russia/military cooperation – 33.3%
- Trade cooperation – 19.3%
- Protection of the environment – 15.2%
- 14.8% of respondents chose cooperation between social organisations and 9.3% cultural exchange.

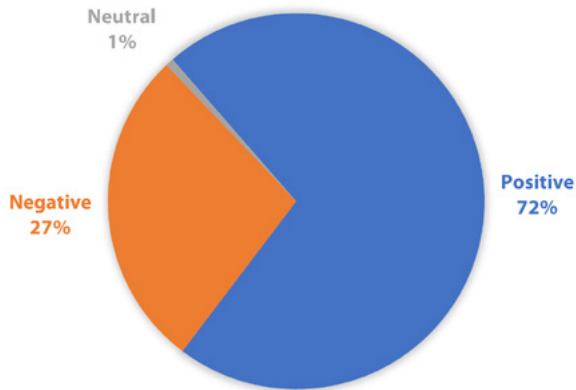
Interestingly, following areas: cooperation between schools and uni-



versities, and domestic security only got few answers, and cooperation between schools and universities was much more popular than domestic security.

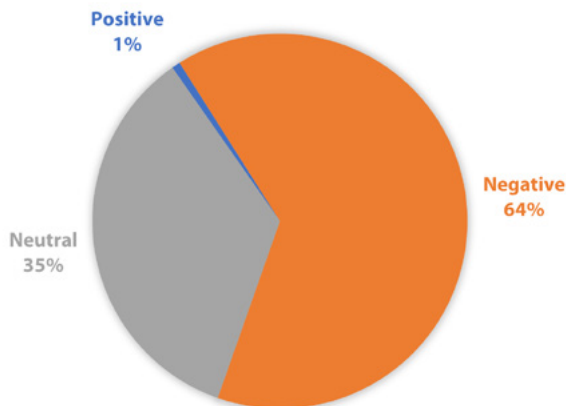
4. What is your attitude towards the societies of the countries of the Baltic Sea basin (except the Russian society)?

Most respondents feel positive about societies of the countries of the Baltic Sea basin (71.7%). Answer “neutral” was chosen by 27.6% and only 0.7% had negative attitude.



5. What is your attitude towards Russian society?

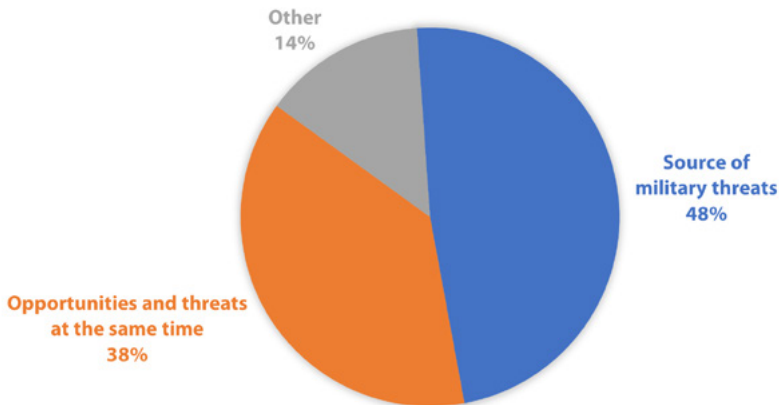
The majority (64%) answered that their attitude towards Russian society is negative, 35% answered that they are neutral and only 1% answered that their attitude towards Russian society is positive.



6. In your opinion, the neighbourhood with Russia is above all:

Among answers two most popular were:

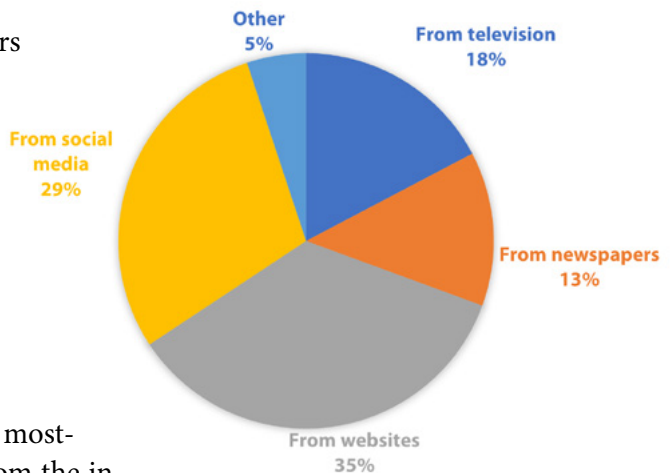
- Russia is a source of military threats – 48.2%,
- Russia provides opportunities and threats at the same time – 37.9%.



7. Where do you mainly get information about current social and political events from?

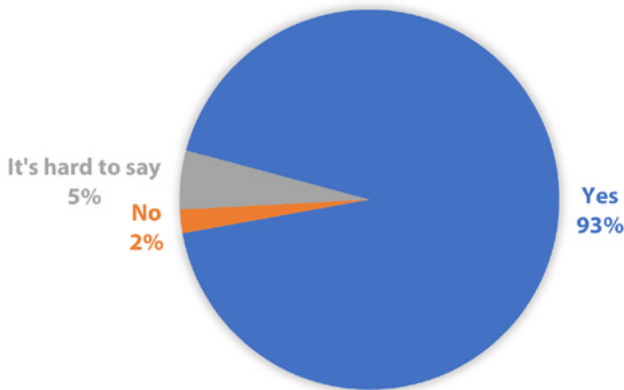
The most popular answers were websites – 35.1% and social media – 29.2%. Only 17.3% of respondents get their information from television, and 13.3% from newspapers. Radio was chosen by only a few percent of respondents.

As we can see students mostly get their information from the internet (websites and social media) – 64.3%.

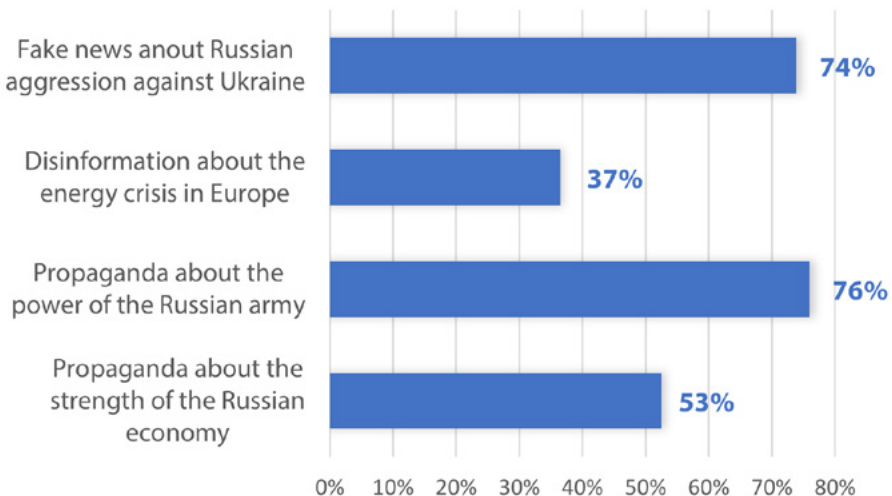


8. Do you see the threats of fake news and disinformation in the contemporary world?

93% of respondents answered “yes”. These 93% see the threats of fake news and disinformation in the contemporary world.



9. What examples of Russian disinformation and fake news have you encountered?



Following issues were most popular in the answers of respondents:

- Propaganda about the power of the Russian army – as issue is seen by 76% of respondents;

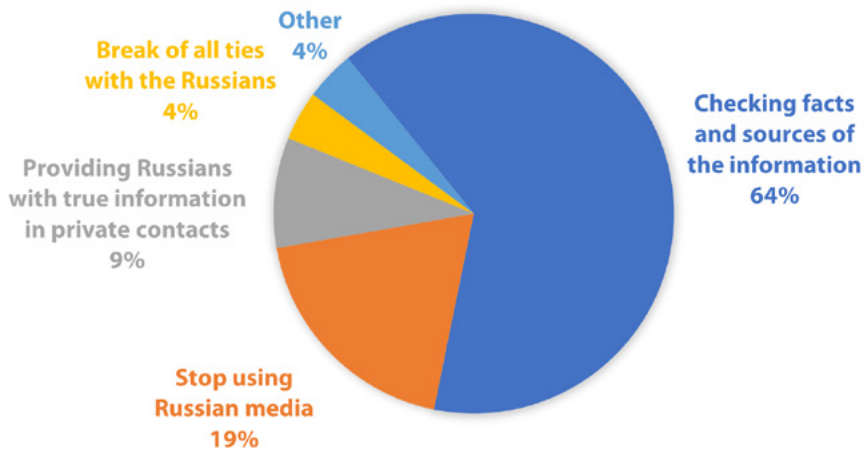
- Fake news about Russian aggression against Ukraine – 73.8% of respondents;
- Propaganda about the strength of the Russian economy – 52.5% of respondents;
- Disinformation about the energy crisis in Europe – 36.5% of respondents.

10. What is the best way to combat Russian propaganda and fake news?

The most popular answers were:

- Checking facts and sources of information – 63.9%;
- Stop using Russian media – 19%;
- Providing Russians with true information in private contacts – 8.9%;

Break off all ties with the Russians was fourth by popularity, however it was chosen by only few percent of answers.



Preliminary data summary

1. How would you describe your national/ethnic identity?

The majority of survey respondents feel mainly their national/state identity. The main answers in the for surveyed groups were: I'm Polish 57%; I'm Lithuanian 67%; I'm Latvian 72%; I'm Estonian 70.2%

2. Do you feel connected to your place of residence?

The most popular answers in all countries (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) were: „definitely yes” and „rather yes”.

3. Which area of cooperation between the countries of the Baltic Sea basin is the most important in your opinion?

Among presented answers, two most popular in Poland and Estonia were: „threats from Russia/military cooperation” and „trade cooperation”. Two most popular in Lithuania and Latvia were: „trade cooperation” and „protection of the environment”.

4. What is your attitude towards the societies of the countries of the Baltic Sea basin (except the Russian society)?

In all countries the majority of answers are: „positive”, followed by „neutral”.

5. What is your attitude towards Russian society?

The main answer in Poland, Latvia and Estonia is: „negative”, but in Lithuania: „neutral”.

6. In your opinion, the neighbourhood with Russia is above all.

The main answer in all countries is: „source of military threats” and then „opportunities and threats at the same time”.

7. Where do you mainly get information about current social and political events from?

The main answers in Poland and Estonia were: „from websites” and „from social media”, in Latvia: „from social media” and „from websites”, and in Lithuania: „from social media” and „from television”.

8. Do you see the threats of fake news and disinformation in the contemporary world?

The main answer in all countries was: „yes”.

9. What examples of Russian disinformation and fake news have you encountered?

The main answer in Poland, Latvia, Estonia was: „propaganda about the power of the Russian army”, and in Lithuania was: „propaganda about the strength of the Russian economy”.

10. What is the best way to combat Russian propaganda and fake news?

The most popular answer in all countries was: „checking facts and sources of information”.

Results summary

Our research involved 763 people in four countries. The survey provides valuable insights into the attitudes and perceptions of the youth in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and sheds light on their identity, sense of security, and media consumption habits. Throughout the survey process, ethical considerations and informed consent were ensured to uphold research integrity and respect for participants.

In summary, it can be said that the majority of respondents who took part in the survey identify themselves with the nation because they feel a strong connection with their place of residence. Most of the respondents believe that trade cooperation, protection of the environment and

military threats from Russia are important for the cooperation of the Baltic countries. These varied responses indicate that Baltic youth is attuned to the multifaceted nature of international relations and understand that security concerns extend beyond military threats alone.

The survey also delved into the attitudes of Baltic youth toward Russia and Russian society. Notably, most of the respondents expressed positive feelings toward societies in countries around the Baltic Sea. However, when it came to Russian society, a significant majority had a negative view. These contrasting attitudes toward Russian society are probably influenced by Russia's role in the ongoing war in Ukraine, its strategic narratives, and historical factors. The narratives disseminated by Russia often depict neighbouring countries as Western puppets or as hostile entities, contributing to the negative perceptions seen in the survey.

The survey respondents perceive the neighbourhood with Russia primarily as a source of military threats, and then as a source of both opportunities and threats. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that for the last 20 years Putin's Russia has been pursuing an aggressive foreign policy, among other things having attacked Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014 and again in 2022, when Moscow unleashed a large-scale war.

In the age of information warfare, understanding where Baltic youth get their news is crucial. The survey found that they primarily obtain information about social and political events from websites and social media, highlighting the paramount role of the digital realm in shaping public perceptions. Television was the second most used medium only in Lithuania, while newspapers and radio were the least used media in all countries. Furthermore, the survey revealed a high level of awareness regarding the threats of fake news and disinformation, with an overwhelming of respondents recognizing these threats. This demonstrates the vigilance of youth in the face of information manipulation and underscores the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in navigating the modern information landscape.

The Baltic youth also indicated that they see the threats of fake news and disinformation and often encounter Russian disinformation and propaganda about the strength of the Russian economy, the power of the Russian army, and Russian aggression against Ukraine. During the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the youth actively engage in

discussions concerning Russia's strategic narratives and influence operations. In general, the respondents agree that the most important tool in the fight against disinformation is the verification of facts and sources of information.

These findings indicate that Baltic youth is actively engaged in seeking reliable information and is cognizant of the need to scrutinize content in the face of disinformation, reflecting a proactive stance in the ongoing information battle. Overall, the survey offers a snapshot of how Baltic youth is vigilant and attuned to security concerns, and takes initiative in seeking reliable information in an era of digital misinformation.

In terms of future actions and strategies, several initiatives are recommended based on the survey's findings, including community building, promoting regional identity, enhancing information literacy, combating disinformation, and conducting continuous research. Understanding these perceptions and responses will be crucial for policymakers and researchers as the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve. Baltic youth is navigating a complex and dynamic environment, demonstrating vigilance and diversity in their identities while seeking reliable information in the digital age of misinformation. The continuation of this survey is of paramount significance to capture real-time changes in youth perspectives and inform policies that address challenges posed by Russia's influence operations.

Preliminary recommendations

There are three areas of recommendation:

- 1) **Raising awareness:** of existing threats in the area of information and disinformation, and of other threats emerging from traditional and social media, including by monitoring and exposing disinformation incidents, their sources, methods and ways of conducting them; identifying and diagnosing attempts to influence social divisions, election results and opportunities to counter propaganda and disinformation; raising awareness of common political, military, economic and environmental threats to the Baltic States.

2) **Skills development:** on social resilience to disinformation, by developing competences on how to recognise and respond appropriately to false information. It is crucial to educate young people on how to recognise disinformation and assess its impact, to strengthen their resilience to false content, and to promote the need to verify sources of knowledge and obtain data. Moreover, it's recommended to further activate young people, develop their competences in recognising and responding appropriately to misinformation, develop further solutions for strengthening resilience to false content.

3) **Cooperation:** through joint monitoring of the information environment, to identify threats but also emerging opportunities. Further building international partnerships among young people and deepening cooperation between project partners (Poland-Lithuania-Latvia-Estonia), and consequently strengthening Baltic cooperation. The undertaken activities provide space for comprehensive and complementary introduction of effective solutions for youth activation and participation (e.g. establishment of Baltic youth organisations/associations dealing with the above-mentioned issues) which in the long term serve for co-creation of Baltic identity.

Central, regional, and local governments in the Baltic Sea states should play a significant role in the above issues. They should:

- encourage independent, professional journalism/mass media to monitor disinformation;
- support research on misinformation and disinformation;
- collaborate with mass media, civil society organisations and fact-checkers in their combat against fake news and disinformation;
- build regional and international platforms of cooperation to counter fake news and disinformation.