



**Pekka Kallioniemi** @P\_Kallioniemi

Feb 13, 2025 · 25 tweets · [P\\_Kallioniemi/status/1889982759499698374](#)

In today's Vatnik Soup, I'm going to talk about Europe's information defense against foreign influence operations & disinformation.

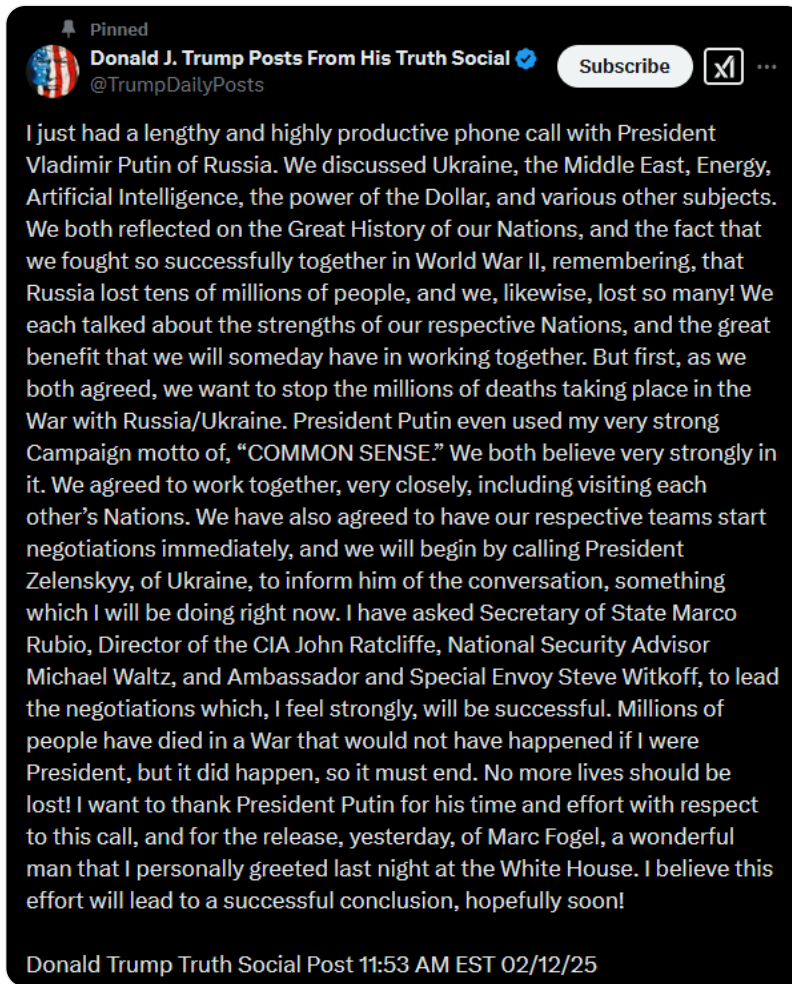
The EU can't rely anymore on America's help in geopolitical struggles, and it's time we created a united front against information threats.

1/24



Recent news coming from the US should be the final wake-up call for European decision-makers. Recently, Trump's rhetoric has been openly pro-Kremlin and both anti-Ukraine & anti-EU, and at the same time the US is dismantling all institutions fighting against disinformation.

2/24



So far, the Trump administration has put staffers working on disinformation as well as a team of election security advisers at the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) on administrative leave.

NATIONAL SECURITY

## Efforts to fight foreign influence and protect elections in question under Trump

FEBRUARY 11, 2025 · 7:47 PM ET



Jenna McLaughlin



A man exits a voting booth at a polling station in Lancaster, N.H., on Election Day, Nov. 5.  
Joseph Prezioso/AFP via Getty Images

In addition, the FBI task force to combat foreign influence campaigns in US politics by Russia, China and other countries was dismantled. The Trump administration also disbanded a task force focusing on enforcing sanctions and targeting oligarchs close to the Kremlin.

# Pam Bondi ends FBI effort to combat foreign influence in U.S. politics

The order also curbs prosecutions of Americans who improperly lobby for foreign nations. President Donald Trump says Republicans were unfairly targeted in the past.



— Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas swears in Pam Bondi as attorney general alongside her partner, John Wakefield, and mother, Patsy Bondi, in the Oval Office of the White House on Wednesday. Andrew Harnik / Getty Images



Feb. 7, 2025, 1:51 AM GMT+2

By Ken Dilanian

## Trump administration disbands task force targeting Russian oligarchs

By Andrew Goudsward

February 7, 2025 12:09 AM GMT+2 · Updated 6 days ago



The seal of the U.S. Justice Department is seen on the podium in the Department's headquarters briefing room before a news conference with the Attorney General in Washington, January 24, 2023. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque/File Photo [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)

To make things worse, Trump's cabinet nominations, especially Tulsi Gabbard and Kash Patel, should sound alarm bells and questions whether the EU should be sharing intelligence with the US any longer.

We need to protect our own information space.

**Trump administration**

## Tulsi Gabbard confirmed as intelligence head despite fears of pro-Russia stance

Senate approves nomination of former Democrat as Mitch McConnell is sole Republican to vote against Trump pick

● [Tracking Trump cabinet confirmations - so far](#)

**Léonie Chao-Fong** in  
*Washington*

Wed 12 Feb 2025 17:53 CET

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📷 Tulsi Gabbard testifies during her Senate confirmation hearing last month. Photograph: Nathan Howard/Reuters

## Kash Patel was paid by Russian filmmaker with Kremlin ties, documents show

Patel, Trump's nominee to be FBI director, was paid \$25,000 last year by a film company that has promoted anti-Western views advanced by the Kremlin, documents show.

February 7, 2025

🔗 10 min ↗ 📌 🗨



Kash Patel appears Jan. 30 before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on his nomination to be FBI director. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

By Greg Miller, Jon Swaine, Catherine Belton, Mark Berman and Derek Hawkins

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Today, the EU's main adversary in the information war is, of course, Russia. The Kremlin has been waging this war against the West at least since 2013, and since then, the EU has been outsmarted and outresourced by it. In other words, they've won, and we've lost.

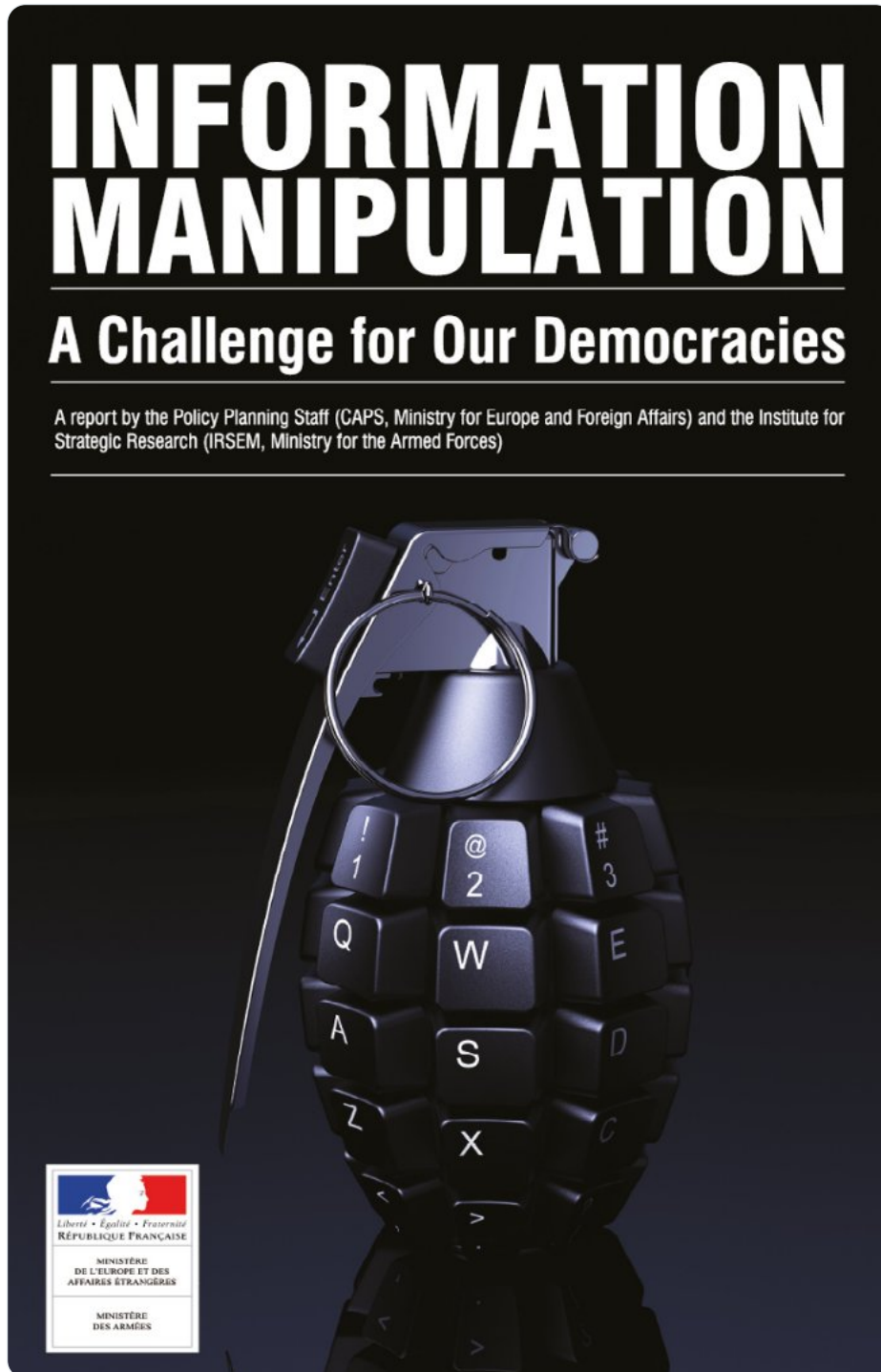
6/24

### The Firehose of Falsehood: the Russian style of propaganda for an age of information abundance.

- High volume and multi-channel approach
- Shameless in its willingness to broadcast lies
- No commitment to, or requirement for consistency
- Rapid, continuous and repetitive messaging
- Point is not to persuade but to confuse and overwhelm
- Assumes a low trust environment *and lowers it further*
- Number of arguments matters more than their quality
- Drown out competing messages through sheer volume

Russia's scope alone on these operations is staggering - according to Jeangène Vilmer et al. (2018), Russia was responsible for 80% of "information aggression" in Europe. At the same time, it's a war of asymmetry: they lie, and we desperately try to debunk their bullshit.


7/24



The Kremlin spends around 2 billion EUR annually on national mass media, and it is estimated that they spend much more on malign influence operations & disinformation abroad. Russia is a disinformation superpower and one of the few nations that truly understand its power.






The  Moscow Times  
RUSSIAN SERVICE

NEWS OPINIONS SOCIETY ECONOMICS VIDEO PHOTO PODCASTS DISTRIBUTION SELECTION OF EDITORIAL

## 2.6 billion rubles a week. Russia will increase spending on state propaganda to a new historical record

07.10.2024 Updated: 07.10.2024      





And the EU? It's very difficult to estimate how much is spent on fighting disinformation in the EU, since each country has their own efforts to counter it. In addition to these spendings, the EU spends roughly 25 million EUR annually on EU-wide projects.

9/24

**European Commission** • This article is more than 6 years old

## EU raises funds to fight 'disinformation war' with Russia

European commission to help member states recognise work of Kremlin 'troll factories'

**Daniel Boffey in Brussels**  
Wed 5 Dec 2018 15.51 CET

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Andrus Ansip, left, and Vera Jourova hold a press conference in Brussels to announce measures to counter the Kremlin's disinformation threat. Photograph: Geert Vanden Wijngaert/AP

The EU has launched a “war against disinformation” spread by the Kremlin in an attempt to protect next year’s European parliament elections.

Just going by these numbers it is very easy to see that we are being overwhelmed by Russia and our efforts against their massive campaigns seem almost futile. The EU simply doesn't have the volume or the resources to fight against all this.

10/24

## AI-driven Russian disinformation campaign targets German elections

Disinformation tactics similar to those used against the United States have been deployed, including using African media outlets for credibility and AI-generated testimonies in influence operations.



05 February 2025, Hamburg: Annalena Baerbock (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), Foreign Minister, speaks at a panel discussion at the Spobis industry conference at the CCH (Congress Center Hamburg). [Photo: Christian Charisius/dpa (Photo by Christian Charisius/picture alliance via Getty Images)]

Xhoi Zajmi | Euractiv's Advocacy Lab | Feb 5, 2025 | 22:29 | 3 min. read  
Content type: Underwritten | Euractiv is part of the Trust Project

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Fighting online disinformation is extremely challenging, as even when one discovers these networks and exposes them, they usually just continue business as usual, adapt and change strategies and often even grow to become much bigger than before.

NEWS > TECHNOLOGY

## TikTok removed 3 influence campaigns during Romania's elections

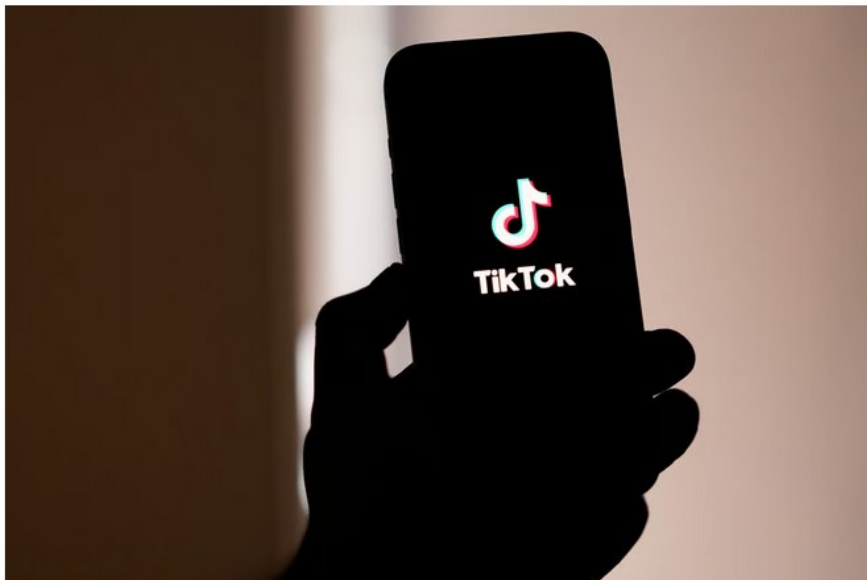
Social media firm faces questioning by European Parliament lawmakers over networks that aided Romanian far-right win.

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POLITICO PRO

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The networks were "very, very small networks" launched out of Romania, targeting a Romanian audience, said Brie Pegum, TikTok's global head of product for authenticity and transparency. | Asanka Ratnayake/Getty Images

DECEMBER 3, 2024 12:29 PM CET

BY PIETER HAECK



IMAGE: META, PONO LOPEZ

Daryna Antoniuk  
September 27th, 2022

Government  
Nation-state News

### Meta takes down hundreds of fake accounts linked to China and Russia

Social media giant Meta removed disinformation networks consisting of hundreds of fake accounts linked to Russia and China that targeted users in Europe, Ukraine and the U.S., the company said Tuesday.



The Chinese and Russian networks recently discovered by Meta were unrelated, but their narratives overlapped in their criticism of the West — focusing in particular on sanctions against Russia and support of Ukraine, the researchers said.

For example, the famous Russian operation “Doppelgänger” has resurfaced and is currently creating massive disinformation campaigns around the German elections. So-called “social media superspreaders”, including Tim Pool, Benny Johnson and Dave Rubin, from the...

Europe > My Europe Series > EuroVerify

# Russia's disinformation operations resurface ahead of German election



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By [Mared Gwyn Jones](#)

Published on 22/01/2025 - 9:12 GMT+1



Carsten Reisinger/Shutterstock @watchTENET/YouTube (Licensed)

## Media start-up from Benny Johnson, Tim Pool, and Dave Rubin was secret Russian influence campaign, indictment alleges

Famous pro-Trump commentators may have been unwittingly duped.



David Covucci

Tech

Posted on Sep 4, 2024 Updated on Sep 4, 2024, 6:01 pm CDT

...Tenet Media case have grown their social media presence on all platforms massively despite having been exposed to be paid by the Kremlin. In the current information space, being exposed as a liar and cheat is actually GOOD for you and just gives you even more exposure.

13/24

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And that's not all! In the most strangest turn of events, we are now also fighting against American bullshit over the ownership of Greenland and "annexation" of Canada. In addition, the MAGA network has been spreading Moscow's narratives for years now.

14/24

LATEST NEWS UKRAINE

## Danish Intelligence: Russia forged letter to spark Trump's Greenland purchase bid

A Russian disinformation operation involving a forged diplomatic letter may have triggered Donald Trump's ongoing interest in purchasing Greenland, revealing Moscow's strategy to create divisions within NATO's Arctic presence.

BY OLENA MUKHINA · 13/01/2025 · 2 MINUTE READ



Greenland, an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark. Credit: UkrInform



## Trudeau warns Trump's talk of making Canada 51st state is 'real': Report

'I suggest that not only does the Trump Administration know how many critical minerals we have but that may be even why they keep talking about absorbing us and making us the 51st state,' says Canadian premier

Merve Aydogan | 07.02.2025 - Update : 08.02.2025



### World

Medvedev says US-Russia talks 'very important' after year silence

Schools close, flights canceled as Tropical Cyclone Zella to hit Western Australia

So, what can be done? In the short-term, the EU can focus on a few things: putting resources in pre-bunking (exposing campaigns before they take place), exposing influence networks, or censorship. Many EU countries don't have the cognitive resilience to fight these threats,...

15/24

# Debunking misinformation failed. Welcome to 'pre-bunking'

Election officials around the world are adopting "prebunking" campaigns, as AI and other threats jeopardize voting.

May 26, 2024

9 min



(Washington Post illustration; iStock)

By Cat Zakrzewski, Joseph Menn, Naomi Nix and Will Oremus

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...and even the opportunity of temporarily closing down social media sites during elections should be discussed. This should be the last resort & the EU would get harshly criticized for this, but for example the US was ready to shut down TikTok due to security concerns.

## TikTok shuts down in the United States hours ahead of a ban



By Aaron Pellish and Brian Stelter, CNN

6 minute read · Updated 7:12 AM EST, Sun January 19, 2025



The power of social media over elections and politics shouldn't be underestimated. Even America's VP, JD Vance, suggested that US support for NATO could be withdrawn if the EU tries to regulate Elon's X. The US wants to maintain its influence over the EU.

POLITICS

## JD Vance suggested the US's support for NATO could be pulled if Europe tries to regulate Elon Musk's X as free speech debate rumbles on

Rebecca Rommen Sep 21, 2024, 9:24 PM EEST

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Vance made the comments on the "Shawn Ryan Show." Chip Somodevilla

- JD Vance suggested the US may reconsider NATO support if the EU tries to regulate Elon Musk's X.
- Vance seemed to reference a letter from Thierry Breton to Musk.
- Vance made the comments during an appearance on the "Shawn Ryan Show."

Pre-bunking (which Vatnik Soup essentially is) has been shown to be an effective way of fighting online bullshit, but the problem with this is the limited scope - these reports reach only a small portion of the population as they're mostly shared by outlets with no reach.

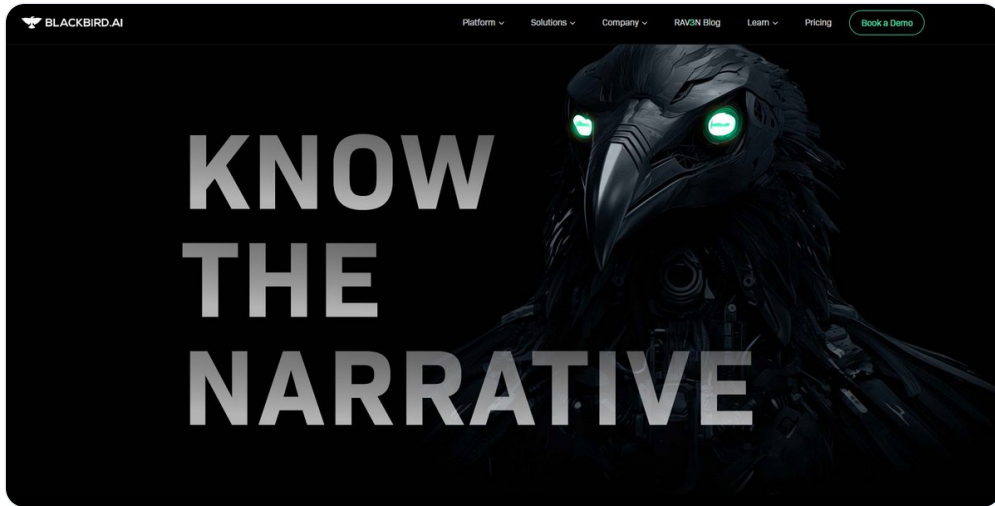
# Vatnik Soup

**THE ULTIMATE GUIDE  
TO RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION**



**Pekka Kallioniemi & Morten B. Hammeken**

Exposing influence networks & potentially disabling them is another effective way to fight online disinformation, but for this you need effective tools that are preferably from the EU. Unfortunately, the best AI-powered analysis tools, like Blackbird AI, come from the US.



The EU should also fund the civil society and initiatives that focus on local influence campaigns. These were mostly funded by the now dysfunctional USAID, and the EU should step up to restart these extremely important programs in Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, etc.

20/24

**Rights and freedom**  
Global development

## Trump's aid cuts will lead to a surge in propaganda and misinformation, say press freedom groups

From Ukraine to Afghanistan, independent media organisations across the world are being forced to lay off staff or shut down after losing USAid funding

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About this content  
**Harriet Barber, Rebecca Ratcliffe and Deepa Parent**  
Tue 11 Feb 2025 06.00 CET

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A photograph of a smartphone lying on a laptop keyboard. The phone's screen shows the official seal of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The seal is circular with 'UNITED STATES AGENCY' at the top and 'INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT' at the bottom. In the center, it features a blue banner with 'USAID' and a graphic of two hands shaking. The phone is positioned diagonally across the keyboard, which has various keys visible, including 'option', 'command', and 'Z'.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) found that in 2023 USAid supported 6,200 journalists and 986 non-state media outlets and civil-society groups in more than 30 countries. Photograph: Getty

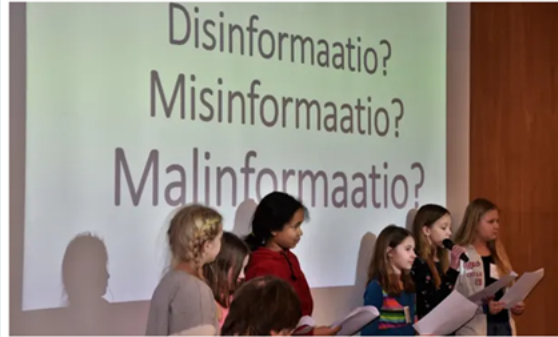
Donald Trump's foreign aid freeze will lead to a decline in the number of independent media outlets across the world, causing a surge in misinformation and playing into the hands of state propagandists, media organisations have warned.

There should also be support for integrating the topics of media literacy and critical thinking into school curriculum. This strategy has been extremely effective in Finland, where Russian disinformation and propaganda has barely any effect on the local population.

21/24

## How Finland starts its fight against fake news in primary schools

Country on frontline of information war teaches everyone from school pupils to politicians how to spot slippery information



Primary school pupils in Helsinki explain the difference between misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. Photograph: Satu Rakkolainen-Sossa

**Y**ou can start when children are very young, said Kari Kivinen. In fact, you should: "Fairytales work well. Take the wily fox who always cheats the other animals with his sly words. That's not a bad metaphor for a certain kind of politician, is it?"

With democracies around the world threatened by the seemingly unstoppable onslaught of false information, **Finland** - recently rated Europe's most resistant nation to fake news - takes the fight seriously enough to teach it in primary school.

As Macron recently stated at the AI summit held in Paris, Europe needs more research and investment in AI. Compared to AI giants like the US and China, the EU is far behind in the AI arms race and there should be incentives for companies to stay and operate in the EU.

22/24

News February 10, 2025

# Mistral AI to invest billions building data centre in France

French AI darling Mistral wants to reduce its dependence on Big Tech's infrastructure

Daphné Leprince-Ringuet 2 min read

**A**s Paris gets ready to [kick off the AI Action Summit today](#), French AI darling Mistral has announced it is investing 'several billions of euros' to build its own data centre in France.

The startup, which develops generative AI models and is seen as Europe's best chance to compete against US players like OpenAI, said in a [LinkedIn post](#) that the move "marks another big step in strengthening our independence."

Mistral currently trains and runs its models using infrastructure owned by US tech giants such as AWS and Microsoft.

But the bottom line is, the European Union needs to spend much more money on fighting the information war. Right now, Russia might be preparing an invasion against the EU and NATO, and information war always precedes conventional war.

We can't rely on the US anymore.

# Europe Is Still Trying to Pretend Putin's Threat Isn't Real

NATO leaders aren't ready for a post-U.S. world.

JANUARY 10, 2025, 3:00 PM

By [Luke McOee](#), an Emmy Award-winning journalist covering European diplomacy.



A soldier takes part in a military exercise in Drawsko Pomorskie, Poland, on Feb. 26, 2024. SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

A lot of this also applies to our close allies in the UK and Canada.

Oh, and start building up those nukes.





Hey friend listen, I  
know the world is  
scary right now but



Its gonna get way  
worse

You can now pre-order the 2nd edition of “Vatnik Soup — The Ultimate Guide to Russian Disinformation”! This updated version, featuring pre-order extras, will be released on the 15th of February 2025.

Pre-order your copy here:

## THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION



### **Vatnik Soup — Kleart**

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