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LITHUANIA'S LEGAL (IN)ACTION IN THE FACE OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA

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Abstract. *As the world enters a fifth year of Russia's murderous war in Ukraine, which, according to the aggressor, was supposed to be a "3 day long special military operation", the Kremlin's tireless propaganda machine is flooding the information space with various false narratives in hopes of reducing the help of Ukraine's allies, discrediting its fight for survival and disseminating uncertainty in Western societies. While the conventional warfare is taking place on the lands, seas and skies of Ukraine, Russia's information warfare front is much farther reaching. The warmongering state dedicates tremendous amounts of money to disinformation campaigns targeted towards the democratic countries, because it is the only battleground in which Russia might be able to overpower the West. Since the very first days of restoration of its independence, Lithuania has been on the receiving end of such campaigns, even more so, regarding the fact that it managed to achieve membership in the European Union and NATO. Kremlin's propaganda is particularly concentrated on the neighbouring democratic states that share and nurture Western values. Considering that any war, conventional or information, cannot be won by only defensive action, this article's purpose is to uncover, what legal means does Lithuania possess in order to counter Russia's propagandistic activities, are the legal measures sufficient and most importantly – what new legal instruments have been implemented during the recent years that are empowering Lithuania not only to counter Kremlin's lies, but to fight back? Methodologically, the research involves a legal analysis of existing laws and legal norms of Lithuania, dedicated to fighting propaganda and ensuring legal liability for it, as well as proposals for the amendments of legal acts, put forward by lawmakers at the Parliament of Lithuania. Findings indicate inaction in providing new and innovative legal means of combating propaganda by the legislators. To conclude, the article highlights the few noteworthy examples of proposals, put forward by legislators in the field of information warfare against Russia and emphasizes the fact that more progressive, proactive, and original legal initiatives are necessary.*

Keywords: *information warfare, propaganda, disinformation, legal instruments*

Introduction

The relevance of the issue. The fourth Lithuanian Democracy Sustainability Barometer study found that for the first time since its beginning in 2022, the percentage of people who believe that Russia poses a direct threat to the Baltic countries became less than 70%[1]. Furthermore, for the first time in four years, those agreeing with the statement that Lithuania should help Ukraine in every way do not make up the absolute majority (49,9%)[2]. These numbers and the lowest Russian threat perception index (determined in the aforementioned study) since 2022, *"indicate a still sufficient awareness of the threat posed by Russia, however […] it is deteriorating"*[3]. Taking in to account that Lithuania, as a state, should be considered one of the most resistant to Russian propaganda because of its history with the aggressor that acts as a "vaccine" against false narratives, albeit slow, but still a decline in perception of

[1] Mažvydas Jastramskis, „Demokratijos tvarumo barometras 2026": 17 (Mažvydas Jastramskis, "Democracy sustainability barometer 2026"), GSSC.LT, available from: https://www.gssc.lt/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/v04-print_Demokratijos-tvarumo-barometras_2026_A4_LT.pdf, accessed 6 March 2026.
[2] Ibid: 17-18.
[3] Ibid: 17-18.

Kremlin's threat is deeply worrying and should function as a wake-up call to Lithuanian, European Union's (hereinafter referred to as the EU) politics and NATO leaders that Russia is gaining ground on the front of information warfare. While the war on Ukraine's soil rages on, the Kremlin is in no position to launch another large-scale invasion, simply because of the lack of capabilities, however if the aggressor wholeheartedly believes that the people will not resist, he might test the resolve of the West. Russia made the mistake of self-deception with Ukraine and is now involved in the largest military conflict in Europe since World War 2, nevertheless it does not mean that it will not make the same mistake again. In a twisted, but pretty much straightforward manner of Sun Tzu's lessons on war, Russia means to win the West over without ever firing a shot. Because of this, it is crucial that Lithuania, as a frontier country, puts up a fight not only against the propaganda narratives but also for the minds of its own people, which are the main target of Russia's information warfare.

Propaganda is extensively analysed, described and discussed by such experts of information warfare as Gintautas Mažeikis, Viktor Denisenko, Mantas Martišius and Nerijus Maliukevičius in monographs, conferences, public lectures and scientific articles. However, propaganda as a phenomenon can and must be studied from the perspective of various scientific fields in order to understand its significance and influence. Psychology and sociology help assess its influence on the peoples' psyche, ways of thinking, behaviour and mood both individually and as a group. The field of security studies helps reveal how propaganda makes an impact on national and public security. Lastly, an analysis of legal documents, norms, their implementation, court decisions, legislative initiatives (such as amendments on legal acts, etc.) and suggestions on improving the legal environment regarding propaganda are methods of legal science used examining the phenomenon of propaganda. This indicates the interdisciplinarity of researches on propaganda. Multiple scientific fields are involved in analysing any case or phenomenon related to propaganda or disinformation.

Goals and objectives of this article. The goal of this article is to reveal what legal means Lithuania possesses and what proposals have been made during the recent year that could help in an information war with Russia.

In order to achieve said goal, these objectives have been put forward:

1. Evaluate the role social media plays in the Kremlin's never-ending information warfare.
2. Present the legal tools available to combat propaganda in the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania at the moment.
3. Review the drafts on amendments to legal acts, giving more legal instruments in the fight against Russian propaganda, submitted by the lawmakers.

Methodology of the Research. The research involves a review of existing legal norms, used by law enforcement officers in cases of dissemination of propaganda, disinformation and fake news and their applicability is briefly discussed. A case study of Russia's universal propaganda narratives being twisted and adapted regarding Lithuania's disconnection from BRELL electrical power system is presented. Lastly, a legal analysis of drafts of amendments on legal acts, meant to help combat hostile propaganda, is conducted and the possible effects of their acceptance on applying legal liability to individuals, involved in disseminating propaganda, are evaluated.

The role of social media in Russia's information warfare

Each year, the intelligence agencies of the Republic of Lithuania present a National Threat assessment – a public document that introduces citizens and residents of Lithuania to

tendencies, processes, and events that influence the national security of the country. In this year's publication, the impact of social media on the spread of propaganda is emphasized. *"International sanctions and national restrictions have reduced the opportunities for Russian propaganda channels to disseminate propaganda in Lithuania, but the Kremlin has not given up its goal of seeking influence in the Lithuanian information space. Russian propaganda narratives directed against Lithuania change barely, however, they are increasingly being spread in a disguised manner. This is aimed at creating the impression that messages, favourable to Russia, originate from Lithuanian society. Social media has become Russia's main tool for spreading informational influence in Lithuania, as they provide opportunities to circumvent restrictions on propaganda channels and, through targeted operations and long-term campaigns, promote distrust in state institutions, incite discord, reduce trust in NATO, or discredit support for Ukraine. Social media algorithms create conditions for a rapid spread of information, and Russian propaganda channels, in order to achieve an image of reliability, often disguise themselves as profiles of independent news pages or influencers"*[4]. This information, put forward by the intelligence agencies, highlights a shift in Russia's behaviour. According to the said information, it can be identified that the aggressor has fully reoriented its propaganda export to social media. Propaganda for the internal audience is still broadcasted using more traditional ways: television, radio, movies, etc., but Russia is adapting to the increasing influence of social media and is effectively using it for propaganda dissemination.

Kremlin's use of social media as a tool to propagate its narratives and its expertise in this area is also noticed by the scientists, who have been analysing Russian propaganda for years. According to Vytautas Magnus University's Professor Gintautas Mažeikis: *"Putin's Russia has created special state funds for information warfare and is developing its own cyber army, which poses a challenge and threat to Western society"*[5]. G. Mažeikis also states that *"Kremlin's repressive regime demonstrated the ability to manage post-truth communication on social media"*[6]. This ability is best described by, firstly, creating and developing regime-managed alternatives to western social media platforms, secondly, by actively invoking troll and bot farms that in turn are being constantly used to influence worldwide social media giants such as "Meta", "X", "TikTok", etc[7]. For example, recently, the Commissioner General of the Lithuanian Police, in an interview with a journalist A. Anužis stated that an estimate of 500 000 bots operate in Lithuania's social media field[8]. To make it clear – *"a bot is a computer program that can perform tasks online by imitating the actions of a real person, simply put, they are face profiles, controlled by algorithms and designed to spread disinformation and manipulate the public space"*[9]. Lastly, as established by Professor Mažeikis: *"propaganda institutions started using these platforms to promote autonomous post-truth propaganda activists, able to create*

[4] Valstybės saugumo departamentas (State Security Department) (2026), 2026 National Threat Assessment: 79, available from: https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2026-GR-LT-El_NAUJAS.pdf, accessed 12 March, 2026.
[5] Gintautas Mažeikis, „Propagandos galia: ideologiniai Rusijos agresijos pagrindai", Almanachas „Rusija dienos šviesoje" 1 (2025): 28 (Gintautas Mažeikis, "The power of propaganda: the ideological basis of Russian aggression", Almanac "Russia in the light of day"), GSSC.LT, available from: https://www.gssc.lt/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/v05_web_Rusija-dienos-sviesoje_publikacija_A4-2.pdf, accessed 7 March 2026.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid: 28-29.
[8] Artūras Anužis, „Policija be ginklų be šarvų ir be pinigų: ar Lietuva išmoko Ukrainos pamokas?" ("Police without weapons, without armour, and without money: has Lithuania learned the lessons of Ukraine?"), Youtube.com, 24:56-25:10, available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-asiOk_GHg, accessed 14 March 2026.
[9] Vytautas Matulevičius, *Baimės frontas (Fear front),* (Vilnius: Bosanova, 2026), 64.

falsified space of communication, where fabricated events and news are being mixed with real affairs"[10]. Just as in any other social media platform, *"Russian propaganda on "TikTok" is often presented in an attractive form – through short entertaining videos, memes or audio tracks that hide a message of Kremlin's interests"*[11].

Vytautas Matulevičius – a communication expert, the head of communication agency "Bosanova" has recently published his book "Fear front", in which he briefly and clearly describes the Kremlin's propaganda, its recurring narratives, explains what Russia aims to achieve by its actions, and how Lithuania can stand up for itself. *"Currently, social media is perhaps the main channel for spreading Russian lies and fear, and an effective tool for dividing and weakening Western societies"*[12], says V. Matulevičius. The head of the State Security Department, Remigijus Bridikis, reiterated this idea, saying that *"social media is probably absolutely everything at this moment, when it comes to carrying out hostile activities. Recruitment and orders to commit criminal acts take place there, and opinions are formed"*[13].

One of the key elements of Russian propaganda is repetition. However ridiculous a lie might sound, when it is repeated over and over again, it begins to take root in the subconsciousness of some people. For a very long time Kremlin has been using the same propaganda narratives and twisting them according to circumstances or the event that is targeted. The table below presents 4 propaganda narratives that are standard for Russia and how they were twisted and adapted according to the Baltic States' disconnection from the BRELL electrical power system in 8th of February, 2025, and synchronization with continental Europe's electrical network the following day. This action severed the last link of Lithuania's energy infrastructure with Russia and made the country energetically independent from the aggressor state. It's safe to say that the Kremlin was not very enthusiastic about it.

Table 1. The twisting of Russia's standard propaganda narratives regarding Lithuania's disconnection from BRELL

Source: National Threat Assessment 2026, p. 81, State Security Department[14]

Narrative	Adaptation
The soviet era brought more benefits than harm to Lithuania	Russian propaganda sought to portray the soviet era BRELL system as a reliable and efficient infrastructure that guaranteed low electricity prices. Disconnecting from this system was depicted as a reckless move that negated the long-standing benefits of former energetic integration.
Lithuania is not a sovereign state and only follows the instructions of the EU and the USA	It was claimed that Lithuania did not have an independent energy strategy and was blindly following the instructions of more powerful allies, which did not meet Lithuania's own interests. This was done to undermine Lithuania's independence and to suggest that strategic decisions were determined by external influence.
Lithuania pursues a provocative policy towards Russia	The disconnection from BRELL was presented as another provocative step by Lithuania against Russia, which increases tension in the region and undermines the region's energy

[10] Ibid: 29.
[11] State Security Department, *supra note*, 4: 79-80.
[12] Vytautas Matulevičius, *supra note*, 9: 62.
[13] Austėja Paulauskaitė, „Bridikis: vykdant priešišką veiklą, socialiniai tinklai yra absoliučiai viskas" („Bridikis: when it comes to carrying out hostile activities, social media is absolutely everything"), LRT.LT, available from: https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2862083/bridikis-vykdant-priesiska-veikla-socialiniai-tinklai-yra-absoliuciai-viskas, accessed 16 March 2026.
[14] State Security Department, *supra note*, 4: 81.

	security. Russian state officials have repeatedly stated that, despite the negative consequences for its energy sector and economy, Lithuania is deliberately provoking Russia. The withdrawal from the BRELL system was presented as another proof of Lithuania's supposed Russophobic policy.
Hostility towards Russia is harming the Lithuanian economy	The disconnection from BRELL was portrayed as an economically harmful action that would increase the prices of electricity, reduce energy security, and in the long-term harm Lithuania's economic development. It was argued that Lithuania should prioritize pragmatic economic relations with Russia over political ambitions.

This is just a single example of many propaganda campaigns the Kremlin launched in Lithuania in relation to important strategic decisions of the state. Although completely ridiculous to a well-informed person, such stories told by Russia do find their audience among people who are not so invested in fact-checking or simply do not know the truth, and social media is an extremely favourable environment for these narratives and their twisted adaptations to circulate.

"The Kremlin is creating an alternative reality in its information war, where Lithuania is weak, alone, and only thanks to Russia's grace has it not yet been conquered."[15] Lithuania and its people know this is not true and Russia knows that too, however the story is told by those who have the initiative to tell it. Therefore, it is extremely important that on social media – a field where most people nowadays spend considerable amounts of their time, and some use it as their only news source – Lithuania starts not only defending itself from false claims, but telling its own story – the truth.

Legal instruments available for combating propaganda

As soon as any action regarding combating propaganda with legal means is taken, the "freedom of speech" lifeline is being cast by those who are involved in the process of disseminating false and harmful information. Undeniably, freedom of expression is one of the core values of the democratic world and is protected by such international legal acts as the European Convention on Human Rights, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Protection of freedom of expression is further transferred into national legal systems. For example, Paragraph 1 of Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the Constitution) serves this exact purpose and states that *"A person has the right to hold their own beliefs and to express them freely"*[16]. However, said Article also clarifies that freedom of expression is incompatible with criminal acts[17], defamation and disinformation included. Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania settled that despite the fact that freedom of expression is one of the foundations of a democratic state, an open, just and harmonious civil society, and an important prerequisite for the implementation of various rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, the freedom to seek, receive and spread information is not absolute[18]. This

[15] Vytautas Matulevičius, *supra note,* 9: 23.
[16] The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, LRS.LT, available from: https://www.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Konstitucija.htm, accessed 7 March 2026.
[17] Ibid.
[18] „Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucinio Teismo 2005 m. rugsėjo 19 d. nutarimas byloje Nr. 19/04" (Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania dated September 19, 2005, in Case No. 19/04), LRKT.LT, Available from: https://lrkt.lt/lt/teismo-aktai/paieska/135/ta244/content, accessed 17 March 2026.

important principle is, more often than not, overlooked by those who disseminate self-created false information or share Russian propaganda narratives. The forthright understanding of freedom of speech as an absolute, characteristic of the United States of America (hereinafter referred to as the USA), was demonstrated by the Vice President of the USA JD Vance, at Munich Security Conference 2025. An extensive understanding of freedom of speech in USA is perfectly illustrated by the fact that burning an American flag is an action protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution in the USA, as ruled by the Supreme Court of the USA in the case of Texas v. Johnson (1989)[19]. Meanwhile, in Lithuania, burning a national flag would be considered desecration of a state symbol – a deed prohibited by law. Such action, as stated in Article 127 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania[20] (hereinafter referred to as the Criminal Code), could possibly incur a 2 year-long prison sentence. So, coming from a completely different background and a country with much wider limits of freedom of speech, JD Vance aggressively criticized Europe's leaders and their initiatives to combat disinformation and propaganda, especially on social media, accusing them of suppressing free speech[21].

It is only natural that Russia uses the freedom of speech, nurtured in the Western world, to its own benefit, promoting its propaganda directly and through various channels and individuals, while at the same time completely restraining freedom of expression for its own people. For example, according to Russian law, criticizing Russia's invasion of Ukraine or calling it a war, which it is, instead of a "special military operation", can get you into jail for up to 15 years[22]. Therefore, if the Kremlin acts so inhumanely towards people who oppose its predatory behaviour against sovereign countries and speak the truth, why should Lithuania back down and let pro-Russian saboteurs and Russia's propaganda shelter under the freedom of speech principle when the shared information is objectively fake and harmful?

Even though the prohibition of disinformation is very clearly formulated both in the Constitution and Article 19, paragraph 2 of the Law on Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania[23], the question of legal liability for such actions is not as plain. Non-compliance with the prohibition on disseminating disinformation provided for in the Law on Public Information, incurs legal liability only to the producers of public information, or other persons who have concluded a contract with the producers – broadcasters and (or) rebroadcasters of television or radio channels, but not for individual persons who have access to a large audience through other channels like social media[24], and as spoken before – social media is absolutely everything. Legal liability to individuals disseminating propaganda is not mentioned in the Code of

[19] Facts and Case Summary – Texas v. Johnson, USCOURTS.GOV, available from: https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/educational-activities/first-amendment-activities/texas-v-johnson/facts-and-case-summary-texas-v-johnson, accessed 17 March 2026.
[20] Law on the approval and entry into force of the criminal code, E-TAR.LT, available from: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.2B866DFF7D43/asr, accessed 17 March 2026.
[21] Patrick Wintour, „JD Vance stuns Munich conference with blistering attack on Europe's leaders", THEGUARDIAN.COM, available from: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/14/jd-vance-stuns-munich-conference-with-blistering-attack-on-europes-leaders, accessed 17 March 2026.
[22] Paul Kirby, Russia-Ukraine war: Moscow politician gets 7 years for denouncing war, available from: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-62092196, accessed 18 March 2026.
[23] Law on Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania, E-TAR.LT, available from: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/asr, accessed 18 March 2026.
[24] Aldas Banelis, „Dezinformacija, propaganda, melagienos: poveikis visuomenės saugumui ir užkardymo teisinės galimybės" (magistro baigiamasis darbas, Mykolo Romerio universitetas, 2024), 43 (Aldas Banelis, "Disinformation, propaganda, fake news: impact on public safety and legal possibilities of prevention" (Master's thesis, Mykolas Romeris university, 2024)), available from: https://cris.mruni.eu/server/api/core/bitstreams/b2e403d9-c562-4116-a31a-3f00fe9f55b5/content, 19 March 2026.

Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Lithuania, nor is it directly defined in the Criminal Code of the country. However, article 170[2] *("Public approval of international crimes, crimes of the USSR or Nazi Germany, their denial or gross belittling"*[25]) of the latter legal act sometimes serves this purpose, is applicable to both individuals and legal entities, and might even lead to a prison sentence. The aforementioned legal norm will not be examined in detail in this article, since its comprehensive assessment and analysis of court decisions has been carried out in the master's thesis "Disinformation, propaganda, fake news: impact on public safety and legal possibilities of prevention"[26]. Nevertheless, it is extremely important to highlight that criminal law in Lithuania, just as in any democratic state that follows the principles of the rule of law, is applicable only as an *ultima ratio*. Not only that, but necessary conditions must be met for liability to apply under said article. *"The criminal act must be committed in a threatening, abusive or insulting manner or the act must have disturbed or could have disturbed public order"*[27], moreover, *"it is necessary to establish […] that is precisely that person who published one or another comment, message or publication, it is necessary to find the means by which this was done […], traces of the criminal act (telephones, computers, hard drives), conclusions from experts are needed, confirming that the words were indeed intended to publicly endorse international crimes, the crimes of USSR or Nazi Germany, to deny them or grossly belittle them"*[28]. However, *"the formal composition of the crime does not require consequences for liability to arise"*[29]. It is essential to state that such ideas, as described in the article 170[2] can only be considered a violation only if they are expressed loudly. Lithuania is not a George Orwell's "1984" dystopia and "thought police" does not operate in a democratic state, governed by the rule of law. People are masters of their own thoughts as long as they live in their heads. During the writing of this paragraph, only 1 case under Article 170[2] was found on the Lithuanian Court Information System "Liteko" since January 1st 2025, which reached the Supreme Court of the Republic of Lithuania and the person was convicted[30].

Seeing as Russian propaganda narratives, including those that can be considered within the framework of Article 170[2] are disseminated actively in social media and yet in one year's time, only one person was convicted, a couple of observations must be made. Firstly, the requirement for very comprehensive proof and ample conditions for the article 170[2] to be adapted and the lack of administrative liability make up a "grey zone" in which individuals, disseminating propaganda, may feel immune to legal prosecution and actively exploit this situation. Secondly, these circumstances lead to an implication that the legal system regarding propaganda must be reviewed and updated by the legislators.

Improvements to the legal system

The existence of the "grey zone" is noticed by the experts. Auksė Balčytienė, a Vytautas Magnus University Professor and communications researcher, states that *"our entire informational and public communication space is difficult to manage, because a grey area*

[25] Law on the approval and entry into force of the criminal code, *supra note* 20.
[26] Aldas Banelis, *supra note*, 24: 43.
[27] Ibid: 44-45.
[28] Ibid: 51.
[29] Ibid: 45.
[30] Lietuvos Aukščiausiojo Teismo 2025 m. gruodžio 9 d. nutartis baudžiamojoje byloje Nr. 2K-173-1073/2025 (The judgement of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Lithuania on 9 December, 2025, in criminal case No. 2K-173-1073/2025), LITEKO.TEISMAI.LT, available from: https://liteko.teismai.lt/viesasprendimupaieska/tekstas.aspx?id=5be5da5c-15d4-4739-a2ff-fe5805fa4e9c, accessed 18 March 2026.

emerged"[31]. The scientist highlights that *"recognizing that the information disseminated is not necessarily true is a challenge for people"*[32] and *"even if it is recognized, a completely new legal system and even a rearrangement of conventional operating principles is needed to control or somehow prevent these activities"*[33]. Associate Professor at the Vilnius University Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Doctor Mažvydas Jastramskis claims that *"Russian disinformation is neither soft power, seeking to improve its image, nor hard power, seeking to impose its will by force. It is a destructive sharp power, which, above all seeks to cut into our social and political fabric, drive wedges and therefore demonstrate that Western political systems, institutions and democracy do not work"*[34]. Having realized that Russian propaganda is not just words, so called "unsystematic opinions" or expressions of freedom of speech, but rather a constant activity of an authoritarian, hostile and predatory state that is trying to erode the very foundations of another – democratic, sovereign and peaceful – country and an act of war against the minds of its people, the answer must be corresponding and assured.

It is known in the legal community that law lags behind real life, and the legislative process is generally reactive. In a Master's thesis, A. Banelis suggested that an update on Lithuania's legal framework, which provides for liability for the dissemination, distribution and approval or propaganda, disinformation and fake news in such a way that it meets today's situation, but at the same time does not become obsolete in the near future and remains relative in the context of new potential threats[35]. Two very particular propositions were made regarding the improvement of the legal system to combat propaganda. First – to supplement the Criminal Code with a new legal norm: *"Public support of war and other propaganda, disinformation or fake news disseminated by the Russian Federation or the Republic of Belarus, or other states recognized by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania as terrorist or supporting terrorism, or by aggressor states, or beneficial to such states, their dissemination, distribution or assistance in carrying out such actions"*[36]. And the second – to introduce a new legal norm into the Code of Administrative Offenses: *"Sharing propaganda, disinformation or fake news disseminated by the Russian Federation or the Republic of Belarus, other states recognized by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania as terrorist or supporting terrorism, or states aggressors, or beneficial to such states on the mass media platforms"*[37]. The reasoning for such suggestions, their explanation, and applicability are explicitly explained in the thesis, published in 2024. It is curious, what actions have the lawmakers taken since that time?

It could be said that the legislators have taken into account both the seriousness of the Russian propaganda threat in Lithuania and the observations of scientists and experts. After conducting a search of draft amendments to legal acts, submitted by the members of the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas), three instances were found.

[31] Žygintas Abromaitis, Vesta Silantjevienė, „Profesorė apie botus ir internete plintančius melus: reikia naujos teisinės sistemos" ("Professor on bots and online lies: a new legal system is needed"), LRT. LT, available from: https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2845408/profesore-apie-botus-ir-internete-plintancius-melus-reikia-naujos-teisines-sistemos, accessed 19 March 2026.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Vytautas Matulevičius, *supra note*, 9: 116.
[35] Aldas Banelis, *supra note*, 24: 59.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid: 60.

The first one – *Draft law on amending articles 2 and 50 of the Law on Public Information and supplementing it with an article 19*[138] – proposed by a mixed group of 18 Parliament members from both position and opposition. This document proposes that the narrow definition of *disinformation*, established by the Law on Public information be expanded from *"false information intentionally disseminated publicly"*[39] to *"intentionally publicly disseminated, created, presented or distributed false or misleading information, which is intended to deceive the public, influence Seimas, President, municipal councils or European Parliament elections, referendums, harm the national security, constitutional order, public order of the Republic of Lithuania or other important public interests of the public"*[40]. This much more explicit definition for disinformation could be of great help, because it would empower law enforcement to link the individuals disseminated false information with their desired effects or results, which could lead to a less complicated application of administrative or criminal liability for this malevolent behaviour. Two remaining suggestions from this draft are an addition of types of information that are prohibited from publication because they pose a threat to state and public security (for example, information that distorts scientific data, aims to destabilize activity of state institutions and so on) and the measures that must be taken by the institution of the Inspector of journalist ethics if the prohibited information is published[41].

The second one – *Draft law on amending Articles 464, 589 of the Code of Administrative Offences and supplementing the Code with Article 507*[242] – proposed by the same group of members of Seimas. If this draft were to be accepted, the Code of Administrative Offences would be supplemented with an article *507*[2] *"Dissemination of disinformation"* which would state as follows: *"Anyone who intentionally creates, submits, disseminates or distributes false or misleading information aimed at deceiving the public, influencing the Seimas, President, municipal councils or European Parliament elections, referendums, or harming the national security, constitutional order, public order of the Republic of Lithuania or other important interests of the public shall be punished by a fine of two hundred to three thousand euros."*[43] The acceptance of this draft by the Parliament of Lithuania would mean that finally, the responsible authorities would have a tool of administrative law to punish individuals disseminating propaganda and disinformation; therefore, the earlier discussed "grey zone" would become considerably smaller, and the feeling of immunity of some individuals, who regularly spread false information, would be dispersed. The draft also specifies that institutions that would be able to apply this legal norm are the police, the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission, and the Journalist Ethics Inspector[44].

[38] Draft law on amending articles 2 and 50 of the Law on Public Information and supplementing it with an article 19[1], E-SEIMAS.LRS.LT, available from: https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/6412f850bf0211f088ded46d8ae099d5?positionInSearchResults=79&searchModelUUID=dc967d8c-9add-4e51-b356-e49ab913fb09, accessed 19 March 2026.
[39] Law on Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania, *supra note*, 23.
[40] Draft law on amending articles 2 and 50 of the Law on Public Information and supplementing it with an article 19[1], *supra note*, 38.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Draft law on amending Articles 464, 589 of the Code of Administrative Offences and supplementing the Code with Article 507[2], E-SEIMAS.LRS.LT, available from: https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/fa6cee70bf0511f088ded46d8ae099d5?positionInSearchResults=77&searchModelUUID=dc967d8c-9add-4e51-b356-e49ab913fb09, accessed 19 March 2026.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Draft law on amending Articles 464, 589 of the Code of Administrative Offences and supplementing the Code with Article 507[2], *supra note*, 42.

The final one – *Draft law on supplementing the Criminal Code with Articles 118[1] and 118[245]* – submitted by the same group of members of Seimas. If the draft were to be accepted, the new article 118[1] *"Information activities of a hostile state against the Republic of Lithuania"* would determine criminal liability to those who on behalf of another state prepared, distributed, coordinated, submitted or disseminated false information, intended to undermine the national security and constitutional order of the Republic of Lithuania and impose a punishment in the form of a fine, arrest or imprisonment for up to five years[46]. This new legal norm could become a great tool for law enforcement officers, because it would be specifically established for cases of propaganda and relieve the officials from creatively adapting the article 170[2] of the Criminal Code to the instances of propaganda, disinformation or fake news. The article 118[2] *"Public incitement to aggressive war"* would state that *"A person who publicly incited, encouraged, urged, justified, supported or otherwise propagated an aggressive war or other armed conflict in violation of the generally recognized principles of international law, or who publicly systematically disseminated declarations or other statements aimed at influencing public opinion to support an aggressive war or other armed conflict in violation to generally recognized principles of international law, shall be punished by a fine, arrest or imprisonment for a term of up to five years"*[47]. It can be argued that this amendment of the Criminal Code is produced to specifically correspond Russia's unprovoked aggressive war in Ukraine and the individuals who express themselves freely on the internet as supporters of it; however, knowing Russia, this legal norm, if accepted, might be relevant to any other war Russia might start someday. God forbid that happens.

These drafts for amendments of legal documents were all registered on the 11th of November 2025. It took almost 4 years of Ukraine's struggle in a war it did not start, hundreds of thousands of casualties, an information space filled with propaganda narratives that are causing tremendous damage to people's minds and the integrity of our society, for legislators to realise that the legal system lacks instruments to fight the Kremlin's lies and individuals who feel immune disseminating them. Not to mention all the fake information that was being tossed around during the COVID-19 pandemic or Lukashenko's (President of the Republic of Belarus) artificially created migrant crisis at the border of Lithuania. Three drafts for amendments of laws, dedicated to fighting propaganda, in more than 6 years. Not great.

A change of perspective

In an interview with a journalist, Frank Gannon, former president of the USA, Richard Nixon said: *"we don't have to convince the Russians that we're for peace. They know that. We have to convince the Russians they cannot win a war"*[48]. Today, on the contrary, *"Russia is convinced that it can do such damage that it would dismantle our institutions"*[49], says Gabrielius Landsbergis, former minister of foreign affairs of Lithuania. Donatas Giknius, Commander of the Information Operations Company of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, recalls his meeting with a Ukrainian military officer back in 2014 after Russia's occupation of

[45] Draft law on supplementing the Criminal Code with Articles 118[1] and 118[2], E-SEIMAS.LRS.LT, available from: https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/d81047e0bf0611f088ded46d8ae099d5?positionInSearchResults=78&searchModelUUID=dc967d8c-9add-4e51-b356-e49ab913fb09, accessed 19 March 2026.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Vytautas Matulevičius, *supra note,* 9: 139.
[49] Draft law on supplementing the Criminal Code with Articles 118[1] and 118[2], *supra note,* 45.

Crimea and the invasion of the Donbas region. The Ukrainian soldier said the following words: *"We lost the information war. That is why blood spills on our land now, on our streets. Do not lose the information war, because then blood will spill on your streets too."*[50] These words, according to Commander D. Giknius, were a call to act. Currently, the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union is strengthening its Information Operations capacity, aiming to help people not get lost in the flow of information, develop the ability to distinguish between what is true and what is not, and develop critical thinking and resistance to misleading information[51]. According to communications expert V. Matulevičius, "*we must not allow Russia to intimidate, harass and destabilize us, we must not be afraid of Russian threats and discuss resonating issues respectfully, without getting angry with each other"*[52], because the Kremlin will certainly use any tensions in our society to its advantage. V. Matulevičius urges to refute Russian lies from the very first days of school. He proposes an idea that once a week, for all 12 years of school, information and media literacy classes should be mandatory from grades 1 to 12, taught by specially trained teachers, with regularly updated programs and analysis of disinformation campaigns[53]. He also encourages the adoption good practices of other countries, like Finland, in repelling Russia's destructive information activities. According to V. Matulevičius, Finland's resilience stands on four pillars: 1) public debates must be based on facts, not emotions; 2) national media must explain disinformation and disseminated narratives; 3) institutions must intervene in public debates when necessary; 4) quality of education increases resilience to disinformation[54]. Lastly, a war cannot be won by only defensive action, the foe has to suffer a counterattack, therefore Lithuania's position regarding information warfare must change. Lithuania's attack on the information front against Russia could look like a well-organised information campaign about a proud Baltic country that successfully reclaimed its independence and became a success story as a democratic republic that is often at the top of statistics on digital innovation, economic growth, fintech companies and entrepreneurial environment.

On the 18th of February 2026, it was announced that Lithuania would be developing a plan to combat disinformation and manipulation[55]. An inter-institutional working group, guided by the Deputy Minister of Culture Viktor Denisenko – propaganda and disinformation expert, author and co-author of books and publications on said subjects – was assembled at the Ministry of Culture and tasked with developing a plan to combat disinformation and manipulation[56]. *"It is estimated that the plan will be prepared by the autumn of this year, and then it will move on to its implementation phase, which will also be coordinated by this working group."*[57] Seeing the state take specific steps in repelling Russian information threats provides confidence in the state.

[50] Lietuvos Šaulių Sąjunga, „Kai mūšio laukas – žmonių protai: šauliai imasi veiksmų" (Lithuanian Riflemen's Union " When the battlefield is people's minds: riflemen take action"), available from: https://www.sauliusajunga.lt/naujienos/kai-musio-laukas---zmoniu-protai-sauliai-imasi-veiksmu, accessed 20 March, 2026.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Vytautas Matulevičius, *supra note,* 9: 141.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid: 148.
[55] "Lithuania to develop a plan to combat disinformation and manipulation", LRT.LT, available from: https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2843114/lietuva-kurs-kovos-su-dezinformacija-ir-manipuliacijomis-plana, accessed 20 March 2026.
[56] Ibid.
[57] "Lithuania to develop a plan to combat disinformation and manipulation", *supra note*, 56.

In a fight against the Kremlin's lies, Lithuania's strongest weapon is simple, but very effective – the truth.

Conclusions

Review and analysis of currently available legal instruments for combating propaganda demonstrates that the requirement for profoundly comprehensive proof and ample conditions for application of article 170^2 of the Criminal Code together with the lack of administrative liability, make up a "grey zone" in which individuals, disseminating propaganda, may feel immune to legal prosecution and actively exploit this situation. Moreover, only three drafts for amendments on legal documents were registered in almost six years of highly intensive Russian propaganda and disinformation campaigns. Despite the fact that the work of legislators on the subject of propaganda leaves many questions, if the discussed amendments to the Criminal Code, Code of Administrative offences and the Law on Public Information were to be accepted, it would greatly increase the tools available to law enforcement and would finally disperse the existing "grey zone".

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