

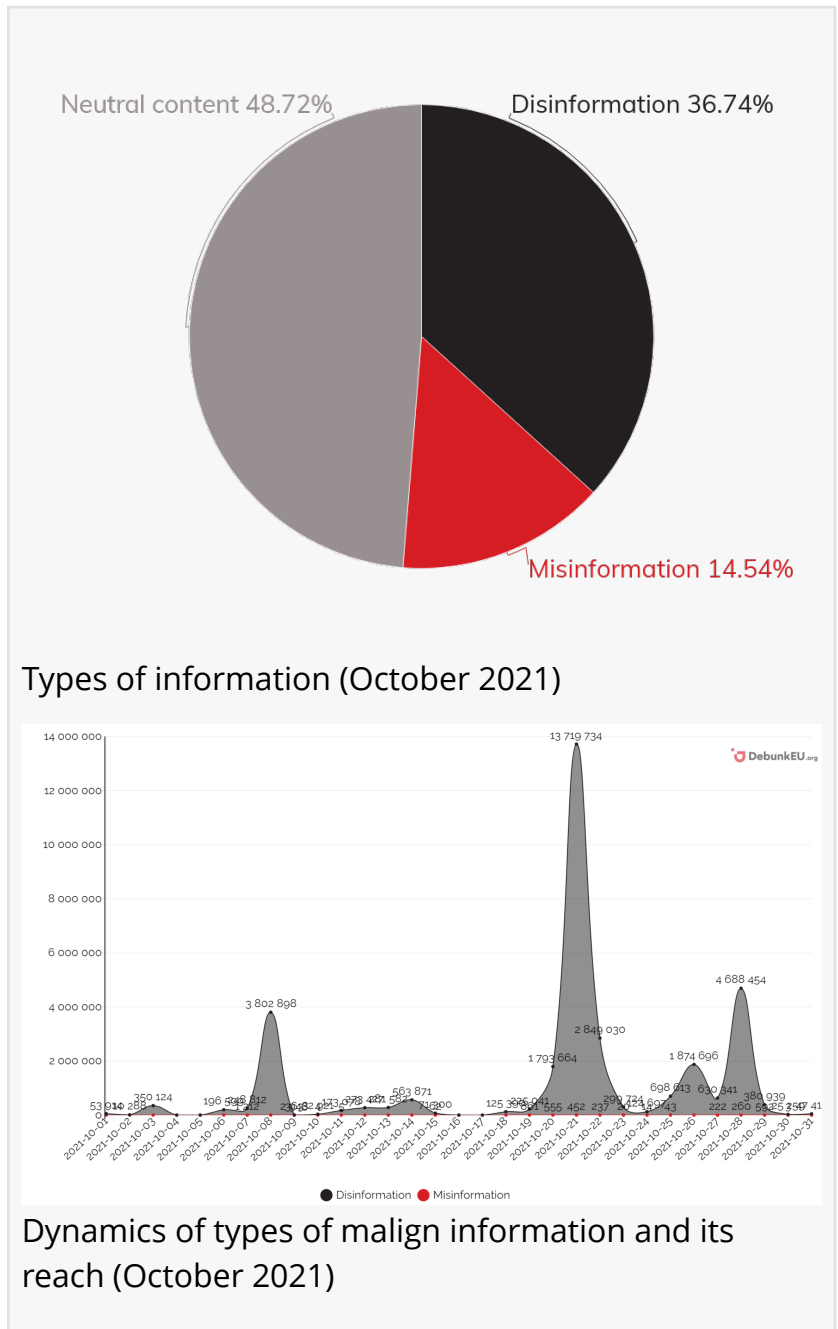
# In the face of a looming energy crisis, Lithuania stabs Ukraine in the back, Kremlin media asserts

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Disinformation narratives asserting that quarrels between the Baltic partners are to blame for the energy price increase in the whole Europe were again used to discredit Lithuanian position against the [Belarusian NPP in Astravets](#). DebunkEU.org analysis shows that the highest peak of malign content coincided with comments made by a member of Ukrainian parliament about how Lithuania is using electricity from Belarus despite agitating its partners against it.

In October, an increase of false and misleading content regarding the Lithuanian position about the BelNPP was recorded. Moreover, for the first time since the start of the monthly analyses on this topic, the number of malign information content pieces exceeded the number of neutral content.

The upturn could be attributed to the comment made by a Ukrainian MP Andriy Gerus which he posted on social media on October 20, showing alleged evidence of Lithuania deceiving Ukraine.



“The post was then disseminated by the most prominent pro-Kremlin news websites. Mr Gerus states that in spring, Lithuania persuaded Ukraine not to buy electricity produced in Belarus, although supposedly it has been doing so in its own right”, says DebunkEU.org Senior Analyst Algirdas Kazlauskas.

Firstly, this statement corresponded to one of the most important disinformation narratives used by the pro-Kremlin media to discredit Lithuanian efforts against the BelNPP. On the one hand, Mr Gerus aims to assert that in spite of all of the efforts to stop the BelNPP, when the crisis comes, political principles are pushed aside, and economic logic is followed. Hence, electricity is purchased from the most accessible source – Belarus. On the other hand, this statement is a strong blow to the Lithuanian anti-BelNPP strategy – the desire to block the electricity exports from Belarus to the markets of Lithuanian partners.

Secondly, the supposedly treacherous Lithuanian policy casts a shadow on the authenticity of Ukrainian-Lithuanian friendship, which had been publicly declared for many years.

“Some of the statements made by Mr Gerus were misleading. However, due to the topology of the BRELL electricity ring, the circular flows of electricity from Belarus to Lithuania have been maintained, and their very existence does not indicate that electricity of Belarusian origin (produced in Belarus) is entering Lithuania. When Belarus does not have a positive electricity balance (the country does not produce more electricity than it consumes), the electricity flows that reach Lithuania from Belarus are transit flows – they come from Russia or Ukraine, while Belarus is only a transit country. Therefore, Lithuania cannot be blamed for not having done something,” says Mr Kazlauskas.

Statements from Lithuanian politicians were used again to spread malign narratives. On October 7, Lithuanian Minister of Energy Dainius Kreivys stated that Lithuania had succeeded in achieving the task of preventing electricity from the BelNPP from entering Lithuania. According to him, these efforts for Belarus already cost \$2B and that is not the end. Although the actual flow of electricity from Belarus continues, Mr Kreivys assured that this is not commercial, but the required traffic, which is being re-estimated daily according to the available parameters but does not exceed 300MW.

The next day, as an indirect response to these statements, several publications appeared in the pro-Kremlin media, the most of which included the text by ria.ru columnist Dmitry Romanenko. The author repeated several frequently used narratives designed to discredit Lithuania’s pro-Western policies.

According to him, the struggle of Lithuania and Ukraine against the Belarusian and Russian electricity in the wake of the upcoming energy crisis is unreasonable, as is the goal of the Baltic countries to disconnect from the Soviet-build [BRELL energy ring](#).

Moreover, it is mentioned that electricity prices are rising, as if to suggest that the disputes of the

Baltic states is the true reasons behind the increase. However, as many experts have already proven, the increase of electricity prices was caused by the [global energy crisis](#) and not because of the blockade of allegedly cheap electricity from Belarus. In the Baltic region the electricity is traded through the Nord Pool Spot market, where electricity flows from all producers in the region and the final price in each country is determined by the actual demand-supply ratio. Thus the statements about the direct purchase of electricity from Belarus on cheaper price are misleading and are based on disinformation narrative that opposing the BelNPP is economically unreasonable.

Throughout October 2021, malign information against the Lithuanian position regarding the BelNPP accounted for 261 entities (51.28% out of examined 509). Disinformation constituted 71.65% while misinformation – 28.35% of the articles published and distributed by the Kremlin-funded (or affiliated) media outlets and social media accounts.

Out of 261 publications identified with false and misleading content, 68.2% were in Russian and 31.8% in Lithuanian. Sputniknews.ru, cont.ws and sputniknews.lt published the biggest share of content with malign messages about the Lithuanian position on the BelNPP (all of the three – 5.4%). During the period considered, ria.ru, rambler.ru and regnum.ru shared more than a half of the total contact reach of all articles (34.1%, 12.2%, and 7.3% of all articles respectively).

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