

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.)

 *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum.)*

PROJECT	
Participant:	[101081520] - [Avatud Eesti Fond] ([OEF])
PIC number:	887710245
Project name and acronym:	COVIDemocracy in the Baltics _ COVIDemocracy

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	WP6-D6.1
Event name:	Forum in Estonia
Type:	Discussion
In situ/online:	<i>In-situ</i>
Location:	Tallinn, Estonia
Date(s):	October 12, 2023
Website(s) (if any):	EST : https://oef.org.ee/teoksil/avatud-uhiskonna-foorumid/2023-xxvi-avatud-uhiskonna-foorum ENG : https://oef.org.ee/en/our-work/open-society-forum/xxvi-open-society-forum-europe-at-the-crossroads-civil-society-media-literacy-and-resilience-in-europe
Participants	
Female:	56
Male:	49
Non-binary:	-
From country 1 [Estonia]:	80
From country 2 [Norway]:	2
From country 3 [Japan]:	1
From country 4 [Bulgaria]:	3
From country 5 [Poland]:	1

From country 6 [Latvia]:	1		
From country 7 [Netherlands]:	2		
From country 8 [Turkey]:	1		
From country 9 [Denmark]:	2		
From country 10 [Georgia]:	1		
From country 11 [Russia]:	2		
From country 12 [Ukraine]:	2		
From country 13 [France]:	1		
From country 14 [Germany]:	1		
From country 15 [India]:	1		
From country 16 [Ireland]:	1		
From country 17 [Moldova]:	1		
From country 18 [United States]:	2		
Total number of participants:	105	From total number of countries:	18

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

The Estonian regional event was organized as Open Estonia Foundation's (OEF) annual Open Society Forum, which dates back to 1995.

The XXVI Open Society Forum "Europe at the Crossroads: Media Literacy, Civil Society and Resilience in Europe" took place on October 12, 2023 in Nordic Hotel Forum, Tallinn.

The event was live streamed and simultaneous translation into Estonian and English was provided. Before, during and after the event the EU funding was mentioned in each social media post on OEF's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) channel and the EU funding logos were visible in every post. The EU logos were on the screens throughout the event, and the EU funding was mentioned also in the welcoming speech by the Executive Director of the Open Estonia Foundation (OEF).

The event brought together participants from various walks of life: pupils, students, retired people, representatives of Embassies and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Ministry of Culture of Estonia, civic activists, journalists and media/communication experts and scholars. Altogether there were 105+ people in the audience.

The videos of the event are available at OEF's website and [in Estonian](#) and [English](#) and on [OEF's Youtube channel](#).

Topic and description of the event:

Over the past two decades, the fundamental values upheld by liberal democracy in Europe have faced significant threats, largely due to scientific and technological advancements. This has led to a fundamental shift in how our society perceives truth, particularly evident in the proliferation of disinformation. The decline of traditional media and the rise of social media have played a pivotal role in this transformation. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the issue, giving rise to an "infodemic." Additionally, the Russian aggression in Ukraine has fueled a disinformation campaign, manipulating facts, undermining common sense, and exploiting societal divisions to impede the European response. Central and Eastern European countries face specific challenges in this context, with still vulnerable institutions, limited media freedom, and rule of law concerns, making them

particularly susceptible to Russian disinformation efforts.

The XXVI Open Society Forum delved into the nature and extent of the problems associated with disinformation, while also highlighting the specific transnational and national dynamics at play. The Forum explored potential solutions, approaches, and tools required to effectively counter disinformation. Emphasis was placed on the crucial role of civil society, as well as the delicate balance between combating malicious disinformation and upholding free speech within a democratic framework.

The Forum focused on disinformation first on a wider, European level, and then delved into country specific and regional cases and approaches, finalizing with the case of Estonia.

The XXVI Open Society Forum was comprised by three parts:

Opening of the Forum:

- Welcome address by **Mall Hellam**, Executive Director of the Open Estonia Foundation;
- Introduction "**View from EU**" by **Vivian Loonela**, Head of European Commission Representation in Estonia;
- Keynote speech "**When Did We End Up in War in the Infosphere?**" by H.E. **Kaimo Kuusk**, Ambassador of Estonia to Lithuania, Ambassador to Ukraine 2019-2023.

First panel discussion "**State of Play: Fake News, Disinformation and the War Against Ukraine**" (in English, simultaneous translation into Estonian was provided)

The first panel engaged in a comprehensive discussion on the mechanics and objectives of disinformation, exploring its spread and operation. Topics of focus included the emergence of the new disinformation ecosystem, the influencers behind it, and their impact on public opinion, with a particular emphasis on the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region in the aftermath of Russia's war against Ukraine. The panel also examined the reach, goals, and societal implications of disinformation. The panel will provide an overview of the current situation of fake news and disinformation in CEE, as well as in the wider European and global contexts during the ongoing conflict. The impact of disinformation on democracy and civil society activism were also discussed.

Speakers: **Nikola Tulechki**, Co-Founder and Data Scientist, Data for Good, Bulgaria; **Maciej Sopyło**, Media Literacy, Human Rights and Communication Skills Trainer, Poland; **Inga Springe**, Co-Founder and Investigative Journalist at the Baltic Center for Investigative Journalism Re:Baltica, Latvia. Moderator: **Raul Rebane**, Communication Expert, Estonia

Second panel discussion "**Disinformation and Resilience in Estonia**" (in Estonian, simultaneous translation into English was provided) - The discussion focused on country-specific approaches. The panel addressed the critical issue of disinformation in Estonia and explored effective practices to tackle it. More specifically, the focus was placed on the role of civil society and the media in countering disinformation and in increasing the resilience of citizens and institutions to information attacks. The panel discussed both existing best practices as well as innovative approaches that have medium to long term results, such as fact-checking initiatives, deepfake detection and civic education, that contribute to increased media literacy and help to protect and inoculate democracy.

Speakers: **Holger Roonemaa**, Head of the Investigative and Fact-Checking Desk, Delfi, Estonia; **Ilmar Raag**, Strategic Communication Expert. Moderator: **Margo Loor**, Trainer and Moderator at Speaksmart.

Media coverage

The event was livestreamed on Open Estonia Foundation's web page (in English and in Estonian) as well as the Estonian [Public Broadcasting's English language website](#). The livestreams gained altogether 100 views, the videos of the event are now available on OEF's Youtube channel and we are continuing to share them in the follow-up activities through boosted posts on FB and OEF's weekly newsletter.

Estonia's main and biggest daily newspaper Eesti Päevaleht made an interview with one of the

speakers, Bulgarian Data Scientist Nikola Tulechki: <https://epl.delfi.ee/artikkel/120243409/bulgaaria-andmeteadlane-kui-moni-sonum-teis-tugevaid-emotsioone-tekitab-olete-juba-sihikul>

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).