

*Unofficial translation*

**The National Concept on Strategic Communication  
and Security of the Information Space**

**2023–2027**

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## Summary

A number of medium-term legislative acts and policy planning documents, including the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027, the National Security Concept, the Comprehensive State Defence Concept, the National Defence Concept, as well as the Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021-2027 require this National Concept on Strategic Communication and Security of the Information Space for 2023–2027 (hereinafter – the Concept).

The Concept consists of eight chapters, including definitions, background, characterisation of security risks and challenges faced by the information space, vision and objective of the Concept, values and principles of national strategic communication, a model for coordination of national strategic communication and security of the information space, tasks and implementation for 2023-2027.

Both internal and external factors pose security risks and challenges for the information space of Latvia. The major international risks and challenges for Latvia's information space are created by the Russian Federation. The lack of resources for communication functions in public administration institutions and local government, as well as insufficient integration of communication into the management and strategic planning process is the major internal challenge.

The solution envisages the promotion of the security of the information space in Latvia in the context of geopolitical uncertainty. This includes strategic communication, resilience to internal and external risks of interference in democratic processes, the information space and participation in a coordinated manner to crisis and threat situations.

The Concept is based on the values and fundamental principles unifying the people of Latvia which are set out in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia. These are the foundations of the country's strategic communication and messages about Latvia to local and international audiences. In a rapidly changing geopolitical environment, state institutions, media actors and society are politically united by a body of values and principles.

National strategic communication and enhanced security of the information space are implemented with a partly decentralised governance model with the comprehensive involvement of state and local government institutions.

The State Chancellery centrally plans the national strategic communication messages and measures for the medium and long-term. It ensures coordination with other public administration institutions and requires the national strategic communication messages be reflected in their annual communication plans and strategies. This includes daily tactical communication.

The information space and its security are equally dependent on three pillars: 1) the effective communication of state and local government institutions with their target audiences; 2) a strong media environment and journalistic offer; 3) a society capable of identifying and resisting manipulation in the information space. The strengthening of each pillar will contribute to national security. A secure information space also discourages the potential opponent from aggression, including hybrid operations by reducing the chances of their success.

The proposed model involves cooperation by the State Chancellery with line ministries and local governments as well as consultation with other state administration institutions - the Saeima (parliament), the Chancellery of the President of Latvia, the National Security Council, state security services and law enforcement institutions, as appropriate. The State Chancellery ensures the coordination and cooperation on the security of the information space and strategic communication issues at international level.

The Concept for 2023-2027 sets out six key action lines to strengthen the security of the national information space: 1) implementation of national strategic communication and capacity development, 2) information space resilience measures against security threats, 3) strengthening and improving the media environment, 4) society that is resilient to threats to information space, 5) partnership with organised civil society and the private and academic sector, 6) international cooperation.

A list of intended measures (Annex) has been drawn up to implement the tasks of the Concept. Institutions will, in accordance with their competence, draft detailed policy planning documents and regulatory enactments (or amendments thereto) to fulfil the key directions and tasks included in the Concept and the list of intended measures.

## 1. Definitions

**Strategic communication** – strategic, planned, targeted and coordinated application of all available communication means to achieve the strategic objectives of the institution and the state.

**Information space** – an abstract, virtual territory created as a result of interaction between society, culture and communication. The information space is characterised by information flows, media and their content, language, social memory of society and other factors.

**Disinformation** – false or misleading content that is disseminated with a view to mislead and/or gain economic or political benefit, which may harm the state and society or any part thereof.<sup>1</sup>

**Misinformation** – false or misleading content disseminated without harmful intent, although the consequences may be harmful to the state and society or to any part of it, for example when a person shares false information with friends and family in good faith.

**Information influence operation** – coordinated efforts by domestic or foreign actors to influence the target audience through a variety of misleading means, including by suppressing independent sources of information while misinforming or performing other manipulations in the information space.

**Foreign interference in the information space** – targeted efforts by a foreign actor or its agents to interfere with democratic processes, including by not allowing individuals to freely form and express their political will. It is often implemented as part of a broader hybrid operation.

**Media literacy and information literacy** – people's skills and knowledge to use media, search and analyse information, critically evaluate media messages and participate in the creation of media content in an effective and safe way.

**Resilience** – the ability of the state, institutions and citizens to detect, recognise and resist threats and crises of information space in a timely manner, including disinformation, as well as to quickly and effectively recover and become more skilled in order to avoid such situations in the future.

## 2. Background

The National Concept on Strategic Communication and Security of the Information Space for 2023-2027 is a strategic medium-term policy planning document. It sets out the objectives for strengthening the security of the information space, including the development of strategic communication capability in 2023-2027, as well as priority tasks in these areas. It is planned to involve all state and local government institutions, as well as organised civil society, academia and the private sector in a coordinated manner and according to their capacity and competence. The security of the information space should be strengthened by the widest possible public, including by providing Latvian citizens and nationals abroad with the knowledge and skills, including media and information literacy, to be able to jointly resist manipulation in the information space, thereby strengthening national security.

The Concept defines a model for the development of national strategic communication capability and security by strengthening the information space, which includes:

- a) analysis of security risks and challenges in the information space;
- b) a vision and objectives of the national strategic communication development;

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions for 'disinformation', 'misinformation', 'information influence operation' and 'foreign interference in the information space' are derived from the European Democracy Action Plan (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - European Democracy Action Plan, COM(2020) 790 final).

- c) values and guiding principles on which to further develop and improve strategic messages;
- d) principal lines of action and tasks for 2023-2027;
- e) actionable Intended Measures for the implementation of the Concept (Annex classified as 'Restricted', hereinafter - the Intended Measures);
- f) procedure for coordination, monitoring and review of the Concept and progress achieved through the Intended Measures

The need for the Concept arises from a number of medium-term regulatory acts and policy planning documents. The National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027 puts the strengthening of social cohesion and citizens' belonging to Latvia as a national priority, including by strengthening the information space, preventing disinformation and improving media literacy, promoting civic participation and developing communication skills in different groups and cultures ('Unified, Safe and Open Society')<sup>2</sup>. A cohesive and civically active society, with the principle of inclusive participation at its core, is also a key objective of the Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021-2027<sup>3</sup>.

The development of a uniform strategic communication capacity of the public administration and information space security monitoring structure and a model of coordination mechanism, as well as the strengthening of the national strategic communication capacity and the security of the information space are determined by the National Security Concept<sup>4</sup>, the Comprehensive State Defence Concept<sup>5</sup> and the National Defence Concept<sup>6</sup>.

The Government's Action Plan for the Implementation of the Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers headed by Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš establishes an obligation for the State Chancellery to develop a Concept based on the risk and threat analysis of the information space, as well as to establish a centralised mechanism for the coordination of the security of the strategic communication and information space of the State<sup>7</sup>.

The Rules of Procedure of the State Chancellery stipulate that the development of a model for cooperation and coordination between public authorities and implementation of strategic communication in public administration shall be implemented by the Strategic Communication Department of the State Chancellery (hereinafter – the State Chancellery's StratCom).<sup>8</sup> The State Chancellery's StratCom has been providing the national strategic communication capability of Latvia since 2020, incl.:

- Developing a model for cooperation and coordination between public authorities to implement strategic communication in the public administration, as well as managing and supporting its implementation. To that end, the State Chancellery's StratCom maintains a number of coordination mechanisms for the dissemination of national strategic communication messages and communication guidelines, as well as for

<sup>2</sup> Latvijas Nacionālais attīstības plāns 2021.–2027. gadam (2020. gada 2. jūlijs), [https://pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027\\_apstiprin%C4%81ts%20Saeim%C4%81\\_1.pdf](https://pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/inline-files/NAP2027_apstiprin%C4%81ts%20Saeim%C4%81_1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Saliedētas un pilsoniski aktīvas sabiedrības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2021.–2027. gadam (Ministru kabineta 2021. gada 5. februāra rīkojums Nr.72)

<sup>4</sup> Nacionālās drošības koncepcija (2019. gada 26. septembris), <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/309647-par-nacionalas-drosibas-koncepcijas-apstiprinasanu>

<sup>5</sup> Informatīvais ziņojums "Par visaptverošās valsts aizsardzības sistēmas ieviešanu Latvijā" (2019. gada 8. janvāris), <https://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40462120>

<sup>6</sup> Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija (2020. gada 24. septembris), <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/317591-par-valsts-aizsardzibas-koncepcijas-apstiprinasanu>

<sup>7</sup> Par Valdības rīcības plānu Deklarācijas par Artura Krišjāņa Kariņa vadītā Ministru kabineta iecerēto darbību īstenošanai, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/306691-par-valdibas-ricibas-planu-deklaracijas-par-artura-krisjana-karina-vadita-ministru-kabineta-ievereto-darbibu-istenosana>

<sup>8</sup> Valsts kancelejas reglaments (2020. gada 26. novembris), <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/valsts-kancelejas-reglaments>

strengthening the security of the information space in cooperation with responsible institutions.

- Providing the public administration with a centralised capability to monitor and analyse the information space, including with regard to manipulations in the information space, disinformation.
- Serving as a national focal point for cooperation with social media platforms.
- Providing training, methodological material development, crisis scenario and other measures to build and improve strategic communication capacity of state and local government institutions.
- Coordinating the development and implementation of trans-departmental strategies, campaigns and other communication activities within the public administration.
- Providing strategic support for crisis communication and coordination.
- Developing and implementing international cooperation, including the formulation of national interests, coordination and representation in bilateral and multilateral formats on strategic communication and information space security issues.

The Concept reaffirms and complements the mandate and tasks of the State Chancellery's StratCom already laid down in legislation, linking them in a partly decentralised coordination model with other public administration institutions, local governments, their subordinate bodies, as well as policies, coordination and cooperation formats under their responsibility.

The Concept does not redistribute responsibility or competence between institutions, nor does it replace existing inter-institutional cooperation formats at strategic or operational level.

The coordination mechanisms and formats proposed by the Concept can be used in both everyday work and in crisis situations.

The State Chancellery's StratCom is responsible for the coordinated supervision of the implementation of the Concept and tasks, as well as reporting to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Saeima and, if necessary, other institutions, including on the progress achieved, as well as the work and challenges planned for the next period.

### **3. Security risks and challenges in the information space**

Security of the information space, based on a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, resilience of public administration and effective national strategic communication capabilities, plays a central role in strengthening national security and defence. The protection of the information space and effective strategic communication capabilities of the state influence the sense of security of the population, confidence in their belonging and trust in the state of Latvia and its institutions, taking responsibility and civic participation, a common understanding of the situation in the country under crisis conditions, the history of the country, democracy and the values unifying the people set out in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, as well as the ability to take important decisions and act.

Disinformation, information influence operations and foreign interference in the information space are often part of a broader hybrid influence operation to achieve political, economic and strategic ends of individual states and non-state actors. Influence measures may be directed against Latvia in order to reduce the trust of the public (or specific groups of society) in the government, state institutions and the media. They can contribute to the polarisation of society, reduce civic participation and influence the conduct of democratic and political processes, compromising the principles of national self-determination. Misleading, unverified information disseminated without harmful intent also undermines public confidence in facts, science and objective reality, thereby causing unintentional harm to national security in the short term, for example in crisis situations, as well as in the medium and long-term.

Security challenges and risks to the information space of Latvia arise from both internal and external factors and actors. The major security challenge is the lack of resources to ensure communication functions in public administration institutions and local government, as well as the insufficient integration of communication into the management and strategic planning processes of institutions.

Relatively low public confidence in state institutions<sup>9</sup> and the media<sup>10</sup> poses an internal challenge for the country, which has also been affected by the global Covid-19 crisis and the ensuing ‘infodemia’<sup>11</sup>. Significant risks for Latvia are also caused by the insufficient level of society’s media and information literacy,<sup>12</sup> as well as low public willingness and ability to take responsibility<sup>13</sup>, to participate in the socio-economic, social and political processes of the country’s development<sup>14</sup>.

Similarly to other countries, Latvia faces global trends and the growing role of social media in economic processes, including annual redistribution of an increasing share of turnover in the advertising market at the expense of traditional media. As a result, traditional media, which are not objectively able to adapt to the new market requirements, face risks that may have an impact on the quality of journalism or the very existence of media outlets. Due to the small size of the

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<sup>9</sup> In 2020, about one third of the population did not trust the Saeima, the Cabinet of Ministers, local government, the judicial system, the public media or public organisations. Latvia has lower confidence rates than the EU (34 % trusted public administration in Latvia in 2019 and 2021, EU - 51 %) and OECD member states (only 24.5 % of the population trusted the government in 2021, OECD 41 %). Sources: SKDS (2020. gada novembris). *Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja*, [https://providus.lv/article\\_files/3842/original/Tabulas\\_integracija\\_112020\\_.pdf?1614348752](https://providus.lv/article_files/3842/original/Tabulas_integracija_112020_.pdf?1614348752); *Standard Eurobarometer 95* (2021. g.); *Standard Eurobarometer 90.3. un 91.5.* (2019. g.); OECD (2022), *Building Trust to Reinforce Democracy: Main Findings from the 2021 OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

<sup>10</sup> In 2021 (compared to 2020 and 2019), public trust in all Latvian public media had fallen, including the Latvian Radio from 85 % (2019) to 76 % (2021), Latvian Television from 86 % to 75 %, LSM.lv from 72 % to 68 %. In November 2021, as regards COVID-19 issues, only 18 % trusted the public media and 12 % private media. Sources: Latvijas Fakti (2021. gada septembris). *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satūra lietošanas paradumiem*. 195.lpp., <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/185/download>; SKDS (2022. gada novembris). *Pētījums par sabiedrības attieksmi pret Covid-19*, <http://195.244.155.179/node/3864>

<sup>11</sup> According to the World Health Organisation, ‘infodemia’ is “an excessive amount of information on the problem that makes finding a solution difficult. It can spread misleading information, disinformation and rumours in health sector. ‘Infodemia’ can hinder effective public health measures and cause confusion and mistrust among citizens”. Source: [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200305-sitrep-45-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=ed2ba78b\\_4](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200305-sitrep-45-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=ed2ba78b_4)

<sup>12</sup> In a study conducted by NEPLP in July-September 2021, 61 % of Latvians believed that they were able to easily recognise reliable information in the media from manipulative (disaggregated, misleading). In April-May 2022, 64 % of Latvians felt confident that they were able to recognise disinformation. Sources: Latvijas Fakti (2021). *Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satūra lietošanas paradumiem*, <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/media/185/download>; European Parliament (May 2022). *Flash Eurobarometer: News & Media Survey 2022*. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2832>

<sup>13</sup> In the 2020 study, only 14 % indicated that they had been involved in a public debate, picket or donated their time to a social problem in the last two years. In spring 2022, only 43 % of Latvians believed that their voice had an impact (average 65 % in EU countries). Sources: SKDS (Novembris 2020). *Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja*, [https://providus.lv/article\\_files/3842/original/Tabulas\\_integracija\\_112020\\_.pdf?1614348752](https://providus.lv/article_files/3842/original/Tabulas_integracija_112020_.pdf?1614348752); European Parliament (June 2022). *Rallying around the European flag - Democracy as anchor point in times of crisis*, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2792>

<sup>14</sup> For example, in the elections of the 13th Saeima in 2018, only 54.6 % of the voting population participated, while in the Latvian municipal elections in 2021 only 34 % of the voting population took part. Meanwhile, civic participation in everyday life remains low, as evidenced by the fact that only 4 % of non-governmental organisations in Latvia participated in national decision-making between 2018 and 2021. Source: Latvijas Pilsoniskā alianse (2021). *Sabiedrības līdzdalība lēmumu pieņemšanas procesā (izpētes ziņojums)*. [https://nvo.lv/uploads/zinojums\\_lidzdaliba\\_lemumu\\_pienemsana\\_2021.pdf](https://nvo.lv/uploads/zinojums_lidzdaliba_lemumu_pienemsana_2021.pdf)

Latvian media and advertising market, the occurrence of these risks may negatively affect not only the media space, but indirectly the entire information space.

The most important international risks and challenges to the information space of Latvia are posed by the Russian Federation (hereinafter – Russia). This is determined by the historical, geographical, linguistic, technological proximity and presence of Russia in the information space of Latvia, as well as its antagonistic world vision developed against the United States, NATO and the EU – by default also against Latvia. It should also be noted that Russian officials and pro-Kremlin media have been conducting smear and disinformation campaigns against Latvia since the 1990s. Through the pro-Kremlin outlets, Russia has spread hostile narratives about Latvia targeting the minority community in Latvia and global audiences, and they contribute to the division of Latvian society. The availability of the pro-Kremlin media channels in the Latvian information space in combination with media consumption habits typical for Latvian minority audiences have played an important role in Russia's efforts to carry out information influence operations in Latvia.

In recent years, Russia has used attacks in the information space as part of its hybrid warfare arsenal, promoting the illegal occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, hiding its involvement in hostilities in Eastern Ukraine, as well as its full-scale war against Ukraine since 24 February 2022. There is no reason to believe that Russia will stop attacking all Western democracies in the information space in the near and medium term, especially against countries where the Kremlin claims to maintain influence<sup>15</sup>. It is in Latvia's interest to strengthen the security of the information space and to develop the resilience of the state and society in order to successfully repel and resist Russian manipulations of various intensity in the information space, including in crisis situations.

The People's Republic of China (hereinafter – China) also uses informational influence and soft-power tools to shape a favourable information environment in foreign countries, including Latvia, in line with its economic, political and other interests. In recent years, China has used hostile narratives and disinformation against partners and institutions that guarantee Latvia's security, including the United States, the European Union and NATO<sup>16</sup>. In the future, Latvia should take into account the growing desire of Chinese authorities to use local journalists, media, researchers, academic sector and non-governmental organisations in order to obtain information about Latvia's information space and build a positive image of China according to its interests, to counter messages in the Latvian public space, which are not in line with the interests of China and its global world view<sup>17</sup>.

There are also other actors who can pose security challenges and risks to Latvia's information space. In 2021, the Belarusian regime carried out a hybrid attack on the EU's external borders, targeting mass efforts of the people of the Middle East to illegally enter Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In addition to channelling the flows of migrants, the Belarusian regime spread hostile narratives about Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, including about their 'non-compliance with international law'. In the future, the Lukashenko regime may threaten Latvia in the information space and thus, indirectly, NATO and the EU. Similarly, the desire of other international actors,

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<sup>15</sup> Satversmes aizsardzības birojs (2022. gada 13. septembrī). *Krievijas – Ukrainas karš. Sekas Latvijai*. <https://sab.gov.lv/?a=s&id=17&jid=109>

<sup>16</sup> The NATO Strategic Concept endorsed at the NATO Summit in Madrid on 29 June 2022 states that China poses systemic security challenges to Euro-Atlantic security. In addition, China uses hybrid and cyberspace operations, confrontational rhetoric and disinformation targeting allies and NATO security. China's actions against the West have been analysed and listed by several other sources in the information space, including the European External Action Service. Sources: NATO (29 June 2022). *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>; EUvsDisinfo (4 April 2022). *China's Balancing Act on the Ukraine War*, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/chinas-balancing-act-on-the-ukraine-war/>

<sup>17</sup> Valsts drošības dienests (2022). *2021. gada publiskais pārskats*, <https://vdd.gov.lv/uploads/materials/29/lv/vdd-2021-gada-parskats.pdf>

including non-state players, to carry out attacks in the information space against the state of Latvia or certain of its institutions cannot be ruled out either.

The information space is closely linked to global technological developments and people's skills to handle them safely. The role of social media platforms in socio-economic and political processes continues to grow, however, the content management of disinformation, conspiracy theories, fraud schemes and other manipulations (algorithms, inauthentic involvement) is too slow and insufficient. Access to technological innovations – virtual and augmented reality (VR, AR), deep-fakes, artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain technologies – has a growing role for the wider public, which presents not only economic opportunities but also security challenges. In order to balance development interests on the one hand, and safeguard basic democratic principles and national security interests on the other, the regulatory solutions of Latvia, EU, as well as global solutions and their effective implementation in practice, will play an important role in the coming years.

#### 4. Vision and objective

***Vision of the Concept*** – to promote the security of the information space in Latvia in the context of geopolitical uncertainty, including through strategic communication, ensuring that the state institutions and society of Latvia are resilient<sup>18</sup> to internal and external risks of interference in democratic processes in the information space, as well as their ability to participate in a coordinated manner in order to effectively manage crisis and increased threats. Latvia will ensure the continuity of statehood and democracy and comprehensive defence of the state where the people's sense of belonging to the state of Latvia, their desire to defend it and psychological resilience in resisting internal and external security risks and threats, plays a central role.

This can be achieved by involving all public administrations, local governments, their subordinate institutions, organised civil society, the private and academic sectors as well as the wider public. The Concept provides for ensuring that public administration and local government institutions are able to communicate strategically with their audiences in a coordinated, efficient and reliable manner in everyday and crisis situations<sup>19</sup>, citizens have access to independent, high-quality and reliable media, as well as the majority of society has at least a minimal level of media and information literacy, organised civil society is aware of its possibilities and role in strengthening the security of the information space.

Mobilisation of material technical, human and financial resources, knowledge and skills is required in the process of the implementation of the Concept to make Latvia's information space so strong and resilient that foreign manipulations in it become too disadvantageous, expensive, ineffective – practically impossible.

***The objective of the Concept*** is to comprehensively strengthen the security of the information space in all three mutually interlinked pillars of the information space and the six priority lines of action, incl. by 2027:

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<sup>18</sup> Resilience of the state and society includes the ability to identify, repel and avoid manipulation in the information space in a timely manner, including disinformation, as well as to quickly recover from shocks and temporary loss of security in crisis situations. Resilience is based on the comprehensive development of knowledge and skills, including by promoting the development of strategic communication capacities of state institutions, promoting the quality, reliability and use of quality media, raising the level of public media literacy and information literacy, and dedicating resources to these objectives that are adequate for the geopolitical situation and national security and defence needs at all levels and sectors of government.

<sup>19</sup> At strategic level, the State Chancellery plans and coordinates the strategic communication of the State, as well as centrally plans and implements measures to promote the security of the information space. At the operational and tactical level, strategic communication activities are implemented, as well as security of the information space is strengthened by all state institutions, local governments, civil society, private and academic sectors, as well as the general public.

- 1) strong centralised strategic communication capabilities are developed, which act in synergy with strategic, efficient and professional communication between the public administration and local government institutions and the public;
- 2) enhanced media independence, quality, security, inclusiveness, and adaptability to the challenges of the 21st century;
- 3) Latvian society is resilient to manipulations in the information space, including through media literacy and information literacy, as well as non-governmental, private and academic sectors are engaged in strengthening the security of the information space in a coordinated and effective manner.

## **5. Values and fundamental principles**

The Concept is based on the values and fundamental principles unifying the people of Latvia, as set out in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia. These are the grounds for Latvia's strategic communication and narratives to local and international audiences. In a rapidly changing geopolitical environment, state institutions, media actors and society (regardless of their self-identification with a particular nationality or language) are politically united by a set of values and principles that are not violated by developing and using state communication narratives, campaigns and other communication activities:

- Latvia's statehood, sovereignty and independence are irreversible. It is the sacred duty of the Latvian state and society to protect them.
- Latvia is ceaseless – it has deep historical roots, a common territory, the Latvian language and culture, which have evolved naturally and have always existed. This includes the continuity of statehood after the proclamation of independence on 18 November 1918, resistance to and non-recognition of foreign occupation regimes, full restoration of independence on 4 May 1990 and continuous involvement of the whole state and society in shaping Latvia's future.
- Latvia is a national state where democratic participation and national identity are based on the Latvian language. Latvia is also modern, adaptable and able to develop, open to minorities and the diversity of society. Latvia has an inclusive and mutually respectful society.
- Latvia is based on European and Western democratic values: humanism, rationality, secularity, the rule of law, democracy and human rights.
- Each and every resident of Latvia is part of the state and therefore carries out communication about the state and society. Latvia advocates the cohesion of society, the belonging of the population to the country's present and future through unified historical memory, motivated and active civic participation, as well as security of society as a whole (including human security).
- Latvia is an effective and fully-fledged member of the EU and NATO, and these institutions are irreversibly the cornerstones and guarantees of Latvia's economic development, prosperity, security and defence.
- Latvia's communication with internal and external audiences is based on proven facts, evidence and belief in science.

## **6. The national coordination model of strategic communication and information space security**

National strategic communication and strengthening of the information space security are planned, implemented and ensured in accordance with a partly decentralised governance and coordination model, as well as a whole-of-government approach, involving all state and local government institutions.

### ***6.1 Coordination of strategic communication***

At the strategic level, the State Chancellery centrally plans the national strategic communication narratives and measures for the medium and long term. The State Chancellery ensures coordination with other public administration institutions in order to ensure that national strategic communication narratives are reflected in their annual communication plans and strategies, as well as in daily tactical communication. The State Chancellery may make proposals to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers in order to promote the achievement of strategic objectives by means of communication. In order to achieve the strategic objectives of the state, the State Chancellery itself or in cooperation with other public administration institutions plans and implements cross-sectoral strategic communication campaigns and other communication activities. The State Chancellery also ensures the transmission of strategic communication narratives to Latvian local government, as well as to organisations of the Latvian diaspora and their representatives in their countries of residence. In addition, the State Chancellery centrally plans strategic communication policy and measures to promote the development of strategic communication capabilities of state institutions, including training and table-top exercises.

The State Chancellery's StratCom chairs the Communication Coordination Group of the Public Administration (hereinafter – the Communication Group<sup>20</sup>) – a closed, consultative coordination format, which is used in everyday and crisis situations, with a view to create the unified strategic communication of the public administration and coordinate messages for different target audiences, identify communication challenges and their potential solutions, as well as exchange operational information on issues to be examined at Cabinet of Ministers meetings or other topical issues in the field. The communication team shall meet at least once a week, or as required. The State Chancellery's StratCom is responsible for the agenda of the Communication Group and serves as its secretariat.

The Government's Communication Coordination Council (hereinafter – the Council), chaired by the Head of the Communication Department of the State Chancellery, coordinates the implementation of the Government's communication policy<sup>21</sup>. The Council also plays an important role in the process of development and improvement of the Government's communication capabilities, promoting cooperation and stays updated on current communication trends, as well as serving as a platform for line ministries to share good practices in the field of strategic communication and to create synergies between sectoral strategic communication plans and strategies in the short and medium term. The Council meets as required, but not less than once every two months.

At the tactical and operational level, the public administration institutions and local municipalities develop their strategic communication plans and strategies in the short term, as well as in the medium term, as required, in order to achieve the objectives of their institutions and sectors, to communicate with their target audiences in a decentralised manner and according to their competence. The aim is to ensure that any person working in public administration institutions, local government and their subordinate institutions is able to convey the strategic narratives and messages of the state, including in crisis situations. Institutions coordinate, as required, their plans and strategies with the State Chancellery. They may also receive strategic support from the State Chancellery for their development.

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<sup>20</sup> The objectives, functions, tasks, powers and composition of the Public Administration Communication Coordination Group shall be laid down in the by-laws of the activities of this group, which shall be issued (or amended) by the order of the Director of the State Chancellery. The Communication Group includes Heads and Press Secretaries of StratCom and Communication Department of the State Chancellery, heads of units responsible for communication of all ministries, as well as communication advisers to the Prime Minister and all ministers. Other institutions may be invited to participate in the Communication Group.

<sup>21</sup> Valdības komunikācijas koordinācijas padomes nolikums, <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=288017>

## 6.2 Coordination of information space security

The information space and its security depend equally on all three pillars: 1) effective communication of state and local government institutions with their target audiences; 2) a strong and high-quality media environment and journalism; 3) skilled, educated and engaged society that is able to recognise and resist manipulations in the information space. Strengthening each of the pillars contributes benefits the national security. A secure information space also deters the potential adversary from aggression, including hybrid operations, as it reduces the chances of success to a minimum.

In order to promote the security and resilience of the information space, the State Chancellery centrally monitors and coordinates processes in the three pillars, including centralised monitoring of the information space, sociological research and cooperation in the field of analysis with Latvian and international partners, as well as providing recommendations to public administration institutions for the adaptation of communication and action in a coordinated manner in order to achieve the strategic objectives of the country. This includes training and organising table-top exercises, strategic support to public administrations, local governments and their subordinate institutions, as well as measures to promote media and information literacy in cooperation with other competent authorities.

The State Chancellery's StratCom also chairs the Information Space Security Coordination Group (hereinafter – the Security Group)<sup>22</sup> – a closed, consultative coordination format that ensures supervision of the implementation of the Concept and intended measures, as well as identifies, eliminates and reduces risks and threats to state and public security in the information space. The group meets as required, at least once every two months. The State Chancellery's StratCom chairs and performs the functions of the secretariat of the Security Group. At the tactical and operational level, a wide range of public administration institutions, local government, subordinate institutions, as well as the non-governmental, academic and private sectors are engaged in strengthening the security of the information space. The general public is also involved to protect the information space from foreign manipulations for example through the implementation of hygiene measures in the information space<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> The objectives, functions, tasks, powers and membership of the Information Space Security Coordination Group (represented institutions with decision-making rights) shall be laid down in the by-law of the activities of this group, which shall be issued (or amended) by a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers in accordance with Section 13 of the State Administration Structure Law. The Concept requires that the Group is represented by: the State Chancellery, the Chancellery of the President, the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Security Service, the State Police, the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP), the Public Electronic Mass Media Council (SEPLP), the Information Technology Security Incident Prevention Institution (CERT.lv). Other state and/or non-governmental institutions may be invited to participate in the Security Group.

<sup>23</sup> Hygiene of the information space is a set of measures that each citizen can practice on a daily basis to promote the security of his or her relatives' information space, such as: caution before sharing emotional content in social media (including disinformation), evaluation of cookie settings, creating a list of quality media and their consumption, regular updating of knowledge about commonly used manipulator methods, as well as others. Source: Bambals R. (Red.) (2022). *Rokasgrāmata pret dezinformāciju: atpazīt un pretoties*. Rīga: Valsts kanceleja, pp.43-46.

### 6.3 Coordination and cooperation model

The national coordination model for strategic communication and information space security is presented schematically in Figure 1:

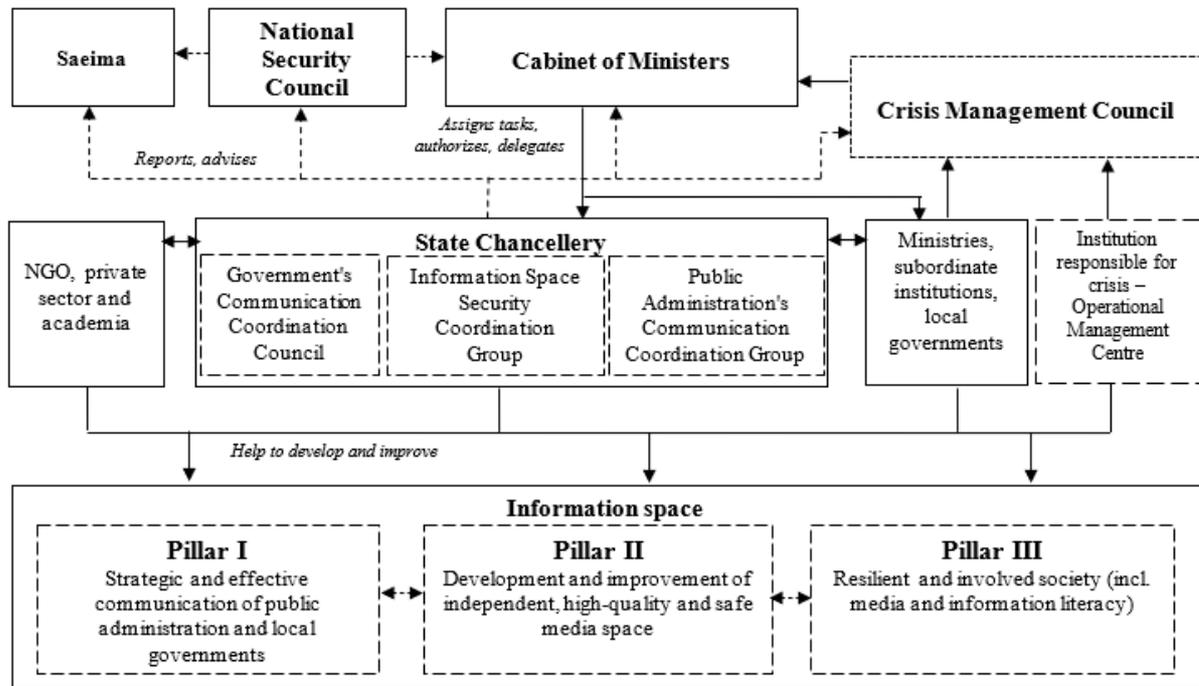


Figure 1. The national coordination model for strategic communication and information space security

In addition to coordination of the Communication Group, the Security Group and the Council, the State Chancellery constantly ensures reporting on security risks and threats to the information space, their management, implementation of strategic communication, as well as other urgent matters to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Saeima, the Chancellery of the President, the National Security Council as appropriate, as well as cooperating with the state security services and law enforcement institutions. The State Chancellery's StratCom ensures coordination and cooperation on information space security and strategic communication issues at international level, both bilaterally and in multilateral formats, including the EU, NATO and others.

The State Chancellery's StratCom regularly disseminates the strategic communication narratives to local governments and regions, as well as organises training and table-top exercises simulating attacks in the information domain, including in cooperation with local government civil protection commissions and other involved institutions.

In the event of crisis or threat, the State Chancellery's StratCom, at the request of the Crisis Management Council, may provide an analytical assessment of the information space security or other forms of support to strategic communication. In accordance with the State Civil Protection Plan, the State Chancellery's StratCom provides strategic support to the institution (or several institutions) responsible for disaster or threat response and relief operations, as well as, if necessary, cooperates with the Operational Management Centre, if one is established<sup>24</sup>. The State Chancellery's StratCom also supports crisis communication efforts in cases where a coordinated cross-sectoral response is required with the involvement of at least three public administration institutions that may have difficulties in providing such a response through their own resources.

<sup>24</sup> Par Valsts civilās aizsardzības plānu, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/317006-par-valsts-civilas-aizsardzibas-planu>

## **7. Priority directions of the Concept for 2023-2027**

The Concept for 2023-2027 puts forward six priority directions to strengthen the security of the national information space and to put these models for coordination and cooperation into practice.

### ***7.1 Implementation of national strategic communication and capability development***

Effective national strategic communication capability is the cornerstone of Latvia's economic development, social well-being, cohesion and trust in the state and its leaders, as well as the successful realisation of the interests of foreign policy, national security and defence policy. Effective strategic communication is an important support for the resilience of the state and society to conventional and hybrid threats during a crisis.

Between 2023 and 2027, the Concept aims to develop and further improve national strategic communication in three directions: 1) structural transformations and developments; 2) development of strategic communication capabilities; 3) development and implementation of strategic communication narratives.

#### **Structural transformations and developments**

A structural challenge is the insufficient human, technical and financial resources base for ensuring communication functions in state institutions and local government. Insufficient resources have not been systematically analysed so far, but they have been revealed in practice, especially when public administrations or local government deal with acute crisis situations. Similarly, the existing communication units and staff often perform support functions in institutions and are often not integrated into the management and policy planning processes, which could offer strategic communication solutions for the management of institutions. Not all institutions have developed communication plans or strategies that would allow for targeted and strategic planning of communication activities for the coming years. The issue of communicators' remuneration (compared to the private sector) is important in order to attract and retain talent in the public sector.

In order to accurately identify shortcomings and obstacles that hinder the implementation of strategic communication in institutions, it is necessary to carry out a comprehensive audit of the communication capabilities of public administration institutions and local governments. Based on the conclusions of the audit, it is planned to develop proposals and a development vision for structural transformation measures to be implemented throughout the Concept period and examined for the approval by the Cabinet of Ministers during the first years of implementation of the Concept. Transformations with resources that are adequate for geopolitical situation and national security needs should be provided to the State Chancellery's StratCom and should promote the capacity building of public administration institutions and local government communication units and communicators.

The Concept and the Action Plan complement the State Chancellery's long-standing work on promoting public participation and open governance. The Concept is in line with the objective of the "Fifth National Open Government Action Plan 2022-2025" (hereinafter – the Open Governance Plan) drawn up under the guidance of the State Chancellery – to promote openness and transparency of the work of state institutions in the public interest, as well as public participation in decision-making.<sup>25</sup> Also in 2022, the "Guidelines for Public Participation in

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<sup>25</sup> For instance, Commitment 3 of the Open Governance Plan aims to strengthen public representation and dialogue with the public in decision-making processes in every sector, incl. the ministries' task to identify and develop a range of cooperation partners and to define the ways in which they maintain a permanent dialogue with the public. The Open Governance Plan also includes other measures to improve public participation and public institutions'

Public Administration” issued by the State Chancellery provide advice on how to identify and inform the target audience about the possibilities of participation in the implementation of the Concept.<sup>26</sup>

### *Strategic communication capability development*

A strategic communication policy planner and practitioner should become a permanently recognised profession in Latvia. The processes of professionalisation and development of the communication sector in public administration institutions, local governments and their subordinate institutions should be continued, taking into account that the resilience of the state and society to threats in the information space, including in crisis situations, depends on the capacity and efficiency of communicators. The objective is to ensure that every person working in the public sector – from senior officials, policy planners and implementers and including communicators – has sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to convey the country’s strategic messages to the internal and external audiences of their institution, as well as to be able to recognise and resist manipulation in the information space both in everyday life and in crisis situations.

In order to develop the profession of strategic communication, the State Chancellery centrally plans and provides annual training on various aspects of strategic communication available to public administration institutions, as well as to local government upon their request. The training shall include the development of centralised methodological materials and analytical research to provide a standardised but sufficiently flexible and adaptable framework for all those involved in the implementation of national communication.

In order for the institutions to be ready to respond to a crisis situation in the information space, the State Chancellery organises annual table-top crisis simulations, contributing to a rapid, efficient and coordinated response of the authorities to various threats with a focus on overcoming challenges in the information space. The training should also be organised for local governments and subordinate institutions upon their request and according to the resources available. The preparation and management of crisis training can involve non-governmental, private and academic partners, as well as international experts and institutions.

In order to promote coordination between communicators employed in public administration and local governments, to raise the social capital of communicators (including social networks) and to increase inter-institutional cooperation projects and activities (including joint communication campaigns and events), as well as to promote the exchange and transfer of good practice, including between the public and private sectors, as well as at national and international level, the State Chancellery plans to organise an annual conference of communicators, as well as other events and activities.

It is in Latvia’s interest to prepare new experts of strategic communication and information space security. This would contribute to meeting the national human resource needs and ensure the export of expertise and knowledge to global markets. It is therefore necessary to provide internships and traineeships for communicators of public administrations in the field of strategic communication, including participation in international mobility programmes, in order to promote knowledge of the latest technologies and good practices in public and corporate communication at international level. It is essential to lobby that Latvian representatives are

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understanding of an effective participatory process as well as its capacity to communicate effectively with the public (Commitment 4: The state communicates with the public in a comprehensible and human language, explains decisions and complex topics, emphasising benefits). Open governance measures thus contribute to one of the pillars of a secure information space – effective communication between public authorities and their target audiences. <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/atverta-parvaldiba#piektais-nacionalais-atvertas-parvaldibas-plans-2022-2025-gadam>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/13835/download>

posted in international institutions in positions related to communication, including in the field of strategic communication, as well as to maintain constant contact with the professionals of the diaspora, to use their accumulated experience, knowledge and skills, to facilitate their return to Latvia, thus supporting the professionalisation of strategic communication.

### *Development and implementation of strategic communication narratives*

Based on the experience gained in public administration, knowledge and projects in planning and implementation of strategic communication<sup>27</sup>, the implementation of the Concept will further contribute to the improvement and implementation of the system of narratives and messages of strategic communication in order to promote the cohesion of Latvian society, strengthen citizens' affiliation to the state of Latvia, including civic participation, make the communication of state and public administration with citizens more effective, strengthen belonging to European values, cultural, economic and political space, as well as promote the resilience of the state and society against foreign manipulations in the information space, including disinformation.

Given the geopolitical situation in the world, one of the most important tasks is to promote the willingness of all state institutions and society to participate comprehensively in strengthening national security and defence, including in the information space, in order to collectively be able to avoid crisis situations, as well as effectively manage them.

The confidence of Latvian citizens in proven facts and science-based information, trust in communication between the state and public administration, as well as the desire to take responsibility and initiative, to use the opportunities and resources provided by the state to create a better future for oneself and the state through conscious and motivated engagement, will play an important role in achieving these objectives.

The State Chancellery's StratCom will develop the national communication strategy by improving and developing the narratives and messages used so far, as well as working on its coordinated implementation with planned, targeted, effective communication activities, including strategic communication campaigns. The use and conversion of messages into concrete communication activities will further require effective and coordinated involvement of all public administrations, local government, including subordinate institutions and the Latvian diaspora.

The efficiency of national strategic communication will be assessed on a regular basis to ensure adaptation, experimentation, learning from mistakes and good practices, as well as to strive for the implementation and development of higher standards of communication good practice.

### ***7.2 Resilience measures against security threats***

Latvia's strategy to develop resilience against manipulations and security threats in the information space, including disinformation, is based on the participation of all public administration and local government institutions, as well as organised civil society, academia and private sector, through both pre-emptive and crisis-responsive solutions at individual, institutional and national level. Manipulations in the information space are often part of a wider hybrid toolbox of the hostile actors, exploiting the vulnerability of the state and society. It is in Latvia's interest to mobilise a wide range of actors and resources in order to develop a resilient information space where the adversary's chances to carry out manipulations would be reduced to the minimum.

Prevention of manipulations and threat is based on the ability to identify them in a timely manner, analyse them, understand the causality of their spread and recommend appropriate

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<sup>27</sup> Valsts kanceleja (2016). *Latvijas valsts un valsts pārvaldes komunikācijas rokasgrāmata*

response measures. It is in Latvia's interest to strengthen and improve the capability of the State Chancellery's StratCom to provide centralised monitoring of the information space in order to analyse related processes in both Latvia and third countries.

These monitoring and analysis capabilities enable improvement of the communication and action within the public administration on a daily basis in order to achieve the strategic objectives of institutions and sectors. They are also integrated in the provision of strategic support to crisis management mechanisms in accordance with the legal provisions.

In the field of analysis and monitoring, the data at the disposal of the public sector should be increasingly used, which will allow for early identification of the causes of the problem, an accurate identification of the target audience and the most optimal forms of communication. The Central Statistical Bureau should be involved in this area, providing fact-based support for setting strategic communication objectives and monitoring their achievement.

In addition to centralised national analysis, the capacity of local governments in the regions of Latvia should also be promoted, including by involving local municipalities in civil protection commissions. The local municipalities have the potential to be the first who notice foreign manipulations in the information space, report to the responsible bodies, as well as take the first anticipatory or reactive countermeasures themselves. In the area of analysis and monitoring, organised civil society, private sector and academia should also be involved, where possible.

It is also in Latvia's interest to strengthen international cooperation in the development of information space monitoring and analysis capabilities, as well as in the exchange and transfer of good practices. This includes cooperation with foreign non-governmental and private sector partners.

It is in the interest of the country to implement, in the coming years, the strategic communication campaigns and other communication activities (including inter-institutional and for several years) aimed at local and international audiences in order to proactively refute hostile narratives against Latvia, promote its national security, as well as the basic principles and values included in the Concept. If necessary, additional resources should be mobilised for this purpose, in line with the needs dictated by the national security and geopolitical situation.

It is essential for Latvia to promote citizens' confidence in science and fact-based information, including by introducing effective preventive measures and, if necessary, legislative changes in order to discourage domestic and international players from deliberate manipulation, including the spread of disinformation, in Latvia's information space.

Latvia will be ready to use attribution at national and international level to cause political, economic, reputational or other losses and costs to actors who intervene in the information space to the detriment of Latvia's national interests.

Strategic communication as well as security of the information space, including monitoring and analysis capabilities, should be further integrated into all national civilian and military crisis management mechanisms. This includes the integration of these elements into crisis and simulation exercises, thereby promoting their continuous improvement and development, building on the lessons learned.

Foreign manipulations in the information space also pose threats and security risks to democratic processes. They can reduce citizens' loyalty and sense of belonging to the state, its institutions and their ability to provide social security coverage for their inhabitants. They pose risks to citizens' willingness to participate and be fully involved in governance of the state, economy and defence. Such manipulations on civic participation, including citizens' participation in elections, have a crucial impact. It is in Latvia's interest to ensure effective protection of the Saeima, local government and European Parliament elections as well as other democratic processes from all risks of foreign interference, including in the information space.

Strategic communication should therefore be integrated in the management of electoral security risks, while strengthening the resilience, communication capacity and resources of the institutions involved in the organisation of elections. In addition, the state, with all the means at its disposal (not only communication), must constantly invest resources in promoting civic participation in the country's socio-economic, social and political processes.

### ***7.3 Strengthening and improving the media environment***

Quality independent media are the cornerstone of a democratic Western value system. They are an important channel for communication between state institutions and local governments and for relations with society. The media form the basis for citizens' awareness, belonging to the state, civic participation, as well as ensuring the so-called watchdog function.

It is difficult to imagine work in the other two pillars of the Concept without a high-quality, independent, safe and capable media environment and high-quality journalism. A strong media environment and high-quality journalism reduce the potential for manipulations, including disinformation. Therefore, they are also an integral part of ensuring the security of the information space both in everyday life and in the event of a crisis or threat to the country.

It is in the public interest to support the public service media, including by promoting citizens' trust in them and providing them with funding close to the EU's average level of funding of the public service media in the Member States in the medium term. Public service media will continue to play a critical role in informing and communicating to citizens in the event of crisis and threats to the country.

In the light of global transformation processes affecting the media and advertising market and given the increasing role of social media, Latvia will continue to financially support national and regional media to provide the people of Latvia with high-quality journalistic content, as far as possible. This will include the efficient and strategic use of the Media Support Fund, as well as the use of other support mechanisms in line with the availability of the state budget resources. It will also include training and transfer of good practices to facilitate the digitalisation of the media, the development of competitive business models, increasing revenues, including through the increase in subscriptions and numbers of paid subscribers, as well as other measures.

A significant proportion of minorities in Latvia has for a long time adhered to disinformation and propaganda channels controlled by Russia. In order to prevent the exclusion, maintain and promote the belonging of these groups of society to Latvia, after denying access to these channels, it is important to continue providing alternative high-quality news and entertainment content to these audiences in the short-term through the existing Latvian media<sup>28</sup>, while not increasing additional content in minority languages that is funded from the state budget. In the medium and long term, it is necessary to promote the integration of this group of society into the European media and information space, by increasing the content in Latvian, thus contributing to the consolidation of the Latvian society based on the official language.

Latvia will continue to involve journalists and the media in the planning of crisis management measures, including civilian and military exercises. This includes measures to promote the continuity of effective media performance in the event of crisis and threats to the state.

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<sup>28</sup> At the end of 2022, there were five news services in the field of television programmes and on-demand services in Latvia, which make up news in Russian and three news services that produce the news in Latvian. In Latvia, the list of audio and audiovisual programmes to be retransmitted contains 250 programmes, 126 of which are available in Russian, but only 43 in Latvian.

Strengthening the security of the information space will also include the provision of a high-quality journalistic offer and ensuring its access to residents in the regions, paying special attention to reaching target audiences in the regions of Latvia bordering Russia and Belarus.

The official publisher of the Republic of Latvia (SLLC *Latvijas Vēstnesis*) will further play an important role in the promotion of public law literacy<sup>29</sup> and civic education<sup>30</sup> and the direct provision of concentrated state information (including in a special legal regime - in an emergency, exceptional situation, for the fulfilment of the tasks of the civil and national protection system) in a single, national, civic and legal information platform in accordance with regulatory enactments in the field of access to official publications and legal information and priority tasks.

Diaspora media and publications will continue to play an important role in strengthening citizens' awareness and affiliation to the state of Latvia. The state should therefore provide the diaspora with media content created in Latvia, as far as possible, and make the content created by diaspora journalists and media more visible and accessible in Latvia.

Journalists and media play a crucial role in informing and educating their audiences about manipulations in the information space, including disinformation narratives and manipulation methods targeting Latvia. This promotes public awareness in order to proactively counter disinformation and mitigate its potentially harmful impact on public and national security. State support for investigative and analytical journalism, as well as educational programmes that prepare professional journalists with high ethical standards can contribute to national security.

It is in the interest of the state and society to ensure the ability of journalists and media to perform their work in accordance with the Satversme (Constitution) of the Republic of Latvia and national laws, including by preserving freedom from political and economic influence or pressure, as well as freedom from fear of physical or other security threats. Media safety and independence is also a matter of international reputation, therefore it is in Latvia's interest to promote a higher position in the World Press Freedom Index<sup>31</sup> by committing to address any case where the safety of journalists or media is threatened in Latvia in a timely, coordinated manner, with adequate severity.

Latvia has become a safe haven for the media and journalists fleeing the repression of authoritarian regimes. Latvia also plays an important role in coordinating the activities of international media donors, as well as in media environment research, journalist and media training and other media support activities, specialising in providing support in the Eastern Neighbourhood of the EU. Organised civil society also makes an important contribution. Latvia

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<sup>29</sup> Public law literacy - the awareness of individuals about their rights and obligations laid down in laws and regulations and the ability to understand and realise them in real-life situations, especially as regards human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy. Social and economic rights are the basis for the education, health, well-being, common good and individual development of the population, citizens, and the sustainability of the country. Public literacy of law is facilitated, inter alia, by sufficient and high-quality awareness (including sound information space, media literacy, prevention of disinformation, digital and communication skills (including knowledge of the official language), internet accessibility, access to state, civic and legal information, accessible professional legal and mediation services), public participation, responsible, reliable, professional and modern state and law enforcement, cutting red tape, quality of legislation and meaningful cooperation in creating, disseminating and organising other activities of a single national, civic and legal information platform.

<sup>30</sup> State and legal information and civic education portal "People. The country. Law" (lvportals.lv) content - educational descriptions, opinion articles and interviews with publicly recognised authorities on issues of history, democracy, political culture, historical memory of society and the identity of the state, thus contributing to an open and high-quality discussion about the development of civil and democratic society and the role of each individual therein.

<sup>31</sup> In 2022, Latvia ranked 22nd out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index. In comparison, Estonia ranked 5th, while Lithuania was 9th. RSF (2022). *World Press Freedom Index 2022*, <https://rsf.org/en/index>

will continue to stand for media freedom and the safety of journalists in various bilateral and multilateral cooperation formats.

#### ***7.4 Engaged and resilient society***

Society's media and information literacy play an important role in developing resilience of the state and society against manipulations in the information space, including disinformation. These skills are crucial to ensure that strategic communication can reach the target audience and that the public trusts in the communication of the public administration and local government, as well as to increase public demand for high-quality, fact-based media content.

In order to strengthen the security and resilience of the information space through cooperation between public administrations and local governments, as well as organised civil society, academia and the private sector, the Concept sets the objective of ensuring that at least 75 % of the Latvian population (aged 18 years and above) has at least minimal media and information literacy by 2027. At the same time, practical tools and opportunities will be provided to promote media and information literacy also for children and young people under the age of 18. A minimum set of these skills means that a person is able to navigate safely in the information space, distinguish reliable content from deceptive content, as well as not sharing unverified content.

To achieve this objective, it is necessary to allocate sufficient resources, recognising that the investment in people and their resilience strengthens national security and national defence, including against hybrid threats. The psychological resilience of citizens to information influence operations and foreign interference in the information space should also be strengthened in order to facilitate successful and effective crisis management in the future.

The objective is to be achieved through a broad set of measures: formal and interest-related education; national strategic communication campaigns and other activities; synergies and partnerships between the public, private sector and academia and civil society, in particular the media, to create and promote tools for raising media and information literacy tailored to different groups of society.

In order to ensure access to media and information literacy tools, methodological materials, recent research, local and international events and other activities in line with international practice, it is essential for all institutions to engage and regularly update the national media and information literacy platform.<sup>32</sup>

On 25 March 2021, the UN General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/75/627) "Global Media and Information Literacy Week" was adopted, spearheaded by Latvia together with a number of other like-minded countries. This is the first UN resolution to address challenges in the information environment, including the fight against the spread of mis- and dis- information. In line with the resolution, Latvia also celebrates the Global Media Literacy and Information Literacy Week in the last week of October each year, which was established and organised annually by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) since 2012. This week can be used to take stock of the main challenges and opportunities in the information space during the past year, including the successes introduced in Latvia in the field of media and information literacy, and to engage local and international audiences accordingly.

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<sup>32</sup> In 2022, the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) has established and maintains a platform-database (website) where information and practical materials for the promotion of media literacy and information literacy of the people of Latvia are available in one place. A wide range of institutions is committed to the improvement and development of the platform.

### ***7.5 Partnership with organised civil society, private and academic sectors***

Since 2022, civil society, media and academic institutions<sup>33</sup> of Latvia and the other Baltic States have joined together to become part of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) research and analysis network<sup>34</sup>. Thus, Latvian non-governmental organisations, media and academia have the potential of playing an active role in the exchange of good practices in research and analysis of disinformation and other manipulations in the information space at national and European level. It is in Latvia's interest to create and develop synergies between the public administration, the Baltic Centre of Media Excellence and other organised civil society, media and academia partners in Latvia and worldwide in research and analysis of information space security challenges, including disinformation. Cooperation should be supported by stable and predictable public funding in the medium-term.

In order to develop new knowledge, support public administration and local government institutions, and create a pool of experts skilled in strategic communication and information space security, which would meet both national and international labour market needs, the State Chancellery's StratCom will strengthen cooperation with educational institutions of Latvia. Public, private and international financial support mechanisms for strategic communication and information space for security research and innovation should be promoted and mobilised in higher education study programmes. It is necessary to encourage participation of Latvian researchers in international scientific cooperation projects, involve them in international mobility programmes, and attract research grants in the fields of information space research and analysis.

It is essential for public administration and local government institutions to develop long-term relations with the private sector, including through the exchange and transfer of good practices, strengthening the communication capacity of the public sector, as well as establishing partnerships and mechanisms in the implementation of strategic communication campaigns and other communication activities. Synergies between the public and private sectors can lead to innovations in research, analysis and security, which can eventually become a country's export product or service.

In order to successfully prepare for future crises and different national threat scenarios, the State Chancellery's StratCom will develop a cooperation network with non-governmental organisations, private and academic institutions and representatives. The network will be mobilised in crisis situations to prevent or mitigate security risks and threats in the information space, to disseminate national strategic communication messages, as well as to implement other measures to successfully manage the crisis.

### ***7.6 International cooperation***

Coordination and cooperation with other countries, international institutions and like-minded partners are essential to prevent and limit manipulations in the information space, including disinformation, alongside the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach at national level.

Containment of the authoritarian regimes in the field of information influence operations and disseminating disinformation benefits society as a whole and can therefore be considered a global public good. It is in the interest of Latvia to constantly learn from the experience of other

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<sup>33</sup> The Regional Centre of Excellence of the Baltic States has since 2022 brought together institutions from Latvia (Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Delfi.lv and Re:Baltica), Estonia (Tartu University, Tallinn University) and Lithuania (Delfi.lt, Vytautas Magnus University)

<sup>34</sup> The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), in cooperation with media organisations, online platforms and media literacy practitioners, brings together fact-checkers, media literacy experts and academic researchers to understand and analyse disinformation. <https://edmo.eu/>

countries, to share its knowledge and skills, as well as to participate in the development of international regulatory frameworks, using the influence of international organisations and institutions to contain authoritarian regimes and influential non-state actors engaged in malign manipulations in the information space.

Through regular initiatives and international participation, Latvia has gained the reputation of a country that actively and successfully implements initiatives in the areas such as strategic communication, countering disinformation and foreign interference in democratic processes, regulation of social media platforms, media and information literacy, media and journalist freedom and security. When implementing the Concept to meet national interests, Latvia will continue to work actively in the field of strategic communication and security of information space in the EU, NATO, UN, Council of Europe, OSCE, OECD, as well as bilateral and regional cooperation formats. This includes regular representation and participation and, if necessary, the organisation of relevant events in Latvia.

The State Chancellery's StratCom as the national point of contact will continue to develop cooperation with social media platforms. Public administration, non-governmental organisations and the research sector will further actively cooperate with social media platforms to reduce the impact of manipulations in the information space on state and public security. Latvia will stand for greater openness and availability of social media platforms' data and algorithms in order to ensure the monitoring of policies implemented by the social media companies to limit disinformation. This includes the effective implementation of the EU regulation and policies, including the Digital Services Act, the Digital Markets Act and the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation.

Latvia will continue to work on the transfer of expertise in strategic communication, media and information literacy to countries whose security and development are closely linked to Latvia's foreign policy interests (e.g. EU Eastern Partnership countries). In addition, Latvia's visibility and expertise in the field of strategic communication and information space security create opportunities for strengthening cooperation with countries from different regions of the world, thus contributing to Latvia's campaign for election to the UN Security Council in 2025 for the period 2026-2027.

In the coming years, Latvia will promote and maintain contacts with experts working abroad in order to pursue national interests, as well as to promote the transfer of internationally acquired knowledge and experience back to the national level. Latvia will use and involve the diaspora to convey and disseminate the national strategic communication messages abroad, as well as to involve the diaspora in strengthening the security of the information space.

Latvia will effectively use the experience, expertise and knowledge of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence to implement the Concept for national needs, as well as promote the Centre's recognition in the international arena.

Public administration will actively use cooperation with other international institutions, academic organisations, non-governmental organisations, centres of excellence in Europe and the world, contributing to the security of the Latvian information space.

## **8. Implementation of the Concept and closing provisions**

A list of intended activities, which is an integral part of the Concept, has been drawn up with a defined division of responsibilities and deadlines for the implementation of the specific tasks of the Concept.

To fulfil the priority directions and tasks included in the Concept and the list of planned measures, institutions shall, in accordance with their competence, draft detailed policy planning documents and regulatory enactments (or amendments thereto). The responsible and co-

responsible institutions will implement the measures provided for in the Concept within the framework of the allocated State budget funds, and the issue of the allocation of additional State budget resources for 2024 and subsequent years shall be addressed in the preparation of the draft law “On the State Budget for 2024 and the Budget Framework for 2024, 2025 and 2026”, together with applications for priority measures of all ministries and other central state institutions.

From 2024, the competent authorities shall report annually to the State Chancellery on the progress achieved regarding the implementation of the Concept. The State Chancellery shall coordinate and compile the information provided by the institutions, as well as ensure unified reporting to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Saeima and, if necessary, other institutions on the progress of the implementation of the Concept and the Implementation Plan, as well as other current events in the information space during the last calendar year by 31 March of each year.

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