



## SUMMARY REPORT

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020

*This report has been produced with the information provided by participating organisations within the OIP COVID-19 Working Group (CWG). Each organisation provides monitoring and analysis of evolving and emerging disinformation and misinformation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional insight and research has been provided by OIP partners, including Zinc Network and Bellingcat.*

The following countries and languages are covered in this report:

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Languages</b>
Armenia	Armenia
Bulgaria	Bulgarian
Czechia	Czech
Estonia	Estonian, English, Russian
Georgia	Georgian
Hungary	Hungarian
Latvia	Latvian, English Russian
Lithuania	Lithuanian, English, Russian
Moldova	Romanian
North Macedonia	Macedonian, Russian
Romania	Romanian
Russia	Russian
Slovakia	Slovakian
Ukraine	Ukrainian, Russian



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## OVERVIEW

*Key new or shifting narratives.*

1. **(Armenia)** Alongside a number of claims that the impact of COVID-19 has been inflated, outlets in Armenia have picked up an interview by Professor Luc Montagnier, a 2008 Nobel Prize winner, who has stated that the virus was likely created in a Wuhan lab, possibly whilst the lab was trying to find a vaccine for HIV. This has spread across a number of countries, including Czechia.
2. **(Bulgaria)** The latest conspiracy is centred around a video which appeared on Facebook, claiming that the crown on the British £20 note represents COVID-19, and the tower in the background is represents 5G. This has also been picked up in North Macedonia.
3. **(Czechia)** A far-right politician has stated that the EU created the virus through genetic manipulation with a view to asserting more control over member states. Additionally, a separate narrative (possibly started by RT) is emerging claiming that the US warned NATO and Israel about COVID-19 but was ignored.
4. **(Estonia)** Russophobic narratives continue highlighting issues between the domestic Russian audience and the Estonian government; it is claimed that instructions issued to ethnic Russians have been “shorter” and “more demanding”
5. **(Georgia)** Following on from the more general claims last week that faith would protect people from COVID-19, disinformation over the weekend has emerged stating that the IMF and EU are providing billions of dollars to the Georgian government specifically to fight the Orthodox Church, and that it will be used as a scapegoat for any sharp rise in cases. The Church has continued to call for parishioners to ignore the stay at home call, particularly over the Easter weekend.
6. **(Hungary)** In a continuation of what appears to be attempts at deflecting criticism of the Prime Minister’s new COVID-19 powers, government allied media continues to push negative narratives around opposition politicians and independent figures. This includes claims that Donald Tusk’s (President of the



European People's Party) grandfather was a Nazi collaborator, and that domestic opposition politicians are acting on behalf of commercial interests, not the people of Hungary.

7. **(Latvia)** Government failure and Russophobia hindering the response to COVID-19 are continued features of the media landscape. In addition, there has been new criticism of the manner in which disinformation is factchecked on Facebook in Latvia, as it is supposedly inherently Russophobic.
8. **(Lithuania)** Criticism of the government's response to COVID-19 has now led to claims of "medical fascism". Separately, anti-vax and false cure narratives (vitamin C in particular) are spreading further, with some groups going so far as to say there is no virus at all.
9. **(Moldova)** Kremlin allies and allied media have turned their attention to areas with Russian occupied territories – notably Ukraine and Georgia – criticizing their claims over, for example, Crimea and Abkhazia and then omitting those regions in their official COVID-19 statistics. There has also been praise for Russia's response, and its offer of assistance.
10. **(North Macedonia)** Alongside continued 5G claims, the conspiracy theory that references Bill Gates funding the creation of the virus in order to microchip the population – as seen in the previous two Working Group reports in Armenia, Georgia, Lithuania and several other countries – has now reached North Macedonia.
11. **(Romania)** Heavy criticism of President Ioannis continues, ranging from general incompetence (for example, when compared to Trump) to collaboration with Western leaders allowing Romanian workers to be exploited during the pandemic. Separately, there have been further claims that the Roma are not complying with the lockdown.
12. **(Russia)** Kremlin-owned media have been pushing the 'positive' response Russian support has garnered, particularly in Italy. Separately, there has been further subtle reporting of Russian scientists rebuking their Chinese counterparts for claiming that the virus could not have been created in a lab.
13. **(Slovakia)** Several Slovakian MEPs have pushed the idea that the financial support provided by the EU is a mechanism to exert further control – moving away from the original claims that the EU is not helping countries enough.



14. **(Ukraine)** Claims of an inevitable economic collapse due to COVID-19 continue. Boxer Alexander Usik has stated that he fears the actions taken by the Government will lead to Ukraine moving toward the “return to some Soviet Union”. This is in relation to the closure of Orthodox churches, and highlights an interesting development with regard to Orthodox issues – criticism of measures taken to close the church because such measures were similar to soviet clampdowns on religion. This appears to be both anti-Kyiv and anti-Moscow.

## DISINFORMATION

### 1. Immigration

*Illegal immigration is accelerating the spread of COVID-19 as migrants and ethnic minorities carry the virus.*

- **(Romania)** ‘Investigative’ site Gazeda de Cluj has [claimed](#) that Romanian migrant workers are being exploited by Germany. This is allegedly part of a plot by Angela Merkel, Klaus Ioannis and the Romanian secret services. The post has been read 1630 times and acquired 288 likes on Facebook.
- **(Poland)** Fake posts on social media continue to utilise the format “I have a friend who works with...” to create a sense of first-hand word-of-mouth validity. A recent crop claim to have a “friend” who works for Polish Border Control, claiming that in a few days the borders will be opened, inciting fear of migrants bringing a new wave of the virus.

### 2. Failure of the EU

*Failure to respond to the pandemic and disunity amongst member states.*

- **(Hungary)** ELÉG, a pro-government Facebook page with 150,000 followers [posted](#) a photo, claiming that “Brussels has done nothing against the coronavirus pandemic” and “their [the EU’s] first move was to lecture and condemn Hungary and Poland”. The page was referring to a resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 17<sup>th</sup> April that – amongst much else – heavily criticised the Hungarian government for not limiting its emergency powers to a set timeframe. In contrast to the claims of the page, the EU offered significant economic and financial assistance to Hungary, with Budapest now on course to become the largest beneficiary of the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative, the EU’s soon-to-be-established COVID-19 emergency fund.



- **(Latvia)** Rebalitic [stated](#) at the end of last week that the COVID-19 virus highlights how Western EU countries rely on ‘slaves’ from the East to maintain their economies. This article was shared 389 times.
- **(Latvia)** Separately, News Front has [claimed](#) that ‘not even COVID-19’ can force the Baltic states to change their Russophobic views, partially because their “Western owners” will not let them.
- **(Slovakia)** MEP Milan Ukrik (from the radical right-wing party Kotleba LSNS) [published](#) a video to his Facebook page, following the online meeting of the European Parliament, in which he criticised the EU for its response to the pandemic. He went on to claim that the financial help the EU is offering to its member states is a mechanism for increasing centralised control. (Czech MEP Ivan David is pushing a similar narrative, see “Conspiracy 2. Planned pandemic”). The video has over 3,000 shares and has been viewed over 160,000 times.

### 3. Incompetence

*Failure / predicted collapse of Western Governments, progressive regimes, opposition parties and lockdown measures representing the states’ attack upon personal freedom.*

- **(Georgia)** On 17<sup>th</sup> of April Giorgi Vashadze, the leader of Georgian opposition party, New Georgia, claimed that the Georgian government is hiding the real number of infected people, and that they plan to blame the Georgian Orthodox Church for the sharp rise of cases after Easter. This was [covered](#) in Tabula.GE and read approximately 6,000 times.
- **(Hungary)** Pro-government daily Magyar Hírlap published a [piece](#) suggesting that some Hungarian opposition figures are potentially acting in the interests of private companies when they look for non-governmental channels to purchase COVID-19 related medical supplies. The article pointed to Budapest’s opposition mayor Gergely Karácsony, who signed a contract with a private laboratory but has not disclosed its name; György Babosi, a politician of the liberal Momentum party who claimed that he could purchase ventilators cheaper than the government; and independent MP Ákos Hadróczy, who criticised the results of a disputed public procurement case.



- **(Latvia)** Pro-Kremlin sites Baltnews and BB have highlighted [businesses](#) and [individuals](#) that have struggled to acquire support from domestic governments in the Baltics, claiming that the Latvian government has failed to help them.
- **(Lithuania)** Website infa.lt has [published](#) an opinion piece by controversial businessman Ugnius Kyguolis, in which he claims “medical fascism has already entered Lithuania”, comparing lockdown measures with the erosion of liberty, leading to economic disaster. Another outlet, videumenedotcom.wordpress.com, pushed a similar narrative, criticising decisions made by the Minister of Health, Aurelijus Veryga.
- **(Moldova)** There is a continuing narrative which criticises Ukraine for being unable to manage the COVID-19 crisis, juxtaposed with Russia who are praised for their efforts.
- **(Ukraine)** Pro-Kremlin news portal PolitNavigator [pushes](#) the narrative that Ukraine is on the verge of “inevitable” economic collapse in the wake of the pandemic, citing a publication called “Mirror of the Week”. Knock-on impacts from the economic failure of Poland and other EU countries are also mentioned.
- **(Ukraine)** PolitNavigator have [published](#) the opinions of boxer Alexander Usik, who has criticised President Zelensky’s decision to close Orthodox Churches for Easter Mass. He refers to this as a “return to some Soviet Union” era; an interesting angle in comparison to other takes on the closure of the churches, as this is both anti-Kremlin and anti-Kyiv. The article has been read over 8,700 times.

#### 4. Russia as “saviour”

*Russia will find a cure, bringing aid to the worst-hit countries, minimal impact felt in Russia, Russia is a victim of Russophobia and Russians living in other countries face discrimination.*

- **(Baltics)** Pro-Kremlin Russian-portal News-Front.info [published](#) a long article describing various examples of ‘Russophobia’ and discrimination against Russians living in the Baltics in how domestic governments are communicating about the pandemic. This included an example of the official advice from the Estonian government which was delivered via SMS. News-Front.info claims that the Russian language version was much shorter and ‘more demanding.’



- **(Baltics)** Another Russian-language outlet, news.rambler.ru, [attempts](#) to mis-attribute the sharp drop in freight traffic on the Latvian Railway as more of a consequence of poor relations with Russia rather than the impact of the pandemic.
- **(Moldova)** Sputnik Moldova [pushes](#) the narrative that the COVID-19 pandemic is completely under control in Russia, citing President Vladimir Putin's praise for the country's efforts. The same portal also [published](#) an article relating to the statement made by MFA minister Sergei Lavrov, in which he promised aid to all foreign allies who request it from Russia, further painting Russia as 'in control' and in a position to assist other nations.
- **(North Macedonia)** Magazin.MK (20,000 followers on Facebook) [published](#) a story, with content from Russia 1 and Russia 24, about a lab in Siberia that will save the world from COVID-19.
- **(Russia)** News-Front.info has [reported](#) on the praise an Italian mayor has given for Russian soldiers.
- **(Russia)** Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused the UK's BBC of intentionally creating a negative image of Russia to its viewers against the backdrop of COVID-19, [calling](#) for the BBC to be fined.

## 5. Moral decay

*The crisis typifies the moral decay or defeat of the West and/or democratic values.*

- **(Estonia)** News-Front.info (for Russian speakers) [cited](#) US conservative Pat Buchanan's comments on balancing the needs of the economy against the crisis as evidence that Americans care more about money than people during the pandemic.
- **(Hungary)** Conspiracy site, Valóság Amit Tudnod Kell, [suggested](#) that U.S. billionaire Bill Gates would want to vaccinate people only if the COVID-19 treatment benefited his business interests.
- **(North Macedonia)** Tocka [published](#) an article recounting the prophecies of Sergei Vronsky, predicting a third world war which will consume all of Europe and Asia, and visions of US cities burning, citing "Sodom and Gomorrah".





- **(Poland)** Conservative news portal Do Rzeczy and the website of rock radio station Antyradio, [published](#) false statements alleged to have been made by the Israeli Minister of Health, that COVID-19 is a divine punishment for homosexuality. Fakenews.pl [debunked](#) this claim and Do Rzeczy have since deleted the article (though Antyradio have not).
- **(Russia)** On Russia 1's *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* a leading expert, Sergey Mikheev, [portrayed](#) the West as suffering from "moral defeat", the intent of which may be to encourage aggression towards Russia and China. The YouTube version of the video has 126,600 views as of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020.
- **(Ukraine)** Politnavigator, a pro-Kremlin portal, [claimed](#) that despite appearing to be civilised and prosperous, the West is using COVID-19 to eliminate its elderly population. The site had approximately 350,000 views last month.
- **(Ukraine)** Pro-Kremlin Opposition Party – For Life, was extensively [covered](#) delivering food parcels over Easter by channels linked to its leader including NewsOne, ZIK and 112. While not harmful in itself, it feeds into the 'failed state' narrative – that Ukraine is not able to feed its own population.

## 6. Orthodox influencers

- **(Georgia)** On 17<sup>th</sup> of April, the "Alia" newspaper's website [published](#) a quote by Bishop Iobi of the Georgian Orthodox Church, claiming that IMF financial assistance to Georgia (3.5 billion dollars) as well as EU assistance are aimed at fighting the Georgian Orthodox Church. He responded to stay-at-home calls by claiming that COVID-19 is not dangerous, and believers should attend church. The statement was made on the eve of the Orthodox Easter Vigil. A Facebook page called 'Stalin' (10,000 followers) also [shared](#) this.
- **(Georgia)** On 19<sup>th</sup> of April, Georgian website FOR.ge [published](#) a quote by Bishop Nikoloz of Georgian Orthodox Church, that "when a person strongly believes, their immune system is strengthened".
- **(Ukraine)** Pro-Kremlin outlet PolitNavigator [covered](#) an unverified (certainly poorly documented) story on a protest against the closure of Orthodox Churches over Easter. The story claims that Ihor Kolomoysky, owner of the 1+1 Ukrainian TV channel and ally of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, staged an event outside the closed Kyiv Pechersk Lavra church, offering people money to kiss religious icons. The article also conflates closure of churches with Russophobia and claims that local authorities "dug trenches" around churches under the "pretext" of repairing sewage pipes.



## Statistics and Cures

### 1. False statistics and causes

*Misquotes, incorrect statistics, hyperbole, inciting panic.*

- **(Armenia)** Digital outlet Lurer.com [published](#) an edited translation of an interview with Russian doctor Alexander Edger, in which he claims that the respiratory syndrome caused by COVID-19 is not pneumonia. The understanding of the symptoms and treatment of COVID-19 amongst the global medical community is still developing; Edger's opinion is based on a very small pool of patients and has yet to be corroborated by the scientific community.
- **(Armenia)** Prominent environmental activist Levon Galstyan [posted](#) on Facebook claiming that deaths from COVID-19 are being massively inflated, comparing the virus with herpes, which '60-80%' of people would test positive for, but obviously does not cause their deaths. The post has gained little traction thus far.
- **(Moldova)** In a lengthy Facebook post, Bogdan Țîrdea, Deputy Leader of the Socialist Party of Moldova, [commented](#) on discrepancies in COVID-19 death rates in autonomous territories and breakaway regions. He criticised the government of Ukraine for claiming the Donbas whilst not including its figures in its national death rate; similarly in Georgia, where figures in Abkhazia are included in the Russian total. (Standards/methodologies for death rate in either country have not been verified.) He goes on to push the idea that other diseases kill many more people each year and the seriousness of the pandemic is being exaggerated.
- **(Romania)** Flux 24 has [cited](#) a Russian scientist, Nadeja Loghina, who claims that poplar pollen can carry COVID-19.

### 2. False cures

*Increases to risk of exposure / serious illness, false strategies for protection.*

- **(Lithuania)** Conspiracy-minded Facebook groups are sharing claims that vitamin C can 'kill' COVID-19 but are denied by the pharmaceutical industry. Other new claims [include](#) that the widespread use of disinfectants and antibacterial handwash will cause cancer, heart disease and infertility. A post pushing this claim from a local website was shared 79 times on Facebook.



- **(Romania)** The Realitatea site (Alex ranking 74 for Romania) has begun [presenting](#) Hydroxychloroquine as the best cure for COVID-19, and stated that the government will purchase 2 million tablets.

## CONSPIRACY THEORIES

### 1. The virus was created in a lab

- **(Armenia, Czechia)** Many outlets worldwide have run with a story which references a recent interview with Professor Luc Montagnier (winner of the 2008 Nobel Prize for Medicine) in which he thought the COVID-19 outbreak had likely begun in a virology lab in Wuhan, possibly as a result of an attempt to create a HIV vaccine. The European Scientist has [debunked](#) this idea. In Armenia it has [appeared](#) on raparak.am (200,000 monthly views), as well as [bavnews.am](#), [news.am](#) and [armeniasputnik.am](#). In Czechia, the story was [reported](#) in Idnes.cz.
- **(Hungary)** Clickbait conspiracy Facebook page Kimondott Igazságok (14,000 followers) [posted](#) a fabricated story, saying that “China is already working on COVID-20” and pointed to a video showing a Chinese woman eating turtle soup.
- **(Georgia)** On 18<sup>th</sup> of April, Beka Vardosanidze, a far-right activist from Georgian March, [wrote](#) on his Facebook page that US president Barack Obama’s administration granted 3.7 million dollars to Wuhan Laboratory to pay for experiments on bats in 2015. The post contains an image, which highlights the distance between Wuhan Laboratory and Huanan Seafood market. This received 88 likes, 27 comments and 102 shares.
- **(Russia)** After a Chinese scientist claimed the virus could not have been created artificially, Alexander Butenko – a senior Russian virologist – [rebuked](#) them in an interview with the “Echo of Moscow” radio station.

### 2. Planned pandemic / Bill Gates conspiracy

- **(Armenia)** In a new episode of the YouTube news series ‘30 Minutes with Arthur Sahakyan’, guest interviewee Ara Manoogian (a US citizen of Armenian origin; journalist, activist, [running](#) for Congress in 2020 and [charged](#) with sex



offences with a minor in 2019) [claims](#) that the elite families who organised the Armenian Genocide of 1915 are now controlling the pandemic. He says he is not sure whether the virus was artificially created or originated naturally but does believe that reported virus deaths are being over-amplified.

- **(Czechia)** Czech Sputnik [published](#) an interview with Czech MEP Ivan David (member of the radical right-wing SPD party) in which he repeats conspiracy theories about COVID-19, including that it was developed through genetic manipulation techniques and that the EU are using it to gain further control over member states. The interview was also picked up by the Parmalamentni outlet and [Zem a Vek](#) in Slovakia. (Slovak MEP Milan Ukrik is pushing a similar narrative, see “Disinformation 2. EU failure”).
- **(Bulgaria)** [Bulgarian Facebook page “Голата истина”](#), published a video outlining how the UK £20 note has a crown on it, representing COVID-19, and a tower in the background, representing 5G. This feeds into the idea that world elites in the West planned the pandemic.
- **(Hungary)** A private citizen from Pécs, southwest Hungary, [posted](#) a number of social media posts, stating that there is no COVID-19 pandemic and that the current crisis is part of “an attempt of secret elites to seize global power.” The 44-year-old man who was arrested by Hungarian police, is now facing charges while his posts were deleted.
- **(Hungary)** Citing an [opinion piece](#) from the Wall Street Journal, two other fringe pro-Kremlin sites – [Felháborító Hírek](#) and [Valóság, amit tudnod kell](#) – stated that Henry Kissinger called for a “world government” to fight the ongoing pandemic whereas the former U.S. Secretary of State never made such claims in the discussed Wall Street Journal op-ed.
- **(North Macedonia)** Former Russian Tennis player Marat Safin’s support of the Bill Gates COVID-19 conspiracy has been [picked up](#) by sports site Gol.MK (68,000 followers) and [Magazin.MK](#) (20,000 followers).

### 3. 5G caused COVID-19

- **(Armenia)** Ara Manoogian (referenced previously) also [claimed](#) in his interview on ‘30 Minutes with Arthur Sahakyan’ that the “millimetre waves” effect of 5G was harmful to humans and nature, affecting genes, causing cancer and weakening immune systems.



- **(Slovakia)** Prominent conspiracy outlet Zem a Vek continues to [promote](#) videos on Facebook featuring David Icke in which he pushes the theory that the pandemic is caused by 5G transmitters. These videos include those previously taken down by YouTube.
- **(Poland)** One of the many Anti-5G Facebook pages published a fake photo depicting popular Polish actor Cezary Żak criticising 5G and linking it to the pandemic. In the photo Żak is holding an image of a child 'crying because of the 5G antenna'; this has been edited together. The post has since been deleted. Defence24 [include](#) the claim in their debunking list.
- **(Georgia)** On 17<sup>th</sup> of April, Georgian clickbait website Wnews.ge [shared](#) a post about the 5G technology conspiracy. The article contains a call to Georgian people to turn off their phones, because of an upcoming planned 5G test in Georgia. The radiation wave from 5G antennas will, supposedly, affect all smartphone-owners, including those who plan to attend the Easter Vigil in churches.

#### 4. NATO

- **(Slovakia, Czechia)** A narrative is emerging across various conspiracy and disinformation outlets in both countries in which the US intelligence services are alleged to have warned NATO allies and Israel about the COVID-19 outbreak as early as November 2019. The original [source](#) of this story may be RT.
- **(Lithuania)** Russian-language media outlets in Lithuania, including [Fondsk.ru](#) and [News-Front.info](#) continue to push anti-NATO narratives claiming that the growing numbers of NATO soldiers present in Lithuania are increasing the risk of COVID-19 for local populations.
- **(Latvia)** Sputnik Latvia highlighted [interviews](#) with several NATO officials about China's "Mask diplomacy" potentially being used as part of a hybrid campaign to improve its reputation amongst NATO countries.
- **(North Macedonia)** Pro-Russian political Party Rodina published a [statement](#) on its website condemning the supposed insistence of NATO that North Macedonia must use 5G, given its 'harmful' effects. In the same statement, they called the quarantine 'fascist'.



## 5. George Soros

- **(Hungary)** Hungary's main state TV channel M1 [cited](#) an [analysis](#) from pro-government think tank XXI Század Intézet, saying that the Hungarian opposition parties, the liberal intelligentsia and the Soros network launched a "coordinated media offensive" that targets the legitimacy of Hungary's highly controversial COVID-19 law. The report alleges that opposition figures, as well as independent influencers, journalists and analysts such as Lili Bayer (a Hungarian reporter of POLITICO Europe) and [Péter Krekó](#) (the Executive Director of Political Capital) are associated with the Soros network. Supposedly, their ultimate aim is to attack Hungary through "echoing statements" from the Hungarian opposition, but the aforementioned figures are non-partisan and do not represent special interests.

## 6. Anti-vax

- **(Lithuania)** A YouTube [video](#) featuring a 'Dr Shiva' from India's claim that a compulsory vaccination programme is on its way, and people will be vaccinated by force, has been dubbed with a Lithuanian voiceover and been viewed over 22,000 times.

## 7. World Health Organization

- **(Armenia)** The Iravunk ("Rights") print and digital news outlet (14,000 views per month) has [published](#) an article which claims that 32% of WHO funding comes directly from Bill Gates and that Gates (along with other big pharma companies) has huge influence over the organisation. The authors depict Gates "as a fanatic" who is dedicated to cutting the global population and microchipping citizens via vaccination. The article goes on to criticise the Armenian Ministry of Health for cooperating with WHO and for previously implementing vaccination programmes such as Gardasil / HPV.

## 8. There is no virus

- **(Lithuania)** Facebook groups focusing on the pandemic continue to spread the theory that the virus does not exist at all and that the global panic has been superficially manufactured by profiteering elites.

## ADDITIONAL



## 1. Response to Chinese and Russian aid

- (Russia) An article in [Nation-News.ru](https://www.nation-news.ru) cites comments made by Polish international security analyst Marek Shchverchinsky that the pandemic is distracting Western governments from countering Russian and Chinese expansionism, as further evidence of 'Russophobia' from Poland, Estonia and Latvia. *(Note: 'Marek Shchverchinsky' only appears online as a citation in disinfo portals, does not appear to be an actual analyst in Poland or for the Polish government.)*

## 2. Domestic responses to COVID-19

- (Bulgaria) Executive Director of the Ural Tourism Association, Mikhail Maltsev, [claimed](#) that Bulgaria will be amongst the first countries available to Russian tourists post COVID-19, as it is not part of the Schengen tourist zone. It is unclear why this should be, however, as despite being outside of the Schengen Zone, it is part of the Schengen Information System, meaning it has no capacity to allow for visa-free travel for Russians on its own.
- (Bulgaria) Gallup International – not linked to Gallup US – [issued](#) survey results which suggest that 53% of Bulgarians are willing to have restrictions placed on them to battle COVID-19. Gallup International receive funding from the Kremlin and are reported to be part of its propaganda efforts, and its current President – Kuncho Stoychev – has been an active member of the former Bulgarian Communist Party for some time.
- (Hungary) After Donald Tusk (President of the EPP) stated in [Spiegel](#) that Carl Schmitt (a prominent Nazi theorist) would be proud of Orbán's use of COVID-19 to acquire emergency powers, the pro-government news portal PestiSracok [published](#) a story with false pictures depicting Tusk's grandfather as a Nazi collaborator. Though briefly a member of the Wehrmacht, it is believed he was forcefully conscripted, having previously been imprisoned in a labour camp by the Nazis. Mária Schmidt, a pro-government theorist, [tweeted](#) a photo (180 likes) claiming that Tusk's grandfather was a member of the SS.
- (Latvia) VZ.Ru [published](#) an article by Aleksandr Malkevich, President of the National Values Protection Fund – a pro-Kremlin outlet with a focus now on Africa. Malkevich criticised the fact that Re:Baltica is collaborating with Facebook to fact check disinformation, despite their – in his view – Russophobic





leanings, thereby damaging the quality of the information exchange between ethnic Russians and Latvians.

### 3. Roma

- **(Romania)** The Fluierul Report site published [claims](#) that the Roma population across Romania are inherently uncompliant with regards to quarantine, and are responsible for many of the new outbreaks. Pictures used in the article were taken from screen captures of 6 year old YouTube videos.