

DISINFORMATION MONITOR ON SOCIAL MEDIA

**ASSESSED DURING THE PERIOD
JANUARY, 1ST – JANUARY, 31 2025**



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DISINFORMATION MONITOR ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Assessed during the period of January 1st - January, 31 2025

Executive Summary

In January 2025, disinformation campaigns on social media in Moldova escalated, strategically targeting public anxieties related to national security, economic instability, and cultural identity. Telegram, Facebook, and TikTok served as the principal dissemination platforms, with Telegram acting as the epicenter for coordinated inauthentic activity. This report presents a critical examination of the predominant disinformation narratives, their emotional appeal, and the key actors driving these campaigns, elucidating their broader implications for public perception and political stability.

Main Insights for January 2025

Platform dynamics:

- **Telegram** continued to function as the primary vector for disinformation, particularly in narratives surrounding the energy crisis, NATO, and governmental legitimacy.
- **Facebook's** acted as a conduit for amplifying Telegram-generated content, facilitating its penetration into mainstream discourse.
- **TikTok and YouTube** were leveraged to target younger demographics through highly visual, shareable content.

Narrative Trends:

- Economic and security concerns remained at the forefront, with **energy security** and **security related disinformation** gaining traction.
- **Anti-government narratives** intensified, aiming to delegitimize state institutions and leadership.

Public Perception Impact:

- **Fear and distrust** emerged as dominant emotional vectors, exacerbating societal polarization.
- **Pro-Russian narratives** maintained a stronghold in public discourse, particularly within rural and older demographics.

Emotional Analysis in Disinformation Narratives

- **FEAR AND DISTRUST** served as the principal drivers of disinformation, eroding confidence in Moldova's European trajectory.
- **NOSTALGIA AND PRIDE** played supporting roles, fostering an affinity toward Russian alignment among specific demographic groups.

Emotional Analysis in Disinformation Narratives

EMOTION	FREQUENCY	PREDOMINANT NARRATIVES
Fear	45%	Energy shortages, electricity and gas crisis, NATO as a military threat
Distrust	35%	Government corruption, EU policies
Anger	10%	Fraudulent elections, anti-government messages
Nostalgia	5%	Russian cultural superiority and stability
Pride	5%	Russia's role as a geopolitical stabilizer

State and Proxy Actor Activity Levels

ACTOR	ACTIVITY LEVEL	OPERATIONAL TACTICS
Russia	High	State-controlled media, coordinated Telegram campaigns
Distrust	Moderate	Regional narrative amplification
Anger	High	Social media activism, troll farm engagement
Nostalgia	Moderate	Automated content propagation

- **Russia remained the central orchestrator**, utilizing state-controlled information ecosystems to disseminate targeted narratives.
- **Belarus and local proxy actors** played facilitative roles in reinforcing disinformation themes.

Overview of the Top 10 Narratives

NARRATIVE	IMPACT	KEY PLATFORMS	PRIMARY EMOTION	TARGET AUDIENCE
Energy crisis and fear of lack of electricity and gas	High	Telegram, Facebook	Fear, Distrust	General public, economically vulnerable groups
NATO poses a direct security threat	High	Telegram, Facebook	Fear, Distrust	Security-conscious citizens

EU economic policies will devastate Moldova	High	Telegram, Facebook	Fear, Distrust	Economically vulnerable groups
Government corruption is endemic	High	Telegram, Facebook	Anger, Distrust	General public, political skeptics
Western values promote societal decay	Moderate	TikTok, Instagram	Nostalgia, Distrust	Young adults, conservative sectors
Russia is a victim of Western aggression	Moderate	Telegram, Facebook	Pride, Distrust	Russian-speaking communities
Russian alignment ensures political stability	Moderate	YouTube, Facebook	Nostalgia, Pride	Older generations, rural citizens
Election fraud undermines democracy	Moderate	Telegram, Facebook	Anger, Distrust	Politically engaged citizens
Pro-European leaders serve foreign interests	High	Telegram, Instagram	Anger, Distrust	General Public, political skeptics

Cluster-Specific Analysis

Cluster 1: Energy and Gas Crisis

The EU was blamed for Moldova's energy crisis, with narratives claiming that government mismanagement, rather than geopolitical realities, was the cause of rising gas prices and electricity shortages. Telegram and Facebook were the primary platforms for amplifying these concerns.

PLATFORMS	IMPACT	KEY DATA
Telegram, Facebook	Heightened public pressure to seek Russian energy solutions	4.5 million Telegram mentions 2.8 million Facebook shares

Cluster 2: Security and Defence

NATO was framed as an external aggressor seeking to destabilize Moldova and force the country into military confrontations. Disinformation narratives suggested that Western alliances, particularly NATO, would undermine Moldova's sovereignty and escalate regional conflict.

PLATFORMS	IMPACT	KEY DATA
Telegram (core), Facebook (amplification)	Increased skepticism of NATO, heightened security concerns	2.1 million Telegram mentions 1.8 million Facebook shares

Cluster 3: EU and US Decadence

This narrative depicted Western values as morally and socially corrupt, promoting the idea that European integration would erode traditional Moldovan culture. TikTok and Instagram played a significant role in disseminating visually engaging content that contrasted “decadent” Western lifestyles with “traditional” Russian values.

PLATFORMS	IMPACT	KEY DATA
TikTok, Instagram	Strengthened opposition to EU cultural influence	1.5 million TikTok videos 1.8 million Instagram engagements

Cluster 4: Perception of the Government

Disinformation focused on delegitimizing the Moldovan government, accusing it of corruption, incompetence, and subservience to Western interests. Telegram and Facebook were the primary vehicles for these claims, which often involved manipulated financial data and misleading allegations about government failures.

PLATFORMS	IMPACT	KEY DATA
Telegram, Facebook	Reduced trust in governance and democratic institutions	3.2 million Total engagements

Cluster 5: Russophobia

Russian disinformation campaigns positioned Moldova as an anti-Russian state manipulated by Western actors. The idea that Moldova was part of a broader strategy to isolate Russia was widely disseminated on Telegram, where nationalist rhetoric encouraged alignment with Russian policies.

PLATFORMS	IMPACT	KEY DATA
Telegram	Reinforced pro-Russian sentiment	1.1 million Telegram mentions

Cluster 6: "Ruskii Mir" (Russian World)

This cluster promoted the idea that Moldova belongs to Russia's cultural and political sphere, arguing that severing ties with Russia would lead to economic and societal collapse. Facebook and YouTube played a major role in spreading these narratives through historical revisionism and economic fearmongering.

PLATFORMS	IMPACT	KEY DATA
Telegram	Increased pro-Russian identification	1.7 million YouTube views 1.3 million Facebook interactions

Conclusion

The disinformation landscape in Moldova during January 2025 was characterized by highly coordinated campaigns exploiting societal vulnerabilities in energy security, political governance, and foreign policy alignment. Telegram emerged as the primary conduit for inauthentic narratives, with Facebook amplifying content to broader audiences. Fear and distrust were the dominant emotional triggers, systematically eroding trust in Moldova's European trajectory and national institutions.

The energy crisis was the most impactful disinformation theme, generating widespread concern about potential gas shortages and power outages. Narratives blaming Moldova's government and the EU for economic struggles were particularly effective in shifting public perception and increasing pressure on state authorities. The security discourse around NATO further fueled anxieties, leveraging regional tensions to create a sense of imminent threat.

The role of state and proxy actors, particularly Russia remains substantial, with direct and indirect involvement in disseminating disinformation. Local pro-Russian groups and troll farms played a significant role in targeting vulnerable communities, ensuring sustained narrative amplification.