The Resilience Council Handbook

Onno Hansen-Staszyński

SAUFEX

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SAUFEX Project

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Executive Summary

This handbook explores the origins, evolution, and early practical application of the concept of Resilience Councils: consultative bodies designed to support more decentralized, inclusive, and democratic decision-making in responses to Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI). Rather than proposing a fixed institutional model, the handbook examines Resilience Councils as a dynamic approach that brings together experts, public authorities, and civil society actors to strengthen societal resilience against information manipulation.

Drawing on interviews with five key contributors to the EU-funded HORIZON project Saufex, complemented by primary and secondary sources, the handbook traces how the concept has developed. It presents Resilience Councils not as a theoretical construct, but as a set of evolving activities. The narrative follows the concept's unconventional beginnings with the Drog group, its subsequent structuring by Polish researchers and academics, its piloting by Polish public servants, and its further development by Drog. Together, these stages illustrate how ideas move between stakeholders, adapting to real-world constraints and opportunities.

The handbook also situates the Polish experience in a broader European context. Reflections from two well-established personalities in the defender community - one from Finland and one from Lithuania - offer perspectives on the relevance and transferability of the Resilience Councils concept beyond Poland. As representatives from frontline states facing similar FIMI challenges, their insights highlight both shared concerns and the importance of national context and personal perspectives in shaping institutional responses.

Importantly, the handbook does not claim to offer definitive guidance on how to establish a successful Resilience Council. As emphasized in the introduction, it is not a prescriptive, step-by-step manual, nor does it seek to codify a single "correct" model. Instead, it documents an ongoing process and invites readers to reflect on how decentralization, participation, and collaboration might be applied within their own institutional and societal settings. By doing so, the handbook aims to inspire informed experimentation and dialogue, contributing to the gradual strengthening of individual and societal resilience to FIMI from the ground up.

The Annex to this handbook explores the concept of Resilience Councils from a wider angle, ranging from philosophical underpinnings to broader practical elaborations that are presently (January 2026) undergoing piloting within the Saufex project framework.

Introduction

Navigating potentially harmful information: Three perspectives In today's information landscape, we face a fundamental choice in how to address potentially harmful content, particularly Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)[1]. Three main perspectives have emerged over time: - Bottom-up authenticity: Ordinary citizens represent the primary source of authentic viewpoints, while elites may contribute to or amplify harmful information. Decision-making should prioritise amplifying voices that are currently marginalised or unheard. - Top-down protection: Ordinary people are susceptible to manipulation due to limited knowledge or cognitive biases. Experts and institutions should guide decisions to safeguard the public. - Collaborative inclusivity: Both experts and citizens offer valuable insights. Effective decision-making requires broad stakeholder involvement, bridging diverse perspectives.

Current approaches to countering FIMI Most existing interventions against FIMI align with the top-down protection model. These often rest on several key assumptions: 1. Knowledge gaps: The public lacks awareness of FIMI tactics, leading to interventions focused on improved communication, such as government strategic communication or high-quality journalism. 2. Factual deficits: People are misinformed about key issues, making fact-checking a core tool to correct falsehoods. 3. Psychological vulnerability: Exposure to FIMI acts like a "contagion," prompting efforts like prebunking (inoculation theory) to build resilience by letting people actively employ manipulation techniques themselves to understand their functioning. 4. Inevitable influence: No intervention fully prevents impact, justifying direct restrictions like content moderation, criminalisation of certain information flows, deplatforming actors, or penalties for dissemination. While many experts advocate intensifying these top-down measures, the SAUFEX project (Secure Automated Unified Framework for Exchange), an EU Horizon-funded initiative, adopts a different path from the outset. A core objective is to decentralise and democratise FIMI analysis and response processes. As outlined in the project's framework, SAUFEX anticipates benefits arising from this path across scientific, economic, technical, and societal domains. Central to its realization is the establishment of Resilience Councils - multi-stakeholder bodies that serve as intermediaries between state and non-state actors. From the project vision: "the establishment of Resilience Councils /.../ could /.../ bolster the project's societal impact by providing a platform for collaboration between stakeholders and ensuring the dissemination of accurate information. Overall, the project's focus on societal impact highlights its potential to protect democratic processes and institutions and foster greater transpar-

ency and collaboration in the face of foreign interference. Resilience Councils, rooted in communities, are not only self-propelling but also create a ripple effect of awareness and resistance against FIMI, reinforcing the society's fabric of resilience. With the potential to be self-financed through public-private partnerships, consultancy services, and research funding, these councils are not reliant on fluctuating political will or governmental budgetary changes. A percentage of exploitation of this project will go and sustain Resilience councils. This model, thus, transforms the battle against foreign interference from a top-down to a bottom-up approach, resulting in a self-sustaining ecosystem."

About this handbook This handbook is intended for anyone seeking to broaden stakeholder participation in decision-making, with a particular focus on countering FIMI. It is not a step-by-step DIY manual - such a prescriptive guide would be premature, and contextual differences may demand tailored approaches. The concept of Resilience Councils is still emerging: The first was established in Poland in 2024, linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and involving NGOs, academia, and other experts. National, regional, cultural, historical, and geopolitical factors likely require unique adaptations elsewhere. Accordingly, this handbook is explorative and descriptive rather than prescriptive. It shares insights from Saufex founding partners, highlights key project-inspired documents, and reflects the author's firsthand experience in the project's development and implementation. The handbook consists of: - Main body: A highlighted journey from initial conceptualisation to the present. - Annex: More speculative explorations, from philosophical underpinnings of an alternative approach to dealing with FIMI, to pilots with adolescents. This handbook does not aim to set the Resilience Councils model in stone. Instead, it seeks to inspire those with an open, constructive mindset to experiment with decentralising and democratising responses to FIMI - ultimately strengthening individual and societal resilience from the ground up.

PART ONE - The origins of Resilience Councils

A conversation with Bram Alkema and Ruurd Oosterwoud

Introduction

In December 2025, I sat down with Bram Alkema and Ruurd Oosterwoud to talk about the intellectual origins of one of the more ambitious ideas to emerge from the European counter-disinformation community: the Resilience Council. The conversation took place within the framework of Saufex, a Horizon Europe project that has been trying to build practical tools for citizens to defend themselves against Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference - FIMI, in Brussels parlance. Bram and Ruurd are the founders of DROG, a Dutch organization that has been thinking about disinformation longer than most, and partner in the Saufex project. They created the "Bad News" game, one of the earliest prebunking interventions. They developed the DROG Disinformation Intervention Model, which maps five generations of counter-disinformation approaches. And they have been, by their own admission, about five years ahead of the field on most things - which is another way of saying they've spent a lot of time being right while being ignored. The Resilience Council concept sits at the intersection of several ideas: that behavioral analysis is more defensible than narrative policing; that citizens rather than elites should determine acceptable conduct online; that transparency and decentralization are more robust than top-down control; and that the regulatory apparatus of the DSA, despite its good intentions, may have made things worse rather than better. What follows is an edited version of our conversation. I've reorganized it thematically and cleaned up the inevitable digressions of live discussion, but the arguments and the voices are theirs.

The philosophical foundation

Onno Hansen-Staszyński: Let's start with the fundamental question. Why should we want to democratize and decentralize decision-making around FIMI? What's the case for that?

Bram Alkema: The basic observation is that rights erode. They erode slowly, silently, whenever you let bureaucrats optimize for their own convenience. Each individual step seems reasonable. "We need to verify your identity." "We need to track this for security." "We need this exception for administrative efficiency." And you add all these small things up, and suddenly you're in a situation where the state can surveil you but you cannot surveil the state. Where they tell you it's

for your protection, but somehow the protections only flow one way. There's always an excuse. There's always some bureaucrat who can think of a reason why your rights should be a little bit smaller today than they were yesterday. That's the way of evolution. That's the way of the dodo. If you don't push back, if you don't constantly test whether your rights are still your rights, they will take them away from you. Always has been this way. Always will be.

OHS: That sounds like a general argument about civil liberties. What makes it specific to FIMI?

BA: Because the information space is where this dynamic plays out most visibly right now. And because the people who are supposed to protect us - governments, platforms, the experts - have systematically failed to do so in ways that respect citizen autonomy. They either don't act at all, or they act in ways that concentrate power rather than distributing it. Look at what happened. First we had platforms doing nothing while state actors ran influence operations. Then we had governments demanding platforms do something, which meant platforms started moderating according to opaque rules that nobody voted for. Then we had governments deciding they needed to take control themselves - and now we have ministries running their own monitoring operations, tracking narratives, deciding what's true and what's false. At no point in this progression did anyone ask citizens what they wanted. At no point did power flow toward the people who are actually affected.

OHS: So it's a matter of who decides?

BA: It's a matter of who has the right to decide. And my position is that in a liberal democracy, that right ultimately belongs to citizens. Not to bureaucrats. Not to platforms. Not to expert committees. To citizens. Which means we need mechanisms for citizens to actually exercise that right. That's what Resilience Councils are supposed to be.

Ruurd Oosterwoud: I'd add that there's a practical dimension here too. For the past ten years, everything people have tried against FIMI has been top-down. Governments saying "we'll handle it." And what we've seen, over and over, is that these top-down approaches either don't work or create new problems. Take the GDPR. It's enforced at high level by certain member states that have the legal powers to address companies in their jurisdiction. Which leaves most European citizens with a legal system they can never actually use. You have rights in theory. You have no rights in practice. The same thing is happening with the DSA. Whenever you flag something with platforms, nothing happens. Whenever you report something to authorities, nothing happens. The law exists, but there's no entrance point for citizens to make it work for them.

OHS: And the Resilience Council is supposed to be that entrance point?

RO: That's the idea. A way to bridge the gap between individual citizens seeing problems and collective action that actually has legal weight. But we had to go through a lot of evolution to get there.

The catalyst: Lithuania and the missing Article 5

OHS: Let's talk about how this thinking became concrete. What was the catalyst?

BA: Lithuania. 2021. The Chinese government launched what was clearly a coordinated information attack against Lithuania over a diplomatic dispute involving Taiwan. And I was watching, waiting for the European response. Waiting for the solidarity mechanism to kick in. And there was nothing. Not just nothing in the sense of no action - nothing in the sense of no mechanism. There was no way for other EU member states to formally recognize that Lithuania was under attack. There was no way to coordinate a response. In fact, it was worse than nothing: other governments actively argued that this kind of thing should be handled at the national level. Each country on its own.

OHS: That seems remarkable, given how much attention FIMI was getting at the time.

BA: It was remarkable. And clarifying. Because think about how NATO works. If there's a military incursion into NATO territory, you don't ask the Lithuanians for proof that it's really a Russian aircraft. You trust them. Article 5 means an attack on one is an attack on all. But for information attacks? Nothing. No mutual recognition. No collective response. No consequences for the attacker. So we started thinking: what would an Article 5 for FIMI look like? At minimum, it would mean that if Lithuania says "this is a Chinese information attack," the Netherlands says it's a Chinese information attack too. Mutual recognition of classification. That's step one. Step two would be coordinated response - making clear to any attacker what the consequences will be.

OHS: Did that idea go anywhere?

BA: It's still in the DNA of Saufex, actually. The "exchange" part of the name comes from this idea of exchanging assessments and responses across borders. But getting even the first step - mutual recognition - turned out to be politically impossible. Everyone wanted to reserve judgment for themselves. Everyone wanted to keep it national.

RO: Which is understandable from a sovereignty perspective, but it plays directly into the hands of adversaries using divide-and-conquer strategies. Russia targets the Baltic states intensively and barely touches Portugal and Spain. If each country handles it nationally, there's no solidarity. The attacked countries are on their own. The unattacked countries don't care. That's exactly what the adversary wants.

The methodological turn - behavior over narrative

OHS: Even if you could get mutual recognition, how do you make assessments objective enough that countries would trust each other? That's the hard part, isn't it?

RO: That's exactly the question that led us to behavior-based analysis. When we started working on this, everyone in the field was talking about narratives. "Russian narratives." "Chinese narratives." Disinformation was understood as false or misleading content - stories, claims, talking points. And the response was either to debunk those stories or to try to get platforms to remove them. We thought this was fundamentally wrong. You can't build an objective warning system on narratives. Narratives are contested by definition. If you say "this is a Russian narrative about NATO expansion," someone will say "no, it's a legitimate critique of Western foreign policy." You're immediately in a political fight about what's true and who gets to say so.

OHS: So what's the alternative?

RO: Behavior. Not what people are saying, but how they're saying it. Are they using coordinated networks of fake accounts? Are they artificially amplifying content? Are they using automation in ways that violate platform policies? Are they engaging in deceptive practices that can be empirically demonstrated? Behavior you can prove. You can show: here's a network, here's the coordination pattern, here's the evidence of inauthenticity. You're not making claims about truth or falsity. You're making claims about conduct. And conduct can be documented, verified, agreed upon across borders.

OHS: Was anyone else thinking this way at the time?

RO: There was one organization: Amit, which later became ARM. They developed the AMITT framework for classifying adversarial behaviors in the information space. But beyond them? Almost no one. The whole field was obsessed with content, with fact-checking, with narratives. We actually built our entire business model on the assumption that everyone would eventually come around to behavioral analysis. We thought we'd get acquired by a bigger player

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doing this work. And in a sense, that's what happened - not to us specifically, but to the field. Look at all the companies doing behavioral analysis now: Graphika, the Centre for Information Resilience, OSoMe. There's a whole market for social listening based on behavior. The field moved where we predicted it would move.

BA: The advantage of behavioral analysis isn't just objectivity. It's that it removes the political contestation. If you say "this content is disinformation," you're immediately in a fight. If you say "this network is engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior," you're making a factual claim that can be evaluated. You're not claiming to read minds or judge truth. You're describing conduct. That matters enormously when you're trying to build cross-border cooperation. The Dutch don't have to agree with the Lithuanians about what narratives are problematic. They just have to agree that certain behaviors are problematic. That's a much easier consensus to build.

The Trias Politica for social media

OHS: You mentioned building a business around these ideas. What was the institutional vision?

RO: We called it a Trias Politica for social media monitoring. A separation of powers. The idea was: a private company - us - would crawl the internet and analyze what's happening. We'd look for behavioral patterns, coordinated campaigns, anomalies. Then we'd package that into situational awareness for governments - but without any personal data, without any identification of individuals. Just: here's what's happening in the information environment. Patterns. Trends. Threats. Governments would get situational awareness without having to spy on their own citizens. That was crucial. The monitoring happens, but it happens at arm's length, by a private entity with clear limitations on what it can and can't do. And then - this is the third part - we'd share the entire dataset with journalists. Because we didn't want to be the ones drawing conclusions. We're a private company. We shouldn't be deciding what's true, what's dangerous, what requires action. That's for journalists to investigate, for the public to debate, for elected officials to decide.

OHS: It sounds elegant in theory. What happened?

RO: We were five years too early. Everyone we talked to who actually understood the problem thought it was a great idea. But those people didn't have money or power. The people with money and power didn't understand the problem - or they understood it differently and wanted different solutions. We had great brainstorming sessions with ethics boards at major accounting firms, trying to figure out how to institutionalize this. How do you create an "Authority

for Social Media Monitoring" that has legitimacy, that has teeth, but that doesn't become a censorship body? How do you defend free speech by monitoring threats to free speech? These are hard problems. And then everything just... died. The conversations didn't go anywhere. The funding didn't materialize. We kept doing our work, kept developing our ideas, but the institutional breakthrough never came.

BA: Until the Horizon call. That's what finally gave us a framework to actually build something. The DSA and Its Unintended Consequences

OHS: The Digital Services Act was supposed to address a lot of these problems. There are provisions about empowering citizens, about trusted flaggers, about researcher access. What went wrong?

RO: The DSA created two effects, and both were the opposite of what we needed. First: platforms went into full defensive mode. Before the DSA even passed, they were lawyered up completely. They wouldn't have conversations anymore. We tried to approach platforms about cooperation - how can we work together to make this actually function for citizens? Impossible. Nobody would talk. Everything was a legal risk now. Second: governments started pulling control toward themselves. The civil society space got squeezed from both sides. Platforms closed up. Governments took over. The room for independent actors - researchers, NGOs, journalists - got smaller and smaller.

OHS: So the law designed to empower citizens ended up disempowering civil society?

RO: Exactly. And then COVID happened, which accelerated everything in the wrong direction.

BA: COVID was a turning point. Governments started actively monitoring narratives - tracking anti-vaxxers, flagging "misinformation." And we kept saying: you don't want this. You don't want to be the ones deciding what's true about vaccines. You don't want to be tracking your own citizens' beliefs. Leave this to professionals doing behavioral analysis. Don't chase narratives. They didn't listen. And then came the backlash - all the criticism about government overreach, about censorship, about the "censorship-industrial complex." Some of that criticism was overblown or bad faith, but some of it was legitimate. Governments had put themselves in a position where they were policing speech, and that created massive trust problems.

RO: And then came the political shifts. Far-right parties gaining ground across Europe. The American situation changing dramatically. And suddenly platforms realized: there's no political incentive to cooperate anymore. There's no financial incentive either. So why bother? Just roll everything back.

BA: The truly perverse thing is that governments looked at a few high-profile successes - like the Sandy Hook lawsuit against Alex Jones - and concluded: we can do this. This is a government job. Protecting citizens from disinformation is something the state should handle. They took exactly the wrong lesson from those cases.

The adversarial landscape

OHS: You've suggested there's a broader ideological conflict at play here. Can you explain what you mean?

BA: I want to be careful about how I frame this, because it sounds conspiratorial if you take it too literally. Think of it as a thought experiment. About five years ago, I read an article about transhumanism. The serious version, not the science fiction version. There are people in the tech world - wealthy, powerful people - who genuinely believe that the singularity is coming. That artificial intelligence will become sentient, and that human consciousness can be uploaded to digital systems, and that death itself can be overcome. And some of these people aren't just waiting for this to happen. They're actively trying to make it happen. Now, run the thought experiment. If you genuinely believed this - if you believed that pushing toward the singularity was the most important thing humanity could do - what would you want the regulatory environment to look like? You'd want minimal government interference in AI development. You'd want minimal restrictions on information flow online. You'd want to eliminate any regulatory body that might slow down the march toward transcendence.

OHS: And you think this explains resistance to European tech regulation?

BA: I think it explains some patterns. When Europe passed the DSA and DMA, we entered territory that these people consider existentially threatening. Not because of the specific provisions, but because of the principle: that democratic governments can regulate the information environment. That's anathema to a certain worldview. I'm not saying there's a conspiracy. I'm saying there's an ideology, held by people with enormous resources and influence, that is fundamentally opposed to democratic oversight of the digital public sphere. And that ideology has shaped the environment we're operating in.

RO: The practical implication is that we can't rely on platforms or on sympathetic tech executives. Whatever cooperation existed before has been withdrawn. We're on our own. Which is actually another argument for the decentralized approach - if you can't work with the gatekeepers, you have to route around them.

Going east

OHS: Let's talk about how Saufex actually came together. Where did the consortium come from?

BA: We made a strategic decision early on: go east. If you want to understand disinformation, don't sit in Brussels talking to policy people. Go to the countries that are actually being attacked. Think about it. If you want to learn about windmills, you go to the Netherlands. If you want to learn about information warfare, you go to the Baltic states, to Poland, to Ukraine. These are the countries in the firing range. They've been dealing with Russian operations for decades. They have practical knowledge that Western European experts simply don't have.

OHS: How did you make those connections?

BA: There was a trip to Warsaw - Ruurd had a scheduling conflict, so I went with you, actually. A book presentation on international disinformation. We met Polish researchers, Ukrainian experts. We were on the same stage as fact-checkers who have since fallen into disrepute, which is its own irony. But we also met people who became core partners.

RO: Debunk EU in Lithuania - we already knew them. They'd been targeted daily by Russian operations. They had real expertise, not theoretical knowledge. The Ukrainians brought frontline experience that nobody else could match. It was a natural coalition: people who actually lived with the problem, not people who studied it from a distance.

BA: And the timing was right. The Horizon call came out in 2022, just before ChatGPT changed everything. We didn't fully understand what AI would do to the field - nobody did - but we had enough of a framework to write a compelling proposal. And it got funded.

The Polish experiment

OHS: So, you had funding, you had partners. What happened when you actually tried to implement a Resilience Council?

RO: We got lucky with Poland. There was a government change - the new administration was reform-minded, interested in democratic innovation. They were willing to actually create a Resilience Council, not just talk about it. So we had our first real-world test. A government-backed Resilience Council in Poland. And it worked, in the sense that it existed and functioned. We thought: this is the first of many. Poland has the EU presidency coming up. We'll use that moment to propagate the model across Europe.

OHS: But?

RO: But political reality intervened. Every member state wanted to do things their own way. The idea of automated, coordinated responses - if something happens here, everyone reacts the same way - turned out to be politically impossible. National sovereignty again. Everyone wanted their own control.

BA: And we learned something important about civil servants. You can't shame them into action. It doesn't matter how many reports you write, how much evidence you compile. If there's no political pressure, nothing happens. We realized: if we rely on national governments to voluntarily create these councils, we'll never achieve scale. The Polish council exists because of a unique political moment. We can't replicate those conditions everywhere. We need a different strategy.

The democratic turn

OHS: So, what's the alternative?

RO: Full decentralization. Take governments out of the equation. Let citizens create their own Resilience Councils. The logic is straightforward. If we put power in nationally mandated bodies, we're dependent on governments to create and maintain them. And they won't - not consistently, not at scale. But if we put power in citizens' hands, we're dependent only on citizens caring enough to participate. And some citizens do care.

OHS: What does a citizen-created Resilience Council look like?

RO: Think of it like GitHub for civic oversight. We provide the infrastructure - the tools, the frameworks, the legal templates. Any citizen can spin up their own Resilience Council focused on whatever issue they care about. Maybe you care about dark patterns in cookie banners. You create a Resilience Council for that. You invite others who share your concern. Together, you document violations, compile evidence, generate legally sound complaints. The system handles the structure; you provide the participation.

BA: The key insight is that you don't need government permission for this. The DSA gives citizens certain rights - the right to flag content, the right to complain about platform decisions. We're just building tools to exercise those rights collectively rather than individually. Nobody has to authorize that. It's already legal.

OHS: But doesn't this create a risk of capture by motivated minorities? The people who participate might not be representative.

BA: That's a real concern. We know from other contexts - like citizen reporting systems for infrastructure problems - that participation is uneven. Wealthy neighborhoods report more. Educated people participate more. If you're not careful, you end up with a system that serves the already-privileged. That's why the Resilience Council can't just be a flagging mechanism. It needs to be a deliberative space. A place where people discuss not just what's wrong but what should be done about it. If it's purely reactive - see violation, report violation - you get the bias you're worried about. If it's deliberative, you have at least a chance of building broader representation.

Learning from Taiwan

OHS: Where did you find models for this kind of citizen participation?

RO: Taiwan. Audrey Tang's work on digital democracy. We actually had her on the Saufex podcast to discuss this. What Taiwan did was remarkable. They built a fully decentralized system for citizen participation in governance. Anyone who wanted to contribute could jump in. There were no gatekeepers, no approval processes. Just open participation with transparent rules.

OHS: How does that translate to the European context?

RO: The key principle is: no exclusionary rules. The system has to be open to anyone. And it has to be transparent enough that manipulation becomes visible. That sounds counterintuitive - if it's open to anyone, isn't it open to bad actors? But the answer from Taiwan's experience is that transparency is itself a defense. When everything is visible, when all the data is public, when anyone can audit the process, it becomes much harder to manipulate without being caught.

BA: This is a fundamental philosophical commitment. Either you believe in open systems or you don't. If you try to build a closed system - with vetted partici-pants, with gatekeepers, with approval processes - you're immediately back to the question of who guards the guardians. Every closed system can be captured. The only robust defense is openness.

The system in practice

OHS: Walk me through how this actually works. A citizen sees something online they think is a DSA violation. What happens?

RO: Let me use a concrete example. I personally find dark patterns in cookie banners infuriating. The DSA explicitly says cookie banners can't be misleading - no dark patterns. But if you have to click three times before you can decline cookies, that's clearly a dark pattern. Now, if I report this individually to the Dutch Digital Services Coordinator, nothing happens. One complaint. One person. They have no obligation to act, and they won't. But what if a thousand people report the same pattern? What if there's systematic documentation of violations across hundreds of websites? What if the complaints come packaged in legally structured format, citing specific DSA provisions, with screenshots and timestamps and analysis?

OHS: That's harder to ignore.

RO: Exactly. So, the system works like this: I create a Resilience Council focused on dark patterns. I share it online, invite others who care about the same issue. Now everyone in this group can flag dark patterns when they encounter them - just take a screenshot, add some context. The system - we're using a framework developed by Check First - analyzes each submission. It runs it through a DSA violations classification. It generates a structured legal document. And those documents get automatically sent to the relevant Digital Services Coordinator. From the citizen's perspective, it's a few clicks. But the output is a coordinated, legally structured mass complaint that's much harder for regulators to ignore.

OHS: And this exists? It's operational?

RO: The infrastructure exists. We're still in early deployment. The question we haven't fully answered yet is: what happens after the complaints reach the DSC? Do they act? What do we need to provide so they can't ignore us? That's the next phase.

BA: Even if DSCs don't act immediately, the documentation has value. You're building a record. You're creating evidence that can be used by journalists, by researchers, by litigators. The process of systematic documentation itself is worthwhile, even before any enforcement happens.

Beyond flagging

OHS: There's a risk that this becomes purely negative - just a system for complaints. Where's the constructive vision?

BA: That's a crucial point. The Resilience Council can't just be about nagging and grievance. It has to be a space for discussing what we actually want. Right now, the tech companies dictate how we think about the internet. They set the terms, they frame the debates. Political parties don't want to engage with these questions - they're too technical, too controversial, too far from traditional political territory. So we're left with a vacuum. Lots of criticism of what's wrong, very little articulation of what we want instead. The Resilience Council should be an invitation to have that conversation. Not just: this dark pattern is bad. But: what should a consent interface look like? What are the design principles we'd actually want? How do we balance convenience against autonomy? These are questions citizens can discuss - and should discuss.

OHS: Is anyone having those conversations now?

BA: Not really. Not in a structured way that feeds into policy. There are academics writing papers, but that doesn't reach citizens. There are activists making demands, but that doesn't build consensus. The space for genuine deliberation about our digital future is essentially empty. That's the deeper ambition for Resilience Councils. Not just enforcement of existing rules, but deliberation about what rules we want. A way for citizens to actually participate in shaping the information environment, not just complaining about it.

The case for trust

OHS: A skeptic might say: ordinary citizens aren't equipped for this. They don't have the expertise to judge complex platform behaviors. They can be manipulated, misled, weaponized. Isn't it naive to trust them?

BA: This is the fundamental question. And I think the skeptical view is wrong - empirically wrong, not just philosophically wrong. The dominant narrative is that ordinary people are helpless against sophisticated disinformation. They believe whatever they read on Facebook. They fall for Russian propaganda. They're sheep waiting to be herded. But look at actual evidence. Take Pizzagate. The theory that Democratic politicians were running a child trafficking ring out of a pizza parlor. If people actually believed this - genuinely believed it - what would you expect? Mass protests. Vigilante action. Political demands for investigation. What actually happened? One guy walked in with a gun. One person. Out of millions of people exposed to the narrative.

OHS: What does that tell you?

BA: It tells me people are much more sophisticated than elites assume. There's a difference between espousing a belief and genuinely holding it. People say they believe all sorts of things because saying those things signals group membership, or expresses frustration, or maintains social relationships. Social death is worse than physical death, in psychological terms. People will profess beliefs to stay in their communities. But that doesn't mean they act on those beliefs. It doesn't mean they've lost touch with reality. Most people, most of the time, can distinguish between performance and reality. They know when they're being sold something. They know when something doesn't add up.

OHS: So, you're arguing for sortition? Random citizens making decisions about information norms?

BA: Yes. If you believe in liberal democracy, you have to believe that a randomly selected group of citizens - any citizens, from any population - can make reasonable decisions about what behavior is acceptable in public discourse. Not decisions about what's true. That's not the task. But decisions about conduct: what's manipulative, what's deceptive, what crosses lines. These are questions about norms, not facts. And citizens are perfectly capable of deliberating about norms. We do this all the time in other contexts. Juries. Citizens' assemblies. Participatory budgeting. The evidence is that ordinary people, given good information and a good process, make reasonable decisions. The cynicism about citizen capacity is not justified by evidence - it's justified by elite self-interest.

The DROG framework

OHS: How does all this fit into your broader analysis of the counter-disinformation field?

RO: Five years ago, we developed what we call the DROG Disinformation Intervention Model. It identifies five generations of interventions, each based on a different paradigm of the problem and the solution. Generation One, starting around 2014: Strategic Communication. The idea is that citizens need better information. If we can counter propaganda with better messaging, if we support independent journalism, if we raise awareness, the problem gets solved. The implicit assumption is that people believe disinformation because they don't have access to truth. Generation Two, around 2016: Debunking. Now the focus shifts to active rebuttal. Fact-checkers identify false claims and publish corrections. The assumption is that if we can establish the facts - if we can agree on a shared baseline of truth - constructive debate becomes possible. Generation Three, around 2018: Prebunking. Instead of correcting false claims after the fact,

you inoculate people against manipulation techniques. Games, videos, educational interventions that expose how disinformation is made. The assumption is that if people understand the tactics, they become resistant. Generation Four, around 2020: Moderation. Now the focus shifts to restricting transmission. Deplatforming, deranking, legal regulation like the DSA. The assumption is that if you can obstruct the spread of disinformation at the source - remove the worst actors, change the algorithmic incentives - the problem diminishes.

OHS: And Generation Five?

RO: Interaction. This is where we are now - or where we should be. The recognition that people don't change their minds because they're given better information or better facts or better education or better moderation. They change their minds through interaction with other people. Through relationships, through dialogue, through belonging to communities. Disinformation isn't primarily an information problem. It's a social problem. Left-behind regions, distrust in institutions, atomized individuals looking for meaning and belonging. You can't solve that with fact-checks or prebunking games or deplatforming. You can only address it through interventions that engage people as autonomous participants in communities.

OHS: And Resilience Councils are a Generation Five intervention?

RO: That's the claim. They're not about telling people what's true. They're about creating spaces where people can deliberate together about what conduct is acceptable. They give people something to be part of - something larger than themselves. They treat citizens as capable of self-governance rather than as victims needing protection.

BA: The critique of earlier generations is that they all assume a deficit in ordinary people. Generation One: people lack information. Generation Two: people lack facts. Generation Three: people lack rationality. Generation Four: people lack protection from manipulation. Generation Five says: maybe people aren't the problem. Maybe the structures are the problem. Maybe what people lack is meaningful participation in shaping their own information environment. Give them that, and you might be surprised at what they can do.

The road ahead

OHS: What's still unresolved? What are the open questions?

RO: The biggest question is what happens after we get complaints to Digital Services Coordinators. We've built the infrastructure to generate systematic, legally structured mass complaints. But do DSCs have to act on them? What evidence do we need to make them unable to ignore us? That's still untested.

BA: There's also the question of scale. Right now, we're talking about small groups of motivated citizens. What does it look like if this scales to thousands or millions of participants? How do you maintain deliberative quality at scale? How do you prevent capture by bad actors? These are design challenges we haven't fully solved.

RO: And there's the elite-bias problem you raised earlier. How do we ensure that participation is broadly representative, not just motivated minorities with time and education to participate? We have some ideas - active outreach, partnerships with community organizations, design choices that lower barriers - but it's a real challenge.

OHS: Any final thoughts?

RO: We've been working on this problem for a long time. Longer than most people in the field. And for most of that time, we've been right about where things were going, but unable to do much about it. It's a strange feeling - being vindicated while watching things fall apart. What gives me hope about Resilience Councils is that they're not dependent on political winds or platform cooperation. They're based on rights citizens already have. They can be built now, with current technology, under current law. And they give people something positive to participate in, not just something to fight against. Will it work? I don't know. But it's the most promising approach I've seen in a decade of thinking about this problem.

BA: My view is simpler. The law says citizens should be empowered. Those words are in the DSA. But there's no accountability for actually empowering citizens. The law is toothless. Resilience Councils are an attempt to give those words teeth. To create mechanisms by which citizens can actually exercise the rights the law supposedly gives them. If that sounds idealistic, fine. But the alternative - leaving everything to governments and platforms - has failed. Demonstrably, repeatedly, catastrophically failed. At some point, you have to try something different. This is something different.

Notes

The DROG Disinformation Intervention Model referenced in this conversation is documented in the 2022 DROG Manifesto, available at saufex.eu.

PART TWO - Resilience Councils, the concept

Introduction

The SAUFEX project started with a detailed concept of what Resilience Councils (RCs) should be. It is described in the project's Grant Agreement. Below is a reconstruction.

Steps

The project originally foresaw the following steps needed to create a\1\n\n\2: drafting a methodology for the creation of the RC, drafting regulations for the formal accreditation of the RC, conducting consultations with representatives of parliamentary and governmental institutions on the draft regulations, formalizing the accreditation of the RC as an advisory body to the legislative and executive branches of government including the Digital Services Coordinator (DSC), establishing the RC, and finally, recruiting and appointing members of the RC. The methodology for the creation of RCs was to consist of the following steps: establishing criteria for becoming a member of the RC based on expertise and experience in Poland and beyond, inviting potential members, training the potential members based on a FIMI and DSA course that will be developed in the SAUFEX project, and providing the potential members with a recruitment exam - more on FIMI in the third blog post.

Tasks

The RC is to be an intermediary between state and non-state actors. Firstly, the RC gathers civil society input and advice. Concretely, it collects feedback from civil society and private stakeholders on the public's perception of hybrid threats. As a result, it brings together currently fragmented data in a centralized secure FIMI knowledge database. Ideally, the RC will be capable of attributing FIMI incidents to actors. The RC will share its accumulated knowledge and expertise with governmental agencies, researchers, and, very importantly, with civil society. Secondly, based on the input of civil society and the expertise of its members, the RC will formulate recommendations regarding evidence-informed policies, appropriate and proportional tactical and political responses, and communication strategies. In theory, as a consequence of the RC's information sharing and recommendations, a more coordinated, harmonized, and standardized approach to FIMI will emerge among national and international stakeholders. Thirdly, the RC will advise the Digital Services Coordinator (DSC), who is nation-

ally responsible for enforcing the DSA. The support of the DSC by the RC goes beyond informing and recommending. It also involves providing the DSC with knowledge of media so that FIMI content can be effectively addressed without having to resort to censorship - see the first blog post.

Impact

The RC is to decentralize and democratize the processes of FIMI analyses and responses. It is to lead to better informed, coordinated, and consistent decision-making regarding FIMI, as well as greater resilience by civil society, democratic processes, and democratic institutions.

Composition

Members of the RC should be experts in media and technology. The first group of potential members to be invited are practitioners from civil society organizations, active in the field of FIMI detection and responding to FIMI incidents. All future members are to be trained by means of a course on FIMI and the DSA that is to be developed by the SAUFEX project. It could become mandatory for future RC members to pass a recruitment exam at the end of the course. At least fifty percent of RC members will be women.

Tools

Members of the RC are to work with state-of-the-art tools to categorize and report FIMI incidents (e.g. OpenCTI, STIX, DISARM). These tools are being upgraded and made more appropriate to the FIMI domain by the SAUFEX project as well as by other current HORIZON-funded projects.

Geographic reach

An initial RC is to be erected in Poland. Would this turn out to be unfeasible, the first RC is to be erected in Lithuania. While RCs are foreseen in all European Union Member States, priority will be given to RCs in Poland, Lithuania, Finland, and the Netherlands. A central European institution, consisting of the heads of national RCs, is to be established to coordinate, harmonize, and standardize the activities of the national RCs.

Funding

Regarding the funding of RCs two potential sources are foreseen: the European Union and self-financing. Self-financing can be the outcome of public-private partnerships, consultancy services, and research funding. Within the SAUFEX project, a percentage of the exploitation of SAUFEX tools will be directed to the initial RC. What the two potential sources of funding have in common is that they are independent of national governments, thus assuring that the RC will not be subject to fluctuating political will or governmental budgetary changes.

PART THREE - The origins and implementation of the first Resilience Council

A conversation with Tomasz Chłoń

Introduction

The following represents a two-session conversation on Resilience Councils with Tomasz Chłoń, Plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Countering International Disinformation, head of research at the Polish Center of Technological Development within the Łukasiewicz Network, and Head of Mission (Chargé d'Affaires) at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Finland - see also part three. The conversations took place in December 2025. The conversation transcripts have been edited for brevity and clarity.

Session one

The premise

OHS: What is the premise under the process of designing and implementing Resilience Councils? Could you give a general idea?

TCh: The mandate of the Resilience Council that is advising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is limited to foreign disinformation, not domestic, but there is a gray zone. The basic premise is that, because of the nature of the threat, we need as many institutions and civil society representatives to be engaged. So, the general approach is a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach and the key element of the whole-of-society approach is creating a network of networks. So, the Resilience Council consists of representatives of civil society, think tanks, academia, universities, and the private sector, representing expertise in domains that are crucial for countering foreign disinformation. I'm using 'disinformation' as a shortcut for foreign information manipulation and interference which is a broader phenomenon than simple disinformation because it includes such activities as information suppression for example, that is especially typical for Chinese actors to or state actors to use vis-à-vis the Chinese diaspora in the world and it's an integral element of hybrid operations that include other methods of influencing and impacting countries and societies abroad by perpetrators mainly Russian. So, for this you need a broad expertise ranging from international relations, education, legal aspects, media, knowledge of contemporary media technology, and AI of course. This is what is

needed to effectively advise institutions that are responsible for countering FIMI for example at the governmental level. And then, of course, how to ensure that those representatives in the Council will have the knowledge required is another subject.

The origins

OHS: How did the concept of Resilience Councils come about and how did you then implement the concept? What was your role in that?

TCh: It started with the research among a group of experts, researchers and practitioners of diplomacy in Poland - a group of people who had experience, some of them with a very well-stablished position in academia. In this concrete case, it was professor Robert Kupiecki of the University of Warsaw, a distinguished diplomat, a former Deputy Minister of Defense and Ambassador to the United States and another researcher, Dr. Filip Bryjka, who had a career in the military and who currently is a researcher at the Polish Institute of International affairs, one of the most prominent research centers and think tanks in Poland, affiliated with the with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We had concluded that foreign disinformation has become a strategic challenge for the international order and a threat to uh democracies and how we function um in democratic states in European Union and beyond in the Euro Atlantic community. So, this has become a very important area of research and then, based on their recommendations, for policy decisions, and the implementation of policies that have been adopted. This is how it started and as we researched the problem it transpired that it is a problem that has many aspects that need to be addressed from various angles and we found that in the European Union and at NATO, the response of the Euro Atlantic institutions and European institutions and most of the Member States were insufficient to counter the challenge. At the time there were even scholars who claimed that disinformation has no impact whatsoever on policies of states and governments. Of course, given the experience with Brexit in 2016, the US elections same year, and then the Presidential elections in France in 2017, it was clear that that is not the case. So, we have to respond. We first had to analyze the problem, then analyze what the response to the problem is, and then see what gaps there are to respond to the problem. Consequently, we came to the conclusion that the only effective way in which we could respond to foreign disinformation is to approach it with the all-hands-on-deck approach which means this whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Robert Kupiecki then researched institutions or bodies that functioned as, or similar to, Resilience Councils in various domains in various countries - councils that would address topics like

climate change or challenges to tourism in those places where tourism is vitally important. So, we researched this from the angle how we can be inspired by what others do in building resilience - building resilience to certain challenges that threaten the way of life or the way of the way of doing business. This was the first part of a report that we prepared.

Another part of the research was directly linked to disinformation as a challenge and how we can improve our capabilities in Poland to counteract. Poland is particularly threatened, by Russian disinformation. The people behind this, the perpetrators, intervene in almost any elections in the world. But the neighboring countries are by definition the countries that are threatened most. So, we decided to also address the needs of the Polish government to be part of an effective response by the international community and, first of all, the European Union. We looked at the policies and instruments at the EU's disposal and what expectations there are towards the Member States. An element of this was the Digital Services Act which we considered very important, if not the most important legal instrument in the world, to counter disinformation. The Resilience Council as we envisioned it in the beginning was meant to be an advisory body to the Polish Coordinator of Digital Services, an institution created by the Digital Services Act of the European Union. But because the process of implementation of the DSA in Poland has been delayed, we thought it doesn't have to be just the DSC but it can also be a different institution - a Ministry that could be advised by a group of distinguished experts. So, we thought that since it's foreign disinformation that we are dealing with it would be good idea to create such an advisory body to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Poland. This does not exclude that the same group of people, or part of them, would be then also advising the DSC.

This was the idea behind it. When doing something new you then you take into account the challenges that you face and the realities and then you adapt your concept and your actions to what's possible. And that's how we came to the conclusion that yes it's necessary to have such a body of people who will advise the government of Poland. Of course there is a difference between advising Minister of Foreign Affairs and advising another Minister but in fact the fundamental goal is to advise the central government on how to be more effective in in countering disinformation.

In the meantime, we had gotten more instruments at our disposal because Robert Kupecki had become Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new government and I had become head of the newly established department for strategic communication and countering foreign disinformation and Plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Countering International Disinforma-

tion. So, we had at our disposal also the administrative tools to implement in fact what we conceived as researchers and as scholars. We prepared a ministerial order describing the goals of the Council, the composition, and how it should function. And then we started to create the Council based on this legal instrument.

OHS: Let's first take one step back and before we continue on where you are now. How did the process go from analysis to being a HORIZON-funded project? What was the motivation behind that?

TCh: Well, the research on the Resilience Council started once we had defined and our proposal within the HORIZON call. So, the broad idea of a Resilience Council or resilience societies came from the requirements formulated by the European Union Commission because in the call they specified what they expect from research and from you projects to be submitted - namely strengthening resilience of societies. When we were preparing a submission, it was in fact the initiative of a Dutch entity - DROG. We joined forces and created a consortium and then submitted the proposal which turned out to be a successful one. So the genesis of the whole process of conceptualizing Resilience Councils and then implementing the Resilience Council in practice was on that moment that we started to work on the call. DROG was instrumental in the development of the proposal.

OHS: I don't if you don't want to mention this at all, I'm ok with that.

TCh: But that's how it happened.

Evolving character

OHS: When you if you think of your first conception after the analyses, what for you were Resilience Councils concretely back then? Did you have an image in mind or did it evolve over time?

TCh: It's been evolving. In the call, for the project which we called Saufex, we described what we think this body should do, right? What would be its goals, the aims, and how to operationalize these - maybe a bit less right because the proposal had to be more general than that. So, we were simply saying that if we want to be more effective as societies, we need this in what domains Council members should be excelling. Then we expanded it in the reort that we wrote for Saufex. So it has been evolving.

Comparision with existing institutions

OHS: When you look at other concepts like the EU FIMI toolbox or the rapid alert system or FIMI ISAC, what makes Resilience Councils different?

TCh: It's broader. It's more strategic. It links definitely closer to civil society and government institutions. FIMI ISAC is analyzing what happens in the info space - it does not necessarily come up with policy recommendations or concrete proposals regarding education as in one of the key conditions to be effective in countering FIMI. You have to create school programs, university curricula to raise awareness and to educate people in how they consume information, especially in the digital world with the social media platforms. FIMI ISAC or a rapid alert system will not tell you necessarily how to legally address the issues - what what sorts of legislation you need on a national or international EU level. They would not go into details in terms of social media regulation or AI or addressing bigger issues in the ecosystem like the freedom of media, how to build trust in public media which is which is definitely needed. In some parts of Europe public media are not trusted at all, and these elements are these things are interconnected. Or, how you should devise and then implement a whole-of-government approach with governmental institutions regarding inter-agency processes and responses, and the inclusion of intelligence services. So, it's all-encompassing. The Resilience Council is the nucleus of everything that is happening on the level state level and societal level.

Polish realities

TCh: An important thing is that, of course, you have to take into account the Polish realities which elsewhere could be similar but will never be the same. Every nation or every government that approaches the problem and wants to tackle it nationally or with international partners, they have uh probably some different challenges which they face.

OHS: What do you see as characteristics of the Polish challenges? What makes them specific?

TCh: The first Polish challenge is that the DSA has not been implemented fully. It is part of our legislation because it's directly applicable, but we have not created instruments for its implementation, including the appointment of the Digital Services Coordinator which weakens our position.

So, if we want to mitigate the problem we have to think of solutions that are temporarily the best. There is the education system issue which is not perhaps the worst in Europe and we have some things to be proud of in terms of teaching science technology. In Poland we have engineers who excel. But, contrary to what the Nordics have and in the Baltic states where they have this disinformation or countering disinformation courses or in Finland you have media education including critical thinking with the element of how you detect uh fake news and the manipulation of information during Finnish language classes, mathematics, manual education - compared to especially the Nordic states Poland has some homework to do which has started and not least as first effects of the Resilience Council. I don't want to say that we made the Ministry of Education change the curricula, and the programs of schools at primary or secondary level. But I think that the role of the Resilience Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not so meaningless. I could say that we as the Ministry have a bit small shoes to fit in, and that we want to expand them - they're narrow and we want to have them bigger. Of course, that is not possible, but we try our best to perhaps do things that in other countries, Ministries of Foreign Affairs would never do simply because there would be no need. So, these are very specific Polish issues that could be similar in some places but in other places don't exist at all.

Towards the first meeting

OHS: Take me from the moment that the legislative basics were in place to the moment that the Resilience Councils started their first meeting. How did that go? How did you decide who to select, what to select? Um what were the thought process and the criteria behind it?

TCh: The process was partially an informal process, partially a legal one and partially administrative. The informal process boils down to the fact that there is a group of people expert institutions in Poland, a community of anti-FIMI defenders that we have mapped in various meetings, encounters, discussions - we more or less have a picture of who does what in this domain.

So, in addition to a public announcement, first we published the legal regulation of the Minister. Then we reached out to the community saying: Look, this is what it is and do you want to be part of it? This was an informal process in a way. Then the formal or the administrative process was that we went deeper into certain mechanisms or processes that we should employ when selecting uh the

members. The basic idea was to guarantee the highest possible expertise and credibility of the institutions that would be represented. So, we that the verification process should not be done by us but independently by the community. The community itself should select the representatives.

But, there has to be a bar and the should be placed relatively high. In our case we agreed at the Ministry and within the informal consultations with community representatives that those who want to be represented in the council should have five institutions supporting them of which at least one is a university, whether public or private. The support should be expressed by the highest authorities in those universities so it's not that a director of an institute writes to us that they support someone. It should be a rector or chancellor who is recommending an institution and a person as its representative. This was the main mechanism to select the representatives.

We got 23 applications and then in an informal process we asked our partners in the government whether these persons can be trusted as a second layer of verification. From the adoption of the legal regulation to the first session of the Council I think half a year, if not more, elapsed. It took us more or less half a year to select the members and then we had in the beginning 23 people as members of the Council. Since then we have had I think three or two or three applications in addition. It's a living body. Up to 30 people maybe is manageable. But we cannot have 100 people there because it would be unmanageable.

Vetting

OHS: Did the vetting process formally eliminate people on the basis of trust?

TCh: Nobody was eliminated. Some aspiring persons simply withdrew their candidacy because of the selection process and the need to have four five supporting organisations. But nobody was disqualified.

Informal meetings

OHS: There were informal meetings also before the legislation started. Was that a way of establishing contact with the defender community in a deeper way?

TCh: Yes. I think we had like three meetings before that. They gave us ideas of who is interested and what is expected. Those informal meetings were very useful.

Session two

Mandate

OHS: What is the formal mandate of the existing Resilience Council?

TCh: Yes. It's really a broad mandate. In the Ministerial order it says that the Council advises the Minister on issues pertaining to countering foreign disinformation. So, the Council can advise on anything it considers important, whether it's in education or media or legal aspects or technological aspects. The Council can also act on its own so it doesn't limit itself to advising the Minister. It can issue statements and recommendations to other authorities, also regional and local authorities. With the Minister it's a two-way street because the Minister can ask for a specific advice and then the Council advises. When the Council issues a statement or gives recommendations to other institutions, state institutions or non-governmental institutions, it is more a one-way street. But, of course there could be interaction with these entities also.

OHS: Is the independence of the Resilience Council stipulated in the mandate or is it implicit?

TCh: No, it is stipulated. So it's explicit. It's in the order that it's an independent body and that the members don't receive any salaries or money. They don't get anything from the government. So, it's doesn't create situations where one could think they are paid and they are dependent. That's not the case.

Member motivation

OHS: Why do you think so many organizations wanted to be part of it when it means providing unpaid services?

TCh: I don't know if it's the same elsewhere or to what extent is this is the same but belonging to such a body that advises the central government is a kind of nobilitation. When you say you are member of such a body then your prestige is higher. I mean, you you have this implicit legitimacy to advise on important issues. So, you can then monetize it in different ways.

But we are thinking about securing the independence of such institutions such as this council in a different way which is needed in case there is a change of government for example and the new government thinks that they it doesn't need such an advisory body. So, to sustain the independent work, one could think of a direct EU financing arrangement. That's what we are working on. We will see how we will fare.

European Commission

OHS: Would that fall under the Democracy Shield or under the resilience initiatives that are now being taken by the European Commission or would it be more like a structural funding for a sort of civil society strengthening policies?

TCh: I think it should be specifically for the purpose of countering foreign information manipulation and interference within the framework of the European Democracy Shield, and in particular the Center for Resilience that is being created right now. So maybe we can find a structural permanent arrangement for specific bodies like this that are specifically created or have been specifically created to counter foreign disinformation.

Strategic or campaign level

OHS: If you look at the body as it started, do you think it is more useful on a strategic level or more useful on an individual FIMI campaign or incident level?

TCh: Both. Yes, absolutely. When we had elections, for example, the Council issued a statement, a warning related to this particular event. Or when we had the drone incursion operation in September this year, then the council reacted to it. But uh it's also strategic in terms of a general call to media to raise awareness of the dangers related to foreign disinformation. Or currently the council is finalizing its work on specific recommendations starting with a with a call to work out and adopt a national strategy and then what that entails. So, in this national strategy you have constitutive elements related to education, legal arrangements, media freedom, and support for independent media - the basic fundamental elements of any strategy. Tthis is a longer process not limited to an individual event or incident.

Types of FIMI

OHS: Looking at FIMI itself, it's probably easy for the government to react to Russian FIMI because it's the hostile. It's a known factor. But what about MAGA FIMI? Doesn't the Resilience Council have the advantage of not being politically accountable so they can respond to this kind of sensitive, different and completely new kinds of FIMI?

TCh: Absolutely. This is very useful and that's in fact the Council is working upon in the context of the Digital Services Act implementation which is part of the MAGA FIMI problem. The Council members are deliberating on what actions to take individually and collectively. This concerns very large platforms and engines. It's easier for the Council to issue documents or recommendations that

are outright critical of what we have been facing as MAGA FIMI. I'm not sure whether this is the case of Poland but in some countries in the European Union experts claim that MAGA is more dangerous and problematic than any other FIMI.

Activities

OHS: Does the Resilience Council engage in FIMI detection or do anything on detection? Does it take FIMI detection as-is as collected by NGOs and state institutions or does organize its own detection mechanisms and answers.

TCh: No, not yet. Individual members in the Council do it on a daily basis. Represented are mainstream factchecking community members like for example Demagog.

OHS: And how about classification of FIMI? I mean, if there is a FIMI campaign, is it classified as dangerous or maybe as banal?

TCh: Well, we don't have right now in the Council a tool like for example the Lithuanian authorities have together with their civil society counterparts where they have this from 0 to 10 classification of incidents. We don't have it in Poland yet, neither in the government nor in this Council. Maybe we should think about it. The council is not even a year in existence. It has been developing its ways and means of functioning. Maybe it's a good idea to create such a such a classification - maybe simply use the Lithuanian model. For the time being the Council has acted on an ad hoc basis when it comes to the drone incident or the elections.

OHS: When looking at the reporting of the detected incidents and campaigns, do members report in a specific way to the Council or is it also ad hoc notifying of what they have found?

TCh: Well, it's both. There is the NASK research center that works under the Minister of Digitalization. The Council members have direct contact in the sense that we invite NASK representatives to the meetings of the Council. Also they receive reports via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - what we have we get as Ministry of Foreign Affairs from NASK is passed on to the members of the Council.

OHS: Does this also involve shared technical standards like OpenCTI, STIX, and DISARM. Or are rather written texts being shared?

TCh: Written text at this stage. No OpenCTI access is there for the time being but we in the Ministry now use OpenCTI so it's only a question of time how we can share at least the results of the work on this platform to benefit the Council and its deliberations.

OHS: What I learned about OpenCTI and all the technical instruments is that they prepare you also for initiating criminal procedures. Is the aim of the resili-ence council rather to have counternarratives or to detect narratives and to bring advice to the table or also to go into the criminalization of FIMI?

TCh: Well, there is one strand of work done within the task force for legal issues that is looking at the problem from the legal point of view - how you to can produce evidence to bring to court if uh uh if there is a case. It is still the initial stage of this task force but I can imagine that members of it would in a way be involved also in in individual cases where something happens I'm now speculating frankly - I can see it going this way when there is a need for testify-ing somewhere in a court. Then one could think of members of the Council to be giving such testimonies - as experts who represent a body that has a standing and a certain prestige and therefore have credibility.

Working groups

OHS: Within the Council there are working groups. How did you create the working groups or how were they created?

TCh: In a natural way. The members represent different fields of expertise and knowledge. The members volunteered to become members of task groups or task forces within the Council. The selection was pretty natural. It didn't take long for people to volunteer and now we have six of such task forces consisting of four to seven members. Some of the members are active in in more than one task force. It started with education, then media, then the legal task force, then reaching out to regional and local authorities, then the technology and science task force, and then culture as well. So these are the six areas covered by the task forces.

OHS: Are the Council meetings task forces-only, instead of general meetings, or are there general meetings organized too?

TCh: Not instead. I mean, they are working within their own calendar and the work plan of action that they have developed. They meet independently, in the sense that they don't meet when the Council meets. The Council meets once a month or more often if needed, but the task forces meet independently so it could be more than that.

OHS: Are the meetings physical or they also take place online?

TCh: Online as well. And the Council itself meets both physically and online.

External relations

OHS: When looking at the Council's relations with the outside world, I mean beyond the Minister of Foreign Affairs with other institutions within the Polish administration? Are they happy with the Council? Do they know about the Council? Do they ask something of the Council?

TCh: Central government institutions, Ministries, can send their representatives to the meetings of the Council and they ask for it. For example, we have a an a regular observer from the Ministry of Defense. This is the interest directly expressed. Others have been in touch also through direct participation in Council meetings like the Ministry of Education. Because of the regional and local governments group there is also a process of meeting with representatives but of course we can't meet every mayor of a city so we act through certain platforms and channels of communication that Ministry of Foreign Affairs has vis-a-vis those authorities. And during the previous session of the Council, we for instance met one of the local mayors of a suburban community of Warsaw. I think the visibility of the council is growing. I wouldn't say it's a recognized body so definitely there's much work to do still to make it uh recognizable for a general citizen. Within the government there is a knowledge about it and within the broad expert community - universities and other institutions - people know that such a body exists. And media are increasingly a aware of its existence but regarding the individual citizen we still have much work to do.

OHS: Is there a plan how to reach the average citizen?

TCh: Mainly through local and regional authorities. This and, of course, media. Regarding the interaction with media, one of the members of the Council is Grzegorz Rzeczkowski and he is very visible and very active in the nation-wide media with millions of viewers. So, this is the way but it's not that you give one interview and then everybody knows.

International situation

OHS: How is it internationally? Are countries around Poland or countries in the same or similar position interested or is the European Union interested? Or is there internationally rather an attitude of let's see what happens?

TCh: We can see a lot of interest, I have to tell you - both from the EU institutions, the European Commission general directorates, Members of the European Parliament. We have briefed Commissioner McGrath before the publication of the European Democracy Shield. We had a number of conferences, seminars, and webinars together with European institutions. Then, on a bilateral level or regional level, Polish diplomacy has done very extensive work with our partners sharing our experience. The result is a growing visibility of the Council also outside Poland. So, people come to the Polish Polish Foreign Ministry and ask for sharing the knowledge, the know-how, and the experience. We received invitations to present the case. The most recent one is from Cyprus today. I had a meeting with one of the directors of the Hybrid Center of Excellence here in Helsinki and she told me that they have been approached by Cyprus that will have the Presidency of the Council from the 1st of January, and Cyprus would like Poland to participate in an event in February to present what the Resilience Council is all about.

OHS: Is a country like Finland interested in it or do they have their own ways?

TCh: Well, they are interested in the sense that a Finnish leading fact-checking organization is part of the Saufex project. This organization has a strong position in Finland and I think they spread the news here. As far as the Finnish authorities are concerned, I think they believe that they have a very good system. They are, in a way, already performing the functions that we attribute to our Council. Cooperation between the government and civil society is traditionally very strong. Finland is a model for so-called comprehensive security including information security where this government and non-government interaction is very strong and natural. Also, the system of education is a model in this respect. So, they probably look at it as an interesting case but they have their own model. But I heard that there was a meeting among experts which they considered a Resilience Council meeting so who knows.

Next step

OHS: Let's move on to the future. What will be the next step? Will it be a Resilience Council for the Polish Ministry of Digitalization?

TCh: Well, that's what I would see heppening once we have the DSC, but that is a question mark given the current situation between the government and the President who has to sign the law. Let's think positively that we have this National Coordinator for Digital Services and that this office will have an advisory body -

it's in the draft of the law that went to the President to sign. Now we will have to think how this new body relates to the existing one. Whether we can create a situation that where this existing body could be simply uh advising the Digital Services Coordinator, or part of this body. We'll see.

BP/ LL

OHS: If you zoom out, what would you say are the lessons learned and the best practices so far?

TCh: Well, the best practice is definitely a situation where you have a researcher background and you have also a strong governmental position somewhere in a Ministry like in our case - having two hats, a hat of a researcher and a hat of a public official - so we could implement the concept of the Resilience Council quickly, and without any hesitation and convince political leaders to accept and welcome such tools as the Resilience Council and the whole concept behind it. Also, a best practice is that you stick to the basic premise that it's an independent body. You have to be very careful because of me as a chair of this body and I am a public servant and a representative of this government. Still the Council acts very much in this conviction that it is independent, that it's not something we impose. They decide what they do, we are just facilitating their work.

What we don't have is what impact this has. It is still the very beginning of this the council's relationship with the media. We have to think about it how to measure the results.

Impact

OHS: That would be my last question. So yes, how would you measure the impact?

TCh: I mean, it's not that difficult in fact because we have institutions that conduct public opinion polls - very competent institutions. We simply have to sit down with them and create a new partnership - a partnership that would result in them advising us and using their tools and resources to measure uh overall aspects of disinformation in society. To create a structural, regular system of conducting such public opinion polls with some reference criteria to help us find out how a given process within the council or action, what impact it had. I mean, I can think about it optimistically and clearly that it's possible to do but maybe it's not. We have to give it a try we haven't done it yet being so overwhelmed

with other issues. We need to create a structural system a that is credible at the end of the day and giving results that you can trust. I don't think it's a question of money, frankly speaking. Those state institutions or research institutions that conduct public opinion polls they have resources to do it.

OHS: So, the main aim is to impact public opinion?

TCh: The main thing is to measure the impact on how people decide to act in elections for example. Well, there you can measure it by the results of the elections. But not the impact on what they think, what they are aware of. For example, is the situational awareness bigger, what sources do they trust, how is the consumption of the media and how is the consumption of the public communication and governmental communication evolving? I mean, I think this is the fundamental thing that we increase trust to the public institutions but also among ourselves. This would be the biggest let's say prize for our work the biggest satisfaction.

OHS: How do we increase trust among ourselves?

TCh: Well, it's not just about Poland. One of the basic barriers to increase trust is this chaotic situation that exists on the internet. You can hide behind anonymity, you can attack anybody - people you know, people you don't know. You can incite to violence and you don't bear responsibility for your actions at all. This is the world in the internet right now. It is total anarchy. So we have to bring back some kind of order and some principles of behavior - that you cannot tell lies about others, insult them without consequences. So I think that if we civilize our public interactions, our societal interactions in the net then that's the way to rebuild maybe trust among us.

PART FOUR – Towards a FIMI Resilience Council in Poland. Research and Progress

Introduction

The following is a lengthy excerpt from the document Towards a FIMI Resilience Council in Poland. Research and Progress, written by Robert Kupiecki and Tomasz Chłoń. The authors explain its rationale: "This report constitutes a deliverable within the SAUFEX project. It contains research offering inferences and lessons-learned from existing resilience councils as a multi-stakeholder approach (public-private-NGO) to address challenges to a societal resilience. The report also strengthens the rationale for establishing a Resilience Council (RC) in Poland as a critical component in addressing Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI). It seeks to develop a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach that integrates expertise from government, academia, civil society, and the private sector to enhance societal resilience against the evolving threats of disinformation. This report also aims to universalize this instrument as a possible way forward for the European Union to act against disinformation and foreign manipulation in the information space."

From the Report:

Introductory remarks

/.../

Resilience councils - inferences from case studies Just as the concept of resilience has gained significant attention among scholars and practitioners of security and the development policies of EU member states in recent years, it has been followed by reflection on effective ways to strengthen it at the level of states, local governments, the business sector, and public policies. It has resulted in the creation of numerous organisations focused on this issue, which can be placed under a common conceptual umbrella of resilience councils. These have not been merged into a single globally coordinated structure. The number of sector-specific projects focused on building resilience and implemented in various ownership and organisational forms are numbered in the hundreds. However, they are more numerous in some sectors than in others. Resilience councils represent an approach to tackling disinformation that is not yet well established. They deserve attention in this context because, as experts state, "A central distinction between authoritarian and democratic systems is their view

of information. Democracies believe and depend on the open and free exchange of information that empowers citizens to make informed decisions to select their representatives and engage in political debates" (Rosenberger & Gorman, 2020, p. 1.). Resilience councils most commonly exist in those sectors that have either experienced or, by nature, are vulnerable to environmental and social threats. The activity of local governments and cities in the sphere of crisis management in the face of threats resulting from climate change, accelerated urbanisation, or derivative civilization challenges demonstrate the above. Similarly, the sphere of public health or sustainable business development are also well represented. These sectors require coordinated and comprehensive strategies to increase resilience, including synergies stemming from resource pooling and collective learning to better anticipate threats, identify trends, and develop effective prevention measures.

In search of common criteria to define resilience councils Based on the research of case studies presented below, one may be tempted to coin an original general working definition of a resilience council. For the RC FIMI created in Poland, it has a reference value. Thus, the resilience council is an interdisciplinary inclusive structure that brings together stakeholders representing different fields of activity: national governments, local governments, business, academia, and civil society around common goals to improve social resilience. It actively works to increase the legitimacy and effectiveness of joint efforts, including by breaking organisational and competence silos; it focuses on threat analysis, knowledge development and exchange, group learning, strategy shaping, and the development of policies and tailored solutions and their effective implementation.

Positive criteria A. Commonality of approach Empirical examples illustrate that the basic criterion distinguishing resilience councils is their inclusive collaborative nature and operational character fostered by diverse entities willing and ready to implement shared missions. They are thus examples of a positive and proactive approach to strengthening resilience. Based on the examined case studies, it can be concluded that several factors are common in their activity: 1. A declared awareness of the need for a holistic integrated approach to resilience against threats occurring in statutory areas of engagement that, due to their complexity, require a cross-sectoral, multi-level, and comprehensive response. 2. A willingness to break siloed approaches to threats by facilitating the coordination of resilience-building efforts carried out by entities of different origins and management organisations (i.e., government-business-civil society). 3. A declared awareness of the need for political and social inclusivity regarding the inclusion of non-state actors. 4. A recognition that the process of strengthening

resilience is an issue that exceeds the sole responsibility of governments and traditional top-down approaches. This involves understanding the need to increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of responses to threats through the involvement of knowledge and resources of a broader stakeholder community. It also recognizes the importance of integrating state (or local government) objectives with the sensitivity and competence of civil society structures and the expert community. 5. The decentralisation of responses to threats achieved through community ownership of resilience initiatives. This fosters the development of best practices while strengthening communities.

B. Structural attributes The case studies examined by the authors show a high convergence of features and properties organising the functioning of individual resilience councils, regardless of their area of operation. This allows us to conclude that these are entities where the similarity of structural attributes increases their legitimacy and effectiveness in the analysis and understanding of threats, the quality of responses, post-crisis rehabilitation, and preventative strengthening of systemic resilience. Within this framework, the following key structural attributes of resilience councils can be identified: 1. Clarity of objectives and missions, which allows for mobilisation of resources, concentration of activities on key tasks, and assessment of their effects. All resilience councils we have examined have publicly available mission statements, definitions of major goals, priority objectives, and outlined plans to achieve them. 2. An open management model, which emphasises flexibility of procedures, effective communication within the stakeholder community, and efficient adaptation to emerging challenges and opportunities resulting from changes in the operational environment. 3. A diverse stakeholder community that includes multiple perspectives in strategizing and planning. This includes the desire to aggregate and strengthen the credibility of experts and practitioners from various fields of knowledge including the public, non-governmental, academic, and business sectors. For example, this would allow business experts to act within their understanding of the specifics of their sector; academics to provide methodological premises and current scientific knowledge; government representatives to add knowledge about the regulatory environment, public policies, and project financing opportunities; and the social factor to link the activity of the resilience council with the expectations and needs of stakeholder communities. 4. Prioritisation of actions and corresponding allocations. In the case of known resilience councils, funding is usually derived from government grants, private sector donations, or income from commercial projects. 5. Continuity of good practices of information sharing between participants of the resilience council, which increases the overall competence of a given structure. 6. Openness to cooperation with other relevant entities, including through formal methods (i.e., in the form of agreements and

memoranda), or other inclusive approaches like traditional conferences, seminars, simulations, gaming, and other networking mechanisms. 7. Professional development through certification of qualifications and maintaining a knowledge-enhancing platform.

C. General criteria of utility (added value) Existing resilience councils generate added value for public policies and civil society through the above-mentioned structural and functional attributes. This involves continuous improvement in the performance of a community of stakeholders in preparation and coordination of crisis activities, structured analysis and social education, institutional synergy, and resource management. This is due to the operational model of such structures, which emphasises adaptive, bottom-up, collaborative, and inherently inclusive approaches. Key value-added criteria in this area relate to: 1. Regular knowledge exchange and cross-sectoral communication processes that contribute to an increased understanding of the nature of resilience-threatening problems and increased synergy and legitimacy of stakeholders' community activities. 2. Democratisation, integration, increased transparency, flexibility, financial efficiency, and creativity of resilience-enhancing processes through close cooperation between government, business, and NGO actors. The latter increases ownership and responsibility for the activities carried out. The governmental factor, in turn, improves the quality of public policies, broadening their information base and credibility while reducing costs and litigation risks. 3. Integrating knowledge and increasing opportunities for social education, which results in increased public awareness of threats and pro-resilience attitudes. 4. Provision of incentives for the responsible use of modern technologies to detect and reduce vulnerabilities. 5. A comprehensive approach to the problem of resilience and efforts to replicate good practices. By disseminating knowledge, resilience councils create opportunities for the universalization of good practices and their adaptation to the needs of specific sectors. 6. Political and regulatory support for social initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience. This increases the quality and legitimacy of regulation while correlating with social expectations.

Negative criteria and risk factors The key to the effectiveness of resilience councils is both active and continuous stakeholder contributions to its overall mission and agenda ("Guidance for Stakeholder Engagement", 2019). In return, these stakeholders are given access to pooled resources that help them in their respective resilience-oriented activities while also increasing the resilience of the system as a whole. The basis of this engagement is the belief that sectoral, systemic, and operational resilience is a common interest and form of public good that will benefit all stakeholders. While resilience councils bring added value in strengthening social and systemic resilience, two areas of concern for their

effectiveness should also be noted: A. the multiplicity of leadership and management patterns of such entities, and B. the structural problems associated with their activities. The first area has a relatively neutral impact on their effectiveness. The second one, on the other hand, involves many specific risk factors that could detract from the positive impact of resilience councils.

A. Leadership and management models In an organisational sense, resilience councils can be both inclusive networks of organisations and forums that bring together state institutions, civil society actors, and businesses to strengthen resilience in areas of public life. Each management option, however, is characterised by a commonality of participants' objectives, a wide range of stakeholders, and parallel connectivity between governments and businesses. Resilience councils serve as platforms for the exchange of information, best practices, and initiatives related to risk prevention, crisis preparedness and management, and group learning to strengthen resilience. Therefore, the leadership model should be considered a neutral/negative factor in examining resilience councils.

A1. Resilience council as a governmental structure Comparative advantages associated with running a resilience council by government structures are associated primarily with access to decision-makers, potential formalisation of the council's activities, and access to relatively unlimited resources. Giving it a legal mandate promotes the formal definition of its powers and responsibilities and allows for inter-agency coordination, as well as the integration of resilience measures into other public policies. The state organiser of such activities may license the involvement of experts and representatives of non-governmental sectors and the extent of their influence on the operation of the common structure. For its needs, the government can also mobilise the necessary financial and material resources, as well as integrated planning processes. However, this leadership model risks bureaucratisation, slow decision-making, "heavy" reporting requirements, and the impact of changing political priorities stemming from domestic and external pressure.

A2. Resilience council as a mixed structure The mixed model of organisation and management of resilience councils is arguably the optimal form for such structures. Beyond the organisation itself and its decision-making structure, this also applies to the interaction of stakeholders in crafting an agenda of joint action. It combines strengths and compensates for individual weaknesses in the planning of the resilience council's strategy. It is linked to the strength of government structures and the legitimacy and flexibility of non-governmental sectors. This type of management model can successfully integrate diverse points of view, increasing the inclusiveness of decision-making processes and resulting in greater legitimacy. Government funding, in turn, can unleash the energy and

systematic use of the competence and innovation of social actors. Such structures, due to the decentralisation of the decision-making process and the reduction of bureaucracy, have the potential to be more adaptable than those managed centrally by the government. The primary risk factors for mixed resilience councils stem from a possible complexity of the processes involved in coordinating and agreeing on objectives of action, as well as the uneven distribution of resources. However, these risks can be mitigated by careful planning and effective communication within the stakeholder community.

A3. Resilience council as a non-governmental structure A common case among working resilience councils is that they are run by non-governmental actors (e.g., business, local authorities, academia). They rely on the strength and funding of their participants while drawing on the inspiration and grant programmes offered by governments and international organisations. The source of their effectiveness is the minimization of bureaucracy and a narrower focus than those of governmental or mixed structures. Their leadership model is also associated with greater trust between participants who work to address issues of genuine concern and urgency. On the other hand, risk factors of this model include uncertainty of financing, potential collision with government policies, and the narrow legitimacy of actions taken that are "invisible" for the wider community.

B. Structural problems related to the activities of resilience councils Resilience councils face several structural challenges. They concern problems with effective management, overcoming differences resulting from the varied organisational cultures of stakeholders, limited availability of funds (which increases competition in this respect), and long-term maintenance of a consistent mission and the quality of activities undertaken. For entities as complex as resilience councils, there is a potential for differences in strategic priorities and operational goals between stakeholders, which raises the risk of internal conflicts and decreased trust. The latter may also result from difficulties in integrating experiences, knowledge, and work cultures of stakeholders representing different sectors (e.g., continuity disruptions or differences in priorities of governments, businesses, and NGOs), as well as unequal representation in organisational management processes. This also affects the credibility of mechanisms for monitoring and improving the effectiveness of activities, as well as the ability to effectively communicate the mission of the organisation.

Why the state should be involved in the FIMI RC FIMI poses a serious threat to social cohesion, public order, and the democratic processes of European Union Member States. Therefore, preventing and countering its impact is a key component of building the resilience of a community of democratic states. A FIMI

Resilience Council that incorporates a wide spectrum of stakeholders can contribute to reducing related problems. This is an appropriate response to the recommendations contained in the EU's policies relating to a comprehensive approach that call for cooperation between governmental, business, and civic actors. This is demonstrated by the experience of many similar entities operating in multiple sectors of public life. They suggest general tasks for the FIMI RC, including: - strengthening national capacities to respond to the spread of foreign disinformation, including through joint multi-sectoral efforts by stakeholders; · linking closer government security policies with the involvement of competences and expertise present among the NGO and business sectors; - conducting research and analysis to identify harmful activities (i.e., TTPs) affecting social media and mapping sources and measuring the impact of disinformation; · raising awareness through research and education that strengthens social resilience, media literacy, and critical thinking skills; - contribution to policies protecting open democratic societies from targeted foreign disinformation campaigns that undermine public trust in free institutions, increase polarisation, and produce other harmful social consequences; - cooperation of the NGO sector with government institutions to address systemic regulatory efforts aimed at combating FIMI in all its manifestations while protecting the free market and freedom of speech; and - regular dialogue, education, and exchange of information with stakeholders. The FIMI RC under construction in Poland will largely be a "defender community" organisation that operates under the umbrella of government institutions that are aware of the challenges of disinformation and the benefits of synergies provided by cooperation with the private sector and civil society. The authors see five key advantages of this structure, which will benefit from the government's ability to leverage its unique capabilities and responsibilities to create a comprehensive, trusted, and effective approach to strengthening resilience: 1. The activities of the FIMI RC will enhance the relevance of national security policy, including prevention, detection, and response to disinformation threats. At the same time, these activities will gain stronger social legitimacy as the result of multi-stakeholder involvement. 2. Long-term resource allocation and regulatory activities will gain significant consultative potential, which may result in increased public trust. 3. The government will gain stronger support in crisis management, which requires rapid response and a broad social basis and reliance on competences and resources. 4. Access to knowledge, support for research, and the consolidation of information exchange practices will be democratised. This can be an important factor in increasing public awareness for more responsible public behaviour in the information sphere and strengthening democratic integrity. 5. The government will enhance its health security to give citizens access to reliable health information, which experience from the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated is an issue of

critical importance. This requires not only tackling disinformation in this area but also exploiting synergies with social organisations. The list of areas in which resilience councils and related organisations operate is very rich. The categories of activities include: agricultural and food resilience, climate and environmental resilience, financial and economic resilience, global systemic resilience, health resilience, resilience of cities, resilience of infrastructure and transport systems, resilience through crisis management, and technological and cyber resilience. In examining the case studies within these areas, it has become increasingly evident that a common and adaptable model for initiating and conducting cooperation intentionally oriented towards social resilience exists. There is therefore no reason why their experience should not be considered relevant for organised activities to prevent and combat FIMI-related risks and threats.

Creation of the FIMI Resilience Council The process SAUFEX began the process of establishing the FIMI Resilience Council (FIMI RC), guided by the following key principles: 1. Civil society councils are generally more effective if they are formally empowered and accredited as advisory-consultative bodies of legislative or executive bodies. This is also the objective pursued by SAUFEX. At the same time, the quality of the work and the usefulness of the councils are a function of the competence of its members. 2. The proposed FIMI RC should bring together representatives of organisations who are experts in areas such as the state and its institutions, legal regulation, national security, education, psychology, and the sociology of disinformation. Membership in the council therefore requires specific expertise. 3. This knowledge should also be based on lifelong learning. To this end, SAUFEX will create a European Master of Countering Disinformation (EMoD) as part of the project. 4. A reference point for the conceptual and organisational work of the council will be the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act). 5. The resilience council will also require a minimum representation of 50% of women. This project envisioned the development of the council's competences using simulations and tests carried out by consortium members at universities. This assumption has been verified. Such simulations could be carried out through real interactions on an ongoing basis between the government administration and third sector entities, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a wide range of NGOs involved in counteracting FIMI. At the same time, SAUFEX has been involved in key consultation and legislative processes related to the implementation of the Digital Services Act: first, in the context of public consultations of the legislative draft, and second, in the context of interministerial consultations of the draft law. Both paths are interrelated. The work was also guided by the results of initiatives and projects launched prior to the

formal start of SAUFEX, including in the Polish Senate. On March 31, 2023 (after this grant application had already been submitted), a seminar of three commissions was held: Culture and Media; Human Rights, the Rule of Law, and Petitions; and Foreign and European Union Affairs. The discussion was based on the report "Tackling Disinformation in Poland. Systemic Recommendations" prepared by 40 experts, including researchers belonging to the SAUFEX consortium. During the session, a declaration on countering disinformation in Poland was adopted. The senators called on all political forces to endeavour to build the broadest possible consensus to fight disinformation, particularly in the face of the ongoing crisis of public trust in Poland and the war in Ukraine. The declaration emphasised that disinformation has a negative impact on the security of citizens. To counter this threat to the democratic state and its institutions, systemic solutions are needed with the support of civil society and its involvement in the efforts of state institutions. The state's strategy for dealing with this threat should cover such areas of public life as: education, media, security policy, civil society support, and legislation. It called for the urgent implementation of the European Union's Digital Services Act. Public consultation The implementation of the Digital Services Act is being coordinated by the Ministry of Digital Affairs, which is responsible for ensuring the effective application of the provisions of this regulation into the Polish legal system by amending the Act of July 18, 2002, on the Provision of Electronic Services (Journal of Laws of 2002, No. Journal of Laws 2020, item 344) and the Telecommunications Law Act of July 16, 2004 (Journal of Laws 2022, item 1648), as well as amending the relevant sectoral legislation. During public consultations in January 2024, the presented assumptions of the draft act amending the Act on the Provision of Electronic Services and other acts in implementing the Digital Services Act drew attention, inter alia, to the following issues: 1. The regulation will become directly applicable and each Member State is required to ensure its effective application in its legal order by adopting appropriate internal provisions. The Digital Services Act provides for designation at the national level of a body that will act as a coordinator for digital services (i.e., a regulator responsible for compliance with the provisions of the regulation in Poland). 2. The legislative actions taken assumed that the amendment will concern only provisions that have been directly submitted by the EU legislator for regulation in national law or those in which the Digital Services Act has left regulatory freedom to the Member States. The following issues, which are reflected in the draft law, therefore need to be regulated by national law: a. institutional provisions on the appointment of the Digital Services Coordinator (President of the Office of Electronic Communications - OEC) and the competent authorities (President of the OEC, President of the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection), as well as the definition of their scope of competence. b. rules of procedure for authorities and cooperation

between authorities, including those related to: i. conducting investigations, inspections, and proceedings related to a breach by providers of intermediary services of obligations under the regulation. The draft act provides for a uniform procedure for conducting proceedings for a breach of the provisions of the regulation and inspections, regardless of which authority conducts it. ii. procedural aspects for the imposition of penalties (with the maximum threshold for penalties being assigned based on Article 52 of the regulation). iii. procedural aspects for lodging complaints against providers of intermediary services (referred to in Article 53 of the regulation). c. issues requiring the establishment of procedures, considering the requirements and conditions set out in the regulation (i.e., the procedure that should be followed by the Digital Services Coordinator): i. granting the status of "vetted researcher" referred to in Article 8 of the regulation. The role of the vetted researcher is to carry out specific research based on the data processed by a specific provider of intermediary services. The status of a vetted researcher depends on the fulfilment of certain conditions and is granted by the coordinator, which offers the provider confidence that its data will be shared with appropriate security rules. ii. granting the status of "trusted flaggers" referred to in Article 22 of the regulation. These are independent entities whose notifications of content deemed illegal by providers of intermediary services are to be treated as a matter of priority by the providers. iii. certification of out-of-court dispute resolution bodies. d. the requirements for orders to act against illegal content or provide information issued by administrative authorities or courts based on EU or national law and in line with the requirements of the Digital Services Act. e. rules on civil liability and proceedings before the courts in the event of a claim for damages for breach of the provisions of the regulation. Of these, SAUFEX considered the following issues: Certification of out-of-court dispute resolution entities The Digital Services Act provides for Member States to engage in good faith in the out-of-court resolution of such disputes, including disputes that could not be satisfactorily resolved through internal complaint-handling systems. This should be done through certified bodies that have the necessary independence, means, and expertise to carry out their activities in a fair, timely, and cost-effective manner. The independence of out-of-court dispute settlement bodies should also be ensured at the level of natural persons in charge of dispute resolution, including through rules on conflicts of interest.

The vetted researcher The draft law also provides for the procedure of granting the status of vetted researcher. Before granting the status of vetted researcher, the President of the OEC shall consult the authorities competent in matters related to the subject area represented by the entity applying for status.

Trusted flagger status The Digital Services Act provides for the establishment of trusted flaggers that operate in designated areas where they have expertise. Through reporting and action mechanisms required under the regulation, they are expected to operate without prejudice and decide on all reports made under those mechanisms in a timely, diligent, and non-arbitrary manner. According to the regulation, the status of trusted flagger should be granted by the Digital Services Coordinator of the Member State where the applicant is established; this status should be recognised by all providers of online platforms falling within the scope of this regulation. Trusted flagger status should only be granted to entities who have demonstrated, inter alia, that they have specific expertise and competence in tackling illegal content and that they act in an accurate, objective, and diligent manner. Before granting the status of trusted flagger, the President of the OEC shall consult the authorities competent in matters related to the subject areas represented by the entity applying for status. The provisions are constructed by analogy with the provisions on certification and with regard to the form of cooperation set out in Article 106 of the Code of Administrative Procedure. When determining the authority to request an opinion, the President of the OEC should be guided by their location in the Polish legal system and their expertise and experience, ensuring the possibility of adequate assessment of designated entities operating in a given sector. It should be emphasised that due to the critical nature of trusted flaggers' activities, the President of the OEC will be obliged to consult the President of the Office for Personal Data Protection.

Opinion of SAUFEX

During public consultations, SAUFEX prepared an opinion on the complexity of the matters regulated by the act and challenges related to its implementation. Overcoming these challenges will require broad inclusion of third sector organisations and experts in view of: the necessary independence and expertise; competence to tackle illegal content; objectivity and diligence; transparency of procedures; and severity of penalties. As part of the consultations, the SAUFEX project coordinator submitted a paper entitled: "The Disinformation Resilience Council as the Social Consultative and Advisory Body of the Coordinator of Digital Services." The paper discussed, inter alia: General assumptions To better protect democratic processes in the EU from FIMI threats, while preserving the fundamental rights and freedoms underpinning them, as well as broadening the legitimacy and social underpinnings of prevention, regulation, and education, we propose the establishment of the FIMI Resilience Council (RC) as the social consultative and advisory body of the Digital Services Coordinator. Relevant provisions in this regard could be included in the proposed legislative

amendments. Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act) is a specific legal constitution to fight illegal content online, including disinformation. To achieve the objectives of the act, legislators envisaged the use of independent civil society organisations involving researchers, auditors, and experts. They could serve to ensure a safe and trustworthy online environment; assess risks and proactively anticipate and prevent them; and reactively counter the dissemination of illegal content online. These organisations could also contribute to voluntary codes of conduct. The FIMI RC could serve as a platform for their cooperation in these areas. At the same time, synergies between public and non-governmental competences could be strengthened by establishing and accrediting the FIMI RC as a social body to assist legislative and executive authorities, first and foremost being the Digital Services Coordinator. The RC would gather experts and knowledge in various areas of the fight against disinformation, such as the state and its institutions, legal regulations, national security, media and the information space, education, psychology, and sociology. Participation in the work of the RC would therefore require expertise that would be integrated into the activities of state institutions. The RC would advise the national Digital Services Coordinator in all related fields, using specialised tools, protocols, and knowledge to coordinate strategic and policy responses to disinformation threats, as well as to promote uniform solutions across the EU and improve internal coordination within the EU.

Objectives

The main objective of the establishment of the RC would thus be to decentralise and democratise processes related to proactively and reactively countering FIMI incidents and campaigns. It would also facilitate the implementation of the DSA in close coordination with relevant state actors. The council, representing a wide range of relevant civil-society-based organisations and experts who are experienced in collaborating with the legislative and executive authorities in Poland and internationally, could play an important role.

Functions

As part of a broad consultative and advisory mission, the following RC functions would also be possible: - An educational function that would develop training materials for institutions and individuals involved in the implementation and operation of the act at the administrative and civil society level. This knowledge should be based on a specialised model of education and training, as reflected

in the textbooks and educational materials prepared for this purpose. Academic research in this framework would also serve general social education on the use of digital media. In addition, the council would support efforts to identify obstacles faced by EU members in coordinating and strengthening national approaches and responses to relevant threats. Knowledge and expertise within the council could also lay the foundation for specialised curricula and courses (e.g., the European Masters of Disinformation - EMoD) for practitioners and officials at various levels, including the central, regional, and local level. Successful completion of the master's course could be mandated for council members. - A testing role to verify the effectiveness of algorithmic protocols that describe and share knowledge about FIMI attacks and operations in real-time, allowing for swifter response and mitigation. This could have a significant impact on the resilience of democratic societies as well as the development of new products and services that aim to detect and counter disinformation and hybrid attacks. Council instruments supported by activist, expert, and media communities in all related domains could include existing specialised databases such as DISARM, STIX 2.1, EUvsDisinfo, and various Open CTI formats. At the same time, these databases could be extended to include data on national disinformation. They could also categorise offences and offenders according to the level of harm and consequences. - A depositary role. It would be the responsibility of the council to gather feedback from civil society and private stakeholders to gain insight into society's perception of hybrid threats, including the potential role of artificial intelligence in combating them, and provide strategic communication advice. The involvement of civil society in this process will contribute to an improved space for solutions, ensuring that the proposed solutions are relevant, effective, and transparent while increasing civic resilience. - An intermediary function. The RC's position between national actors could facilitate the standardisation of efforts to counter online threats, including through the establishment of part-nerships and cooperation, for example, with EUHYBNET to counter hybrid threats.

Effects

The direct effects of the work of the RC, together with general political, social, and educational effects (resulting in e.g., diminished affective polarization), would be: - Early detection and a coordinated response. By contributing to early identification and coordinated dissemination and response to network threats, the RC would support efforts to minimise the impact of these threats and reduce the cost of corrective actions. This would include identifying and neutral-ising disinformation campaigns before they become popular and detecting and mitigating cyberattacks before they cause significant harm. - Undermining

perpetrators' business models. The RC would contribute to increasing the costs of operations for entities disseminating disinformation or illegal content. - Anticipating and preventing impactful FIMI incidents and campaigns. The RC would formulate hypotheses on what FIMI to expect next as a form of prebunking. - Reduced reputational damage. The risks of disinformation and illegal content can damage the reputations of public institutions, government agencies, and other institutions, which can be costly to repair. The RC can help minimise reputational damage and reduce the costs associated with rebuilding trust and credibility. - Better use of resources. The RC can help ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively to address relevant threats. By strengthening social and governmental responses, the council can help avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that resources are allocated to specific risks. To ensure maximum independence from national authorities, the work of the RC could be financed by EU funds and self-financing.

Methodology for the establishment of the FIMI Resilience Council Based on simulations and academic tests, the establishment of a resilience council, at least half of which would be women, would result from: - establishing criteria for participation based on knowledge and experience, including international experience; - launching inclusive invitations to civil society organisations as well as academic, research, and media centres to select candidates based on specific criteria; - training of nominated candidates and members related to the Digital Services Act; and · a recruitment exam.

Summary

Decentralisation and democratisation processes for analysing and responding to online threats, including FIMI and illegal content, can offer significant societal benefits. By allowing for greater transparency and participation of civil society, these processes could lead to more informed decision-making and ultimately improve the resilience of democratic processes and institutions to hostile actions by foreign, state, and nonstate actors. The establishment of the FIMI Resilience Council, anchored in the civic community, will strengthen the overall awareness and resistance of the state and society. Through the possibility of direct EU support and self-financing through public-private partnerships, the council could become maximally immune to changing political will or the budgetary discretion of governments. This model has the potential to transform the f ight against FIMI from top-down to a peer-to-peer (if not bottom-up) approach, which could lead to a unique ecosystem for countering disinformation and other hybrid threats in the digital environment.

Interagency consultation

Following public consultation, the draft amendments to the Act on the Provision of Electronic Services and other relevant acts were submitted for interagency (interministerial) consultation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs communicated its position referring to SAUFEX's contribution. The ministry noted that during the public consultation conducted from January 5, 2024 to January 19, 2024, several entities requested the establishment of a social advisory body that will act under the Digital Services Coordinator. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sharing the views of social actors, proposed the creation of a consultative and advisory body for the Digital Services Coordinator. This body would, at its own initiative or at the request of the coordinator, prepare and present positions on combating illegal content and countering FIMI in the digital information environment. Proposed areas of involvement include: 1. the certification of entities for out-of-court dispute resolution, 2. the status of a trusted flagger, 3. the status of a veri-fied researcher, 4. liability of providers of intermediary services, 5. civil liability and proceedings before the courts, 6. complaints against providers of intermedi-ary services, and 7. other matters referred by the Digital Services Coordinator. According to the MFA, the council could include representatives of organisations registered in the National Court Register as well as universities, research centres, the media, and other entities (appointed by the Digital Services Coordinator) that work to counter the spread of illegal content, disinformation, and FIMI in the digital information environment. The position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been considered by the Ministry of Digital Affairs, which is the coordinator of the statutory work. It proposed the following wording be included in the draft act: 1. The President of the Office of Electronic Communications is advised by the Council for Digital Services, hereinafter referred to as "the Coun-cil". 2. The Council is a permanent advisory body to the President of the OEC on matters related to ensuring the safe, predictable, and trustworthy functioning of the digital services market. 3. The tasks of the Council shall include, in a. making proposals to improve the functioning of out-of-court dispute settlement bodies and trusted flaggers and access to data for vetted researchers; b. expressing an opinion on the enforcement of the obligations of providers of intermediary services under Regulation 2022/2065 by competent authorities; c. expressing opinions on other matters related to the functioning of the market for interme-diary services. 4. The Council is composed of representatives of non-judicial dispute resolution bodies, trusted entities, and media involved in exposing foreign disinformation campaigns through journalistic investigations. The pro-cedure for appointing members of the Council and the rules for its organisation could be laid down in a separate regulation. Because of these draft provisions and the political will to enact them, as well as the resulting increased potential

for even more inclusive participation of the third sector, SAUFEX proposed the appointment of a second council under the Minister of Foreign Affairs. While the first would advise the Digital Services Coordinator on the implementation of the Digital Services Act, the second council under the foreign minister would work on cross-cutting issues such as strategies, policies, stratcom, info ops, legal solutions, institutions, and general media education to counter FIMI and disinformation. At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been strengthening strategic communication and countering disinformation team. The Minister has appointed his Plenipotentiary on Countering Foreign Disinformation. The Ministry has also reinvigorated cross-institutional coordination to counter foreign FIMI and disinformation campaigns. A dedicated MFA's Department for Strategic Communications and Countering Foreign Disinformation was established in August 2024.

FIMI Resilience Council of the Minister of Foreign Affairs The creation of a FIMI Resilience Council under the Minister of Foreign Affairs is possible in Poland due to the ability of a member of the Council of Ministers, when implementing policy established by the Council of Ministers and after notifying the Prime Minister (information should be forwarded to the Chancellery of the Prime Minister before the entry into force of an executive order), to appoint (on the basis of Article 7(4) point. 5 of the Act on the Council of Ministers) councils and panels as subsidiary bodies in matters falling within its scope of activity. The composition of the body should be consistent with its departmental nature. This means that the members of the boards should not be representatives of other ministries or units supervised by another minister. If it is preferable for such a board to be composed of representatives of external entities (e.g., NGOs), in which case the board may be formulated by invitation rather than appointment, but the details may be refined accordingly. The scope of the appointing order should specify all the tasks of the council, which should be defined as precisely as possible and indicate the result to be achieved (e.g., preparation of a recommendation or report). It should also specify the tasks to be carried out by the entity concerned and its intended composition. Based on a law that stipulates that the Council of Ministers may set up an advisory committee attached to a minister and define the scope of his tasks, it is also possible to set up an auxiliary body attached to the minister. However, this formula has not been used in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus far, and the procedure would be much longer than in the case of an internal order. To summarize, the appointment of a council attached to the minister requires the issuance of an order and formal notification of this fact to

the Prime Minister's office. The regulation should specify how the members are appointed or invited and, above all, the specific tasks or purpose of the board. As a result of SAUFEX's activities, a draft order has been created, which is attached to this report.

Simulations of the work of the FIMI Resilience Council The assumptions for the establishment of the board and the draft regulation were also the subject of seminars on countering disinformation with NGOs, think tanks, and the media at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on June 5, 2024, and July 19, 2024 (a list of institutional participants is attached). The Plenipotentiary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Countering International Disinformation presented the activities and initiatives taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the country and within the international arena, as well as potential common areas of cooperation to combat disinformation. These include: - strengthening the team for strategic communication and counteracting FIMI and disinformation in the MFA, including the appointment of the plenipotentiary and establishment of a dedicated department. - inter-ministerial coordination, including through the Information Exchange Group and the team for cybersecurity. - The decisions of the Council of the EU on the creation of a Rapid Response Team to Hybrid Threats. - the plans of the Polish Presidency in the Council of the EU, including the creation of a Resilience Council at the EU level, support for the AU, tightening the sanctions system, strengthening cooperation with civil society, and effective implementation of the Digital Services Act. - cooperation within the EU, NATO, and formats of the Weimar Triangle (i.e., France, Germany, and Poland) the Lublin Triangle (i.e., Lithuania, Poland, and Ukraine), and Polish-American cooperation under the Ukraine Communication Group. - the creation of an advisory body to the Digital Services Coordinator. During the meeting, participants also raised the following issues: - Polish society is not currently immune to disinformation, and state institutions do not yet have the skills to fight disinformation. - countering disinformation should take place in parallel on many levels, with the involvement of different ministries, including the Ministry of Education. - the need to support NGOs and create an appropriate communication channel. - the necessity of avoiding blanket censorship, which carries the risk of censoring legitimate content. - the need to create an inter-ministerial strategy (education is not a task for the MFA, but rather the MEN, MPS) and an inter-ministerial body. In addition to those issues, participants asked the following questions: - Is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs evaluating this problem strategically in relation to the long-, medium-, and short-term? - Is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs examining what specifically affects Poles? - Will the Ministry of Foreign Affairs be the centre of counteracting FIMI in Poland? - Does the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plan to create contact points for the media? - What form will the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs' participation in the work on the Digital Services Act take and when will a coordinator be appointed? The seminars created an opportunity to exchange views and promote further cooperation between governmental actors, the media, think tanks, universities, NGOs, and civil society in countering FIMI. The invited participants expressed their willingness to to take part in the MFA Public Diplomacy Grant bids.

Notes

On Robert Kupiecki: „Undersecretary of State Robert Kupiecki Professional diplomat, in the foreign service of the Republic of Poland since 1994. He served as an intern and expert in the Department of Planning and Analysis, head of division and deputy director of the Department of European Institutions, deputy ambassador to NATO (1999-2004), director of the Department of Security Policy (2004-2008), Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Washington (2008-2012), and Deputy Minister of National Defence responsible, among other things, for strategic planning and the international activities of the ministry (2012-2015). Holder of a postdoctoral degree (doktor habilitowany), professor at the University of Warsaw at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies. Author of books and publications in the fields of international relations, security, and history. Fluent in English and Russian. Undersecretary of State Robert Kupiecki is responsible for shaping and implementing security policy, including defence, disarmament, non-proliferation, export control, and new security challenges, while supervising the Department of Security Policy. He coordinates the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, cooperation with the United States and Canada, support for Ukraine, and the foreign aspects of the state's defence preparations. He represents the Minister on the National Security Committee and the Cybersecurity Collegium, and oversees the work of several departments, including those dealing with EU Foreign Policy, the Americas, and Global Affairs." Source: https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/robert-kupiecki

On Tomasz Chłoń : „Plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Countering International Disinformation. Combating disinformation in the international environment requires coordinated actions and the involvement of many institutions - both domestic and foreign. In response to these challenges, the Minister of Foreign Affairs appointed the Plenipotentiary for Countering International Disinformation, whose task is to coordinate activities and strengthen interdepartmental and international cooperation in this area.The main responsibilities of the Plenipotentiary include: - implementing the strategy and coordinating actions in the identification, monitoring, and countering of disinformation originating from abroad, - cooperation with international partners and organisa-

tions dealing with disinformation issues, - coordinating cooperation with domestic authorities, institutions, and non-governmental organisations to exchange information, experiences, and best practices. The Plenipotentiary ensures the coherence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' actions in countering disinformation by: - representing the Minister in domestic and international working groups, committees, and other initiatives, - coordinating the work of the Ministry's organisational units and entities subordinate to or supervised by the Minister in matters related to disinformation. The Plenipotentiary also chairs the Consultative Council for Resilience to International Disinformation at the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Council develops opinions and recommendations on actions to strengthen Poland's informational resilience. The Plenipotentiary manages its work and submits the conclusions of its activities to the Minister.The position of Plenipotentiary was established by Order No. 14 of the Minister of Foreign Affairs dated 9 May 2024. The role is held by Ambassador Tomasz Chłoń, an experienced diplomat associated with the Polish foreign service for over 30 years. He served as Poland's ambassador to Estonia and Slovakia, headed the Department of the United Nations System at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and worked at the Permanent Representation of Poland to NATO. He also served as Director of the NATO Information Office in Moscow, operating on behalf of NATO Headquarters in Brussels. He currently serves as Head of Mission (Chargé d'Affaires) at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Finland." Source: https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/pelnomocnik

Both note texts were translated from Polish by Grok 4.

PART FIVE - ORDER NO. 30 OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS of 11 September 2024 on the Consultative Council for Resilience to International Disinformation at the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Pursuant to Article 7(4)(5) of the Act of 8 August 1996 on the Council of Ministers (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 1050), the following is ordered: § 1. 1. The Consultative Council for Resilience to International Disinformation at the Minister of Foreign Affairs, hereinafter referred to as the "Council", is hereby established. 2. The task of the Council is to formulate opinions and recommendations on matters related to countering international disinformation. 3. The detailed rules of procedure of the Council shall be determined by the Regulations adopted by the Council in the form of a resolution at its first meeting. § 2. 1. The Council shall consist of: 1. the Chairperson - the Plenipotentiary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Countering International Disinformation; 2. the Deputy Chairperson - the director or deputy director supervising the organisational unit responsible for strategic communication and countering international disinformation; 3. Members - representatives of civil society organisations invited by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to participate in the work of the Council. 2. Persons whose qualifications, knowledge or experience may be useful in the work of the Council may participate in the Council's meetings with an advisory vote. § 3. 1. The Chairperson shall manage the work of the Council, in particular by: 1. chairing its meetings; 2. convening meetings as needed, but no less frequently than once every two months; 3. inviting persons referred to in § 2(2) to meetings. 2. In the absence of the Chairperson, the work of the Council shall be managed by the Deputy Chairperson. § 4. 1. The Council shall operate through meetings held at the seat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hereinafter referred to as the "Ministry". 2. Council meetings may be conducted using means of direct remote communication and electronic communication, and their proceedings may be recorded using technical means of sound and image recording. 3. The Chairperson may decide to consider a matter by way of correspondence-based coordination of positions (circulation procedure). 4. If a matter is not agreed upon in the circulation procedure, it shall be considered at a Council meeting. § 5. 1. The Council shall act collegially. 2. The Council shall take decisions in the form of resolutions by consensus. In the absence of consensus, the Chairperson shall order a vote. Resolutions adopted by voting shall be passed by a simple majority of votes of the members present and voting. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson's vote shall decide. § 6. Participation in the work of the Council shall not entitle to remuneration, per diems or reimbursement of travel expenses. § 7.

1. Technical and organisational support for the Council, in particular the preparation of Council documents and the minuting of its meetings, shall be provided by a Secretary appointed from among the employees of the Ministry's organisational unit responsible for strategic communication and countering international disinformation, by the Chairperson of the Council. The Secretary shall not participate in the adoption of resolutions. 2. The minutes of the Council meeting shall be signed by the Chairperson and the Secretary. 3. Substantive support for the Council's work shall be provided by the Ministry's organisational unit responsible for strategic communication and countering international disinformation. 4. The Council shall submit an annual report on its activities to the Minister of Foreign Affairs by 31 March of the year following the end of the calendar year. § 8. This Order shall enter into force on the day following the date of its announcement.

Minister of Foreign Affairs: R. Sikorski

Notes

Source: https://www.gov.pl/attachment/a563486e-a97f-4731-b217-71a70877fb07 [pdf] The Order was translated from Polish by Grok 4.

PART SIX - Consultative Council for Resilience to International Disinformation at the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Resilience Council) - PL MFA press release

The idea of establishing the Council for Resilience to International Disinformation was presented by the Plenipotentiary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Countering International Disinformation - Ambassador Tomasz Chłoń - during a meeting on 15 November 2024 attended by nearly 90 representatives of civil society organisations engaged in countering disinformation. The Council constitutes a new platform for cooperation between public administration, universities, local governments, social organisations, and the private sector. Its main objective is to strengthen societal resilience to international disinformation and to develop opinions and recommendations on actions in this area. The Council includes experts representing various sectors, whose task is to jointly analyse information threats, develop concrete solutions - including legislative ones - and foster cooperation with universities and local governments. The Council also supports educational activities and projects aimed at raising public awareness of disinformation threats. The Council was established by Order of the Minister of Foreign Affairs dated 11 September 2024. Its initial composition consists of 22 experts recommended by more than 100 non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, and private sector entities involved in combating disinformation. The work of the Council is chaired by Tomasz Chłoń - Plenipotentiary of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Countering International Disinformation.

Notes

Source: https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/rada-odpornosci The press release was translated from Polish by Grok 4.

PART SEVEN - The Polish MFA Resilience Council third informal meeting

The following was originally published as a Saufex blog post.

Introduction

On November 15, 2024 the third informal meeting of the Polish Resilience Council (RC) took place after two earlier sessions in April and July. The next meeting, early 2025, will be the first formal, inaugural meeting.

MFA

The Polish Resilience Council is linked to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). This year, within the MFA, a FIMI plenipotentiary was appointed and a Department of Strategic Communication and Counteracting International Disinformation was founded. The inauguration of the Resilience Council is the next step in setting up a structure to counter FIMI. This is not to say that countering FIMI is a task solely for the MFA. The idea is to involve other ministries and to de-silo the domain.

Member selection

Within the structure of my recent thought experiment, the Polish RC is to be a national advisory RC composed of experts, in this case, representatives of NGOs and public academic institutions. The selection of the members is implemented step by step. First, NGOs and public academic institutions could express their interest in the RC on the MFA website - over 100 organisations did so. Then, they were then invited to send representatives to the third informal meeting, both offline and online. The next step is these organisations proposing a physical person as a candidate member, filling out a form, and fulfilling the requirement of having the support of at least five relevant organisations, of which a minimum of one is to be a public academic institution. The support claim needs to be backed up by documents signed by a person legally authorized to represent the organisation. The deadline for submitting the form is December 15. After the deadline, those who have fulfilled the requirements and have passed a security check will be installed as members of the RC.

RC specs

The general RC is to meet every two months, while specialised subgroups could meet every two weeks. The RC is to cooperate with a next RC that is to be linked to the Polish Ministry of Digitalisation. This RC is to focus mainly on DSA-related domains. The legislation underpinning this second RC is expected to be passed in Parliament before the end of the year. The relation between the two RCs is yet to be established.

PART EIGHT – The Polish National Council for Digital Services

Introduction

A second Polish Resilience Council is to be established. The second Resilience Council is to provide advice to the upcoming Digital Services Coordinator. Its legal foundation is not a Ministerial Order, as was the case for the MFA Resilience Council, but legislation. The second Resilience Council is part of the Act implementing the DSA in Poland. Currently (January 2026), the Act has been adopted by Parliament and Senate, and is awaiting the President's signature. ACT of 18 December 2025 on amending the Act on Providing Services by Electronic Means and certain other acts Article 15f. 1. The National Council for Digital Services, hereinafter referred to as the "Council", operates under the Digital Services Coordinator. 2. The Council is an opinion-giving and advisory body to the Digital Services Coordinator in matters related to ensuring the safe, predictable, and trustworthy functioning of the digital services market. 3. The tasks of the Council include: 1. presenting proposals for improving the functioning of out-of-court dispute resolution bodies and trusted flaggers, as well as submitting requests concerning their operation; 2. presenting proposals and requests concerning the implementation of the right of access to data for verified researchers; 3. issuing opinions on the fulfilment of obligations of providers of intermediary services arising from Regulation 2022/2065; 4. issuing opinions on other matters within the scope of the functioning of the digital services market. 4. The Council consists of 12 members, including the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Council. 5. The Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and other members of the Council are appointed by the Digital Services Coordinator from among candidates nominated by out-of-court dispute resolution bodies, trusted flaggers, entities referred to in Article 7(1)(1), (2), and (4)-(8) of the Act of 20 July 2018 on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 1571, as amended), as well as social and economic organisations related to the digital services market. 6. The Digital Services Coordinator may dismiss the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, or another member of the Council before the end of the Council's term upon a request from the entity that nominated their candidature. 7. In place of a dismissed Chairman, Deputy Chairman, or another member of the Council, the Digital Services Coordinator appoints a new Chairman, Deputy Chairman, or another member of the Council. Paragraph 5 applies accordingly. 8. The Digital Services Coordinator appoints and dismisses the Secretary of the Council from among persons employed in the office servicing the President of the UKE. 9. The same

person may serve as Chairman of the Council for no longer than two terms of the Council. 10. The term of the Council lasts 4 years. 11. The Chairman of the Council manages the work of the Council and represents it externally. 12. Administrative support for the Council is provided by the office servicing the President of the UKE. 13. Expenses related to the activities of the Council are covered from the state budget funds in the part administered by the President of the UKE. 14. The office servicing the President of the UKE reimburses Council members for travel costs to Council meetings, in accordance with the rules set out in the provisions on entitlements due to an employee of a state or local government budgetary unit for domestic business travel. 15. The rules of procedure of the Council are determined by a regulation established by the Digital Services Coordinator.

Notes

Sources: https://orka.sejm.gov.pl/proc10.nsf/ustawy/1757_u.htm (Act); https://www.sejm.gov.pl/Sejm10.nsf/PrzebiegProc.xsp?nr=1757 (progress) The Act, Article 15f, was translated from Polish by Grok 4.

PART NINE - A Finnish perspective on Resilience Councils

Introduction

The following is a transcript from the conversation I had in December 2025 with Mikko Salo, co-founder of Faktabaari, a Finnish non-governmental organization committed to countering misinformation and advancing media literacy - and partner in the Saufex project. Over the past ten years, Faktabaari has become a recognized leader in fact-checking and digital education in Finland, providing trusted resources for educators and the wider public. Mikko is also co-founder of NORDIS (Nordic Observatory for Digital Media and Information Disorder) and EU senior advisor to LUT University.

Democratization

OHS: Do you think there is a real need for democratization or decentralization of decision-making processes related to FIMI?

MS: Yes. At least there has to be much more awareness-raising. I think people need to know what is going on, and the topic has to be made much more visible - unlike the current siloed approach in which information is shared only on a "need-to-know" basis. It touches everybody through mobile phones and digital platforms. If you don't feel engaged somehow, you get lost and confused about the situation. So, at least some level of transparency and accountability is needed regarding what is being done. And now, if we consider FIMI as "the Russians are attacking us, and we have to shield ourselves" governments cannot do this alone in the information sphere without compromising democratic society.

You have to bring people on board. In Finland, what has happened is that people tend to participate, especially because of the eastern flank. There is a collectively shared mindset that we don't allow for manipulation - even to the extent that people sometimes see Russians where they are not. That can get a bit out of hand. This is a relative strength in Finland regarding FIMI. We haven't really had the need to fine-tune that approach, because it comes quite naturally. That's the Finnish "secret weapon," if you will.

There are a lot of bad things coming from the East, and that unites us. But now things are also coming from the western front, and that's where it gets complicated. It's no longer the case that everything bad simply comes from the East. Now we have this mixed situation - the western front, from movements like

MAGA. This is complicated for Finland as well, because it's much harder for governments to address publicly. The U.S is still our main security ally in the physical world. But in the virtual world, Europe has been seriously challenged, and also by the security doctrine. That creates confusion, even if it hasn't hit Finland directly yet. These are two foreign fronts. Of course, there also is China, but in Finland China is mostly perceived through problematic platforms like TikTok.

OHS: Does this new situation change the need for democratization, or does it instead require more centralization?

MS: Russia is almost unanimously considered a challenge for small states likes Finland. We associate and symphatise very closely with Ukraine, so you don't need to explain that much. People understand that government organizations are doing something, even if the coordination remains hidden. But when influence comes from former democracies - or however we define the U.S., for example - that's very worrying and confusing. One has to call out concrete actions, like was done in France and Germany when they saw interference in elections. I don't see Finnish authorities do that. They weigh national security considerations. It will be independent actors - media, NGOs - to raise the alarm and say: this is happening too, and, unfortunately, it's coming from within democratic block. That makes everything much more complicated. It was easy when there was one enemy. Now it's fragmented, and that's why we need a new kind of thinking. This is where organizations like Faktabaari have a role in initiating the debate. We are free to do what governments cannot within diplomatic jargon.

Resilience Councils

OHS: What are Resilience Councils to you?

MS: In Finland, we already have many preparedness structures, mostly built for the eastern threat. They also functioned during the pandemic, but fundamentally they function as post-war structures to deal with the Eastern threat. The Resilience Council is adapted to the culture and historical experiences. In Finland, the concept helps us ask ourselves: what is missing? What blind spots exist? What might the government not be able to do? What do we need to future-proof ourselves?

In Poland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs brings NGOs together. That's not the Finnish model. Ten years ago, the Finnish Prime Minister's Office began gathering Ministries, educators, and communicators to discuss these issues, learning partly from U.S. models, again mostly focused on Russia.

There has also been a cooperation between independent media and government structures to prepare for war-like emergency and crisis situations. For instance to make sure that if someone tries to occupy Finland, for example public broadcaster can always operate and everybody in media industry has role to play. But this is for extreme cases and does not seem needed for hybrid threats, in which we are neither at war nor at peace. These are new. Journalistic media is one block, the government another. That works in crises, but for hybrid challenges, we need something new.

Multiple fronts

MS: We currently have the eastern front, the western front, a digital front, and a domestic front. A digital front because social media and generative AI amplify anything and have already been often weaponized. And a domestic front, even though Finland is relatively moderate, but it's only a matter of time before political actors exploit the technological tools. We already see early symptoms. Resilience interventions should address all fronts. The question is who should play what role and what the role the state actors have in all this. I think in the ideal case, the Finnish resilience council would be an organization that could address the all fronts, not only the eastern. I'm less worried about Russia per se than about over-focusing just on it. The real danger from Russia is that it manages to exploit existing Finnish societal divisions and polarise the debate further. In the future, domestic actors or even Western actors could do the same if it benefits them. That's the mindset we try to promote: broadening the debate about who does what. In Faktabaari we gathered people who are observing this process independently, more perhaps with a journalistic or a researcher's mindset. We try to kind of raise awareness on what's the state of play and what could we do from civil society. As pilot we gathered a network of about 15 FIMI specialists who are worried about information resilience and not just about Russia. They shared pretty much the analysis of the existence of an eastern, western, digital, and domestic front and the need to both understand and prepare for different approaches with these 4 fronts. In Finland there is not yet a comprehensive media policy or other policy or answer to this new landscape.

It is important to find channels to at least come to a common situational awareness on what is Finland's biggest problem at given time and how big part Russian influence really is. Our current understanding is that for the time being, there is no major information campaign against Finland compared to e.g. to Poland; the my understanding the pressure is mostly on the bigger and more polarized EU countries where Russian messages might echo better.

Finland has assets: whole-of-society tradition, compulsory military or civil service, strong willingness to defend the country. Over 80% would defend Finland with arms even without certainty of victory. That's exceptional. So, the rhetoric is there, the mindset is there but the information domain and lanscape is gettiong more and more complex also with gen AI. We now have also hybrid threats, which in itself is a pretty complex concept.

We need to enhance our discussion from focusing just on the East to a wider 360 focus. And, I think resilience enhancement in the information domain is the way forward.

Formalization

OHS: Are the current informal structures sufficient, or should this be formalized like in Poland?

MS: It looks like in Poland the first step was to find and talk to people and gather them on the premise that there is a existential problem and something needs to be done about it. So, let's show unity towards the East, especially the East. We have that covered in Finland. We don't have a single actual, formal body as such focused on FIMI but we do have several structures dealing with that challenge. I think that we would need something new. There are many resilience minded NGO's and they've traditionally contributed to the whole-of-society approach. But in the information domain they are a little bit lost. The situation rather is that the government is gathering data from several networks of independent actors, but no in a systematic way, and asking what the state of play is and what the way to consult people would be. There is no immediate perceived threat so there is seems to be no need for a less informal consultation mechanism between independent actors and government actors. We are at the forefront, nevertheless trying to work out a better mechanism but government actors are concerned about who has to have responsibility for what because the field is so broad and many things are happening in parallel and security officials tend to keep in silos.

Centralization

OHS: Do you think that the consultation mechanisms you talk about should be sectorally siloed or should they be implemented in a central body?

MS: It's not easy to institutionalize them. In Finland things tend to be discussed in trusted circles. Different parts of the government are engaged with different aspects of the field and they engage with their own circles. There are whole-of-society defense structures. These are quite dominated by the defense forces that are still very respected and not considered as military. But the information domain is a very sensitive domain in open societies, and even though defense forces are interested to be engaged in this domain, this domain seem to remain politically loaded. In case of a conflict, the situation is clearer but in a hybrid situation things are changing all the time. So, while the defense forces do engage on a bilateral basis it is hard to find a way to institutionalize the situation. Especially, since things are moving very quickly now. While the Western front hasn't been as explicit as eastern until now, it starts to be hard to ignore this front since there is even a US security doctrine to support local MAGA-minded parties to make Europe great again - whatever that would mean.

OHS: So, the defense forces are to serve as the starting-point for more formal consultation mechanisms?

MS: Defense forces are not at least the most visible actor against FIMI. The scentre of gravity is closer to PM office with many other actors. There is bit of a trend to enforce StratCom approch in the domain. It has been relatively small but now they are at least regrouping the situational picture in PM office. For example, in the ministries the directors of communication in different ministries used to work for the respective ministers but now they are working for the PM office ie. Council of State. That's quite a centralization. There is an expert discussion in Finland now what are the good and bad sides of this centralization of government communication.

OHS: What are the good and the bad sides of this?

MS: Well, we don't know the results of analyses yet. I think, from a StratCom point of view, it can help help against silos but it also centralizes the vulnerability to the Prime Minister and might erode the link to ministries with subtrance expertise on more technical files. At the same time, civil servants are worried because they have been really responsible within their domain and experts were able to communicate much more closely with ordinary civil servants within specialized domains. Now, with directors of communication working together, working for one audience, communication could rather become part of a narrative. A motivation for the reform was as usual saving costs and pooling communication resources while it's easier to steer the communication by the PM.

I think eventually, the devil will be in the details of how it is implemented, but this is the trend, and it's an aimportant change, and we try to understand what it means.

Position of NGOs

OHS: Does the new set-up change the position of NGO like Faktabaari?

MS: The positive part is that at least with stronger PM office or coordination altogether it si easier to identify the counterpart to interact with. Until now I've been asking frequently: Who is coordinating? Who has the big picture? Who is doing what and responsible in case of an emergency or attack. This has been in place as a crisis communication protocol but not so much beyond that. We have contact with some people in the new set-up. Maybe it will be a chance to establish communication mechanisms. But, at the same time, it may also be that the new construction does not want to engage.

So far they respect what we are doing, and say it's super important but they also indicate that they cannot share information. We do our part, but I keep asking: What is your part? And what should be our part? Who acts in what manner if something happens? But at least we know, it's the Prime Minister's office that is supposed to say something. And if the office doesn't say it, we need to react if we have ressources.

FIMI processes

OHS: Are the process linked to FIMI - detection, classification, grading, reporting, countering - part of an integrated process in Finland or is everybody doing a little part?

MS: I think that it's pretty siloed but when it comes to Russia a bigger picture is definitely created. I don't know how well they are able to observe social media or the digital space. Regarding the monitoring of Western, the domestic, and the digital front, the monitoring is more siloed.

OHS: Could the current centralization be an opportunity to go beyond siloes?

MS: In that case, everybody would be linking to the Prime Minister's office for liaising. The mindset in Finland is, or should be, that even the military wants independent critical citizens in the end. Of course they have to be united defense forces but if e.g. communications systems brake during crises, citizens/soldiers would need to be able to critically analyse themselves, make informed decisions and not to panic.

Epilogue by Mikko Salo

In the context what I know on Polish pilot on Resilience Council on FIMI, I will try to describe why at least in Finland we need more citizens engagement and information resilience building and focus to wider digital information disorders where Russian FIMI (Polish FIMI RC seems to focus entirely) is unfortunately only one important element.

In my thinking FIMI from EAST and in our case Russia is only one of the 4 fronts an informed citizen needs to build resilience to. The 4 fronts with linkages for Finns can be categorized as: 1. EAST (Russia and to a smaller extent China) 2. WEST (de facto rereferring to US MAGA (Trumpism) dominating currently the information agenda while US plays a major role in Finnish security debate via NATO and bilateral defence) 3. DIGITAL platforms (referring to big commercial tech giants running so called "social media" and "AI chatbots" like X, Meta, Alphabet/Google, ChatGpt, Microsoft) who dominate citizens media consumptions including news 4. HOME (meaning Finnish national and to lesser extent EU political debates. In this front Nordic countries with relatively similar media structures build a reference to each other)

Within my thinking huge majority of Finns already have a historical and cultural inoculation towards EAST and especially Russia. Especially since our unifying and true narrative of winter war (1940), the national survivor has been dependent on countering preparing to counter Russian influence in all domains. Finns never stopped developing their defence forces and never trusted Russians. Latest Russian full scale attack on Ukraina (2022) united the Finnish citizens for firm NO to Russia and forced politicians to historical full NATO membership and firm and determined policy especially towards Russia...and with expense of increased dependency from US.

WESTern information front now means resilience to MAGA created confusion that attacks strongly the EU but especially tradition (Nordic) welfare model including what we call as Nordic media welfare society with balancing actors such as strong Public broadcasters, pluralistic commercial media, media education traditions from early age and other trust and consensus building institutions.

DIGITAL platforms and AI tools are widely used in Fionland whereas the critical debate on their consequences and links to politics have only gradually increased since the openly MAGA X-owner Musk put down his mask and openly used his platform to run his/MAGA interpretation of US 1st amendment on freedom of speech and attacking all things "woke" and all things regulation (including EU) while practically all tech giants aligned with MAGA regime since Trump

second term. EU as the only adult in the room on digital matters is trying to maintain European values, transparency and accountabililty regulation. But it has been challenged very openly and put to decide by MAGA in between Ukraina destiny and own approach also to digital regulation.

Finally HOME ground is key for national impact and keep things close to citizens on locally determined issues. This is also the primary front since no one else is defending the citizens if it is not the civil society organization of the respective country and impact of geopolitics will spread to this key front also within election system if the national actors are not ensuring transparency and accountability e.g. for fair elections.

In Finland due to relative security dependence to MAGA US but via that also to unregulated US and Chinese (TikTok) DIGITAL platforms, independent watch-dog role for citizens is crucial as state (politician and administration) find it hard to balance with physical security threats and more abstract cognitive warfare taking place on peoples very personalized digital devices such as mobile devices. Independent watchdogs are desperately needed to keep citizens resilient and awake while the officials need to balance in question of national physical secur-ity to an very unpredictable and transactional US regime. Russia is much more predictable and even unites Finland whereas WESTern and DIGITAL fronts tend to divide the social fabric of the home front including the EU. There is a growing awareness that we need to adjust our systems and I am confident that we will over time. Problem remains that things go fast and especially our western and digital front remain vulnerable until we find solutions nationally within Nordic and European true partners not trusting that US will return to good all times. We are living a big transition. This needs further analyising, open debate and action. Finland has parliemanetary elections in April 2027.

Notes

The conversation with Mikko Salo took place in December 2025. The epilogue was written in January 2026.

Mikko Salo is since 2014 a Founder and Executive Director to Faktabaari an awarded Finnish transparency NGO run independent fact-checking and Digital Information Literacy (DIL) service and media. He is also Co-Founder to NORDIS (Nordic Observatory for Digital Media and Information Disorder) currently in charge of it's AI Literacy focused development and link to EU digital policy. He has been a member of several European Commission high-level expert groups on online disinformation and media education especially in regards election and information integrity.

Mikko academic background is in international relations and European studies in five European countries including Sweden. He has almost 30 years of experience in European Affairs including Finnish Prime Ministers office, 4 different EU institutions, university, private and NGO sector. As a disinformation expert he joined 2022 a study visit to US midterms to better understand the impact of the technological challenges. To counter FIMI Faktabaari joins also e.g. the European Saufex.eu consortia along national networks. Mikko is also a reserve officer in Finnish conscription army urging debate for content to whole-of-society security approach and "bildnung" when preparing especially the digital natives to cognitive warfare on increasingly weaponized and biased information technology platforms with very few democratic accountability.

PART TEN – A Lithuanian perspective

Introduction

The conversation below took place in December 2025. My conversation partner was Viktoras Daukšas, head of Debunk, partner in the Saufex project and a Lithuanian independent technology-focused think tank and non-governmental organization that studies disinformation and implements educational media literacy initiatives. Debunk.org conducts disinformation research across the Baltic countries, Poland, Georgia, and Montenegro, as well as in the United States and North Macedonia, in collaboration with its partners. Debunk's work is supported by a network of volunteers, known as "Elves". Viktoras also is board member of FIMI ISAC (Information Sharing and Analysis Centre), a coalition of like-minded organizations working to safeguard democratic societies and their information ecosystems from FIMI. By strengthening collaboration, FIMI-ISAC enables its members to detect, analyze, and respond to manipulative behavior more quickly and effectively, while upholding freedom of expression. The focus is not on judging content, but on identifying and exposing coordinated manipulation by foreign actors.

The assumption

Onno Hansen-Staszyński: The basic assumption underlying Resilience Councils is that there is a need for democratization and decentralization regarding decision-making on how to deal with FIMI. Do do you see that need or you think everything's working quite well? Viktoras Daukšas: I think the problem is a bit different. Because to say that we need democratization of an industry, you need to have the industry first to have something to democratize. I think we are lagging behind dramatically the authoritarian regimes and the threat actors that they are supporting or running themselves. I think they are dramatically outpacing us on quite many fronts. I state at many conferences that if you want to counter an industry you need to have an industry of your own. The invasion of Ukraine shows that also very well - if you want to support Ukraine with artillery shells you have to have production, you have to have an industry. If you don't have industry, you don't don't have the capacity and capability so therefore you cannot counter the threat. So I think this is the broader and bigger problem: to call that what we have, this mix of NGO's, CSO's, and media activists an industry. It's not an industry - it's a it's activism. And activism is only sustainable at peak time. It's not sustainable in the long term. So my feeling is that if Europe wants to really counter FIMI threats and other threats to national security of the Mem-

ber States, uh we need to have the industry to be able to counter it. You cannot expect some volunteers to do Star Wars magic and to counter everything. It's just physically impossible. I think that's the broader problem, that if you do not put in the resources to grow the industry, it will be a very big struggle because it's very random. It's unstructured. Also, currently a big part is very grant-based - it's a race for the grants to do something. There is no long ter long-term sustainability in it so it's very random and fragmented. But it's random and fragmented by design, not by the will or by a strategic perspective from the defenders community. Therefore, you cannot have very clear KPIs. They're just not there. Our adversaries have it all. They experiment they don't care about mistakes. They throw pasta to the wall to see what sticks. They are not accountable to any democratic principles. They can do whatever they want or whatever AI says it's a good idea to do and they just don't care. They can test so many things and see what's sticking how it works. So this puts us even at a technical disadvantage because our procedures are slower than their procedures. We are getting outpaced in their use of AI. They use it without any care about the impact and the more destructive they are, the better it is for them. We have these structural problems. In the field of FIMI we separate different analysis stages: there is initial priority intelligence requirements, then strategic monitoring, instant detection, instant analysis, report writing, sharing, drawing conclusions, and policy suggestions. That is kind of the full cycle of the CTI or general analysis. There are multiple organizations even in the same country that are somehow covering parts of it - sometimes all of it, sometimes just part of it. Some have smaller capabilities, some bigger. It tends to be quite random because local organizations compete for the same grants. Some ideas get duplicated. In general, it's not a very effective market but it cannot be effective if it's based on just grants. We don't have a long-term goals concerning what we're trying to achieve or the funding mechanisms are not connected with the long-term goals. By having the analysis cycle and focusing on different activities, you will have very different impacts. If you work with elections you will work on something that's quite short term to expose some campaigns that are happening right now. This will have a kind of immediate impact, exposing what's happening right now. In an intermediate perspective the tools will be different. It will concern talking about prebunking, exposing the narratives, exposing the lessons learned, exposing modi operandi, that's a more long-term communication. And education take decades because what's happening in the schools and universities and how people are trained on information literacy can highly depend on what will be their life and their life choices and how they see the world. This creates a problem because you have short-term, mid-term, long-term solutions and then you have all organizations competing for the same pot of grants or funds. There is no strategic alignment. It's more an alignment on paper than in factuality because if you cannot sustain

the same team operating over longer time periods, you will always struggle to keep up with the KPIs. If the KPIs are changing every every quarter, every every six months, every year again, it will be very difficult to have productivity. So the question is where do we draw the balance in in the frameworks? Where do we say that initially awareness is the first thing what's needed but in the long term we need to have proper counter measures because awarenes just informs the key stakeholders but awareness and informing all the citizens so far seems to be a really really difficult job and very very ineffective. If there are big holes in education in later stages of life, it might be very difficult to to to fix those, to educate on those issues later on. I think this mixup of responsibility stages and of long-term versus short-term is very important. They all have very different tools and capabilities to deal with and even the perspectives are very different.

The industry

OHS: How would you see the industry, because you say there is an industry needed. What should the industry encompass?

VD: I know what industry should encompass. It would be bad practice if the very same thing would happen as in the cyber security industry where there are around 10 biggest global players left that manages the majority of the field. I don't know if that's the most productive way. I think that Europe has smaller think tanks and smaller units in the academic world that are functioning really well, that have this startup mindset in their heads and can move and innovate and do new things. I think that produces a more innovative and more competitive industry than having just a few big companies that already are dominating in one field and are trying to enter another. Between the two fields the differences are quite stark so you cannot apply all the cyber knowledge to FIMI - that's very very clear. The procedures do not work because the object of analysis is a bit different. Also, all the laws and policies around it are very, very different compared to cyber. I would see multiple organizations with different capabilities that are capable to work together on countering specific threats. This gives you a better coverage geographically, a better and more diverse ecosystem that can also somehow better maintain it itself and be more more efficient.

Resilience Councils

OHS: Is there a role for something like Resilience Councils in your vision?

VD: What's interesting that 'Resilience Council' is just a broader name or a label. But, if we look at the framework and see how Resilience Councils are defined within the framework, I would put them as almost equal to FIMI ISACs. It's the same thing, just the name is different. Because in both you will find the defenders community. In one you will have more local leaders, in the other more global leaders. In both you have forms of governance and democracy and elections of electing the leaders and the working groups. There is a code of conduct. There is a clear mandate on how all work together. So, yes, I think they are equal. Both FIMI ISACs and Resilience Councils are structured around the same idea that they are more civil society-led or led in a democratic way rather than being enforced. I see a lot of similarities between them. The members produce reports, they cooperate together, they coordinate, they work on data models on how they exchange data, on who monitors what, how they align with some specific events like elections to work on. So I see a lot of um overlap and I think in general they are called differently but in a way I think it's the same thing. There are just some adaptations that have been made: one is a bit more local and another is a global entity. In cyber security you also have the ISACs that are information and sharing centers and they can be local, they can be at an industry level, they can be at a one-country industry level, they can be at a cross-country industry level, they can be governmental, they can be public, they can be civil society-led. There are different versions of the ISACs. In the future, I think there's more value in having some of the ideas or frameworks becoming the standard, instead of using synonyms. I think that would be something that we would like to achieve a better standard. It would be less confusing, more clear, and more interoperable.

Impact

OHS: Isn't the big difference the interface with authorities. Isn't FIMI ISAC struggling from time to time to get their point across to authorities? Isn't this baked into the structure of the organizations?

VD: I disagree with you. I think FIMI ISAC does extremely well in communicating with authorities. When FIMI ISAC organizes events, everyone participates in those events. The participation rate is great. And we have coverage from institutions from academia to media and so on. So we have a really remarkable reach.

OHS: Is there impact? Are governments taking over FIMI ISAC recommendations, implementing them in their policies?

VD: Sixty to seventy percent of actions are taken after the reports are published. It's quite a wide follow-up. Sometimes it's by the platform, sometimes by the law enforcement, sometimes by others but the reactions are there. So, I would say that it works quite well. There are so many different threats that it's hard to do a taxonomy for those threats because they are ever evolving and there is so many of them. That also means that you need to have different responsibilities because in all points in life you will never be able to monitor everything. You will need to somehow strategically prioritize what are you monitoring and that defines the mandate of each organization in the sector. And if those mandates are not aligned then there is overlap or some wasted energy. But maybe sometimes there is a need for overlap when we need to review again findings and double check if they are correct. Maybe then overlap actually works as a kind of as a watchdog mechanism. It's not that I'm trying to make the models competitive. I'm just trying to say that it's a bit different perspective. There are different value chains that that the local ISACs versus international ISACs involve. The local ones are a local network that needs to create a mechanism to compete locally. For the international mechanisms there are different mandates. International organizations tend to be bigger than local organizations. They have more capacity to provide training. Sometimes they can provide tools and methodologies for local organizations to operate faster, better and more effectively with best practices. International ISACs bring this kind of experience from election to election and what you can learn from them, which you cannot do locally because you don't have the mandate to analyze all the other elections. That's why I would say that it's different. The number one priority is to make some of these Resilience Councils or ISACs active in countries and then at a later stage the question is how do you connected these in a broader Union-wide community. It would make sense. What is important is that the advice by these organizations is being listened to. If there is no outcome, they are useless. So local organizations, I guess, can help to build better bridges. Regular meetings and discussions locally can lead to outcomes so this is highly beneficial. But there is also the more European or more global angle where you build I guess a bit more long-term or a bit deeper knowledge that can be re reused on a cross-country basis. What I'm trying to say is that it's a system within a system of systems. There are many different systems and frameworks and we need to make them more um interconnected so we could work better together. Then, as a response to FIMI, we can deploy international teams and local teams and combine them together. They have different perspectives and different experience - maybe the local organizations haven't seen 10 other elections and they cannot compare; those who work internationally can bring this knowledge to the table. I think we can build more effectiveness in connecting the dots within the system, however imperfect and small it is. There are still ways and means to

achieve more efficiency in in that. There is another framework. It is an international idea design for resilience. But this one is very institutional heavy - it's led by institutions. The Resilience Council presented by Saufex is kind of civil society-led. So I guess that's the core difference. Like FIMI ISAC is civil society-led compared to local StratComs or EEAS StratCom or the Rapid Alert System that are institutional-based. Right now in Europe I think FIMI ISAC is the only big network of organizations countering FIMI that has size and impact. Maybe another network would be EDMO, the fact checkers. But the fact checkers network is a bit different - it's more journalist-based and less analist-based.

OHS: And focused on education, for instance on media literacy.

Lithuania

OHS: Let's consider the local situation in Lithuania. Is there an ISAC? Is there an institution like a Resilience Council? Is there a structure for different sectors meeting each other, formally or informally?

VD: There's a combination of both, which I think is quite good. In Lithuania there are the community meetings with the institutions. We have national crisis management center that is kind of a central institution coordinating the stratcoms for 10 institutions and for counter measures and response at a strategic and a tactical level that can be deployed over institutions. So Lithuania has quite a strong structure from that perspective. The thing is that you cannot say that it's one or another, that is it institutional or community driven because you need to have both like in Lethania. You need a coordinating authority that coordinates on a cross-institutional basis which is a really difficult job because institutions tend to compete with each other and there are always questions of what can be shared what not and there is competition between them. So, the coordination is very important and this coordination is impossible to do from the outside - it only can be institutional-based and the process has to be repetitive so institutions could learn how to work productively over time. Once this is there, then you have the institutional coordination and a Resilience Council or FIMI ISAC version that is more community driven and then these worlds starts to overlap - being independent they are doing their own research and share ideas and finding. My point is that you need to have both if if you want to operate uh properly - the informal and the currently operational.

OHS: Would it make sense to formalize the structure more?

VD: You can can you formalize, yes, but then every formalization leads to a question of resources and I think maybe that's the reason why some of these models are kept informal because there are no resources attached to them. Once the resources are attached then it by default becomes formal. That's the key question. By the way, what does formal mean? Because if it's a grant agreement or a contract, this is also a formal thing.

Resources

OHS: I think that formalization also is a political issue. So for instance, if there will be a new government in Poland, I don't know if what is there now will survive. So, it's very hard to have a long-term strategy if completely opposite parties can come into power with different visions. And I think that's one of the reasons why probably Europe is so important. But also why it's so hard to create something tangible and durable because I think everything is short-term by nature of the politics, not only by nature of the field or lack of willingness. What do you think about that?

VD: I think it's all about resources. Why does academia work? Because there is investment in academia. It's part of educational system. In contrast, everyone agrees that FIMI is a problem there is no structural business model to support drafting analyses. Therefore, the field is so fractured and inefficient. It's a kind of chicken and egg problem: if you don't invest in analysis, it will be very difficult to move forward. But you still want to move forward. So, it's kind of a back and forth. And I think in no market you will achieve high productivity if you you don't do the briefings and you don't do the analysis, if you don't repeat the cycle many times to perfect it with specific threat actors in specific industries to be productive. With the current amount of information in the world nobody's able to monitor everything. So, you have to prioritize on something that's the most important.

OHS: Is there a posible business model for the field? I mean, isn't it always state driven and state funded by definition or does real business model exist that could work?

VD: So you tell me: the does cyber security field has the business model?

OHS: Yes. But in that domain, there are tangible costs for instance when a cyber attack is being launched against company. So, I think in this field people see the short-term and the long-term benefits o being more secured. I don't think that FIMI triggers this kind of awareness of direct costs.

VD: What you're saying that companies in cyber are paying because they can be attacked. But, there is little investment in prevention. It's only about dealing with the consequence if it happens. I guess it happens still too rarely, so for companies it's not seen as valuable to invest a large amount of resources. Maybe that's the reason or maybe it's a lack of awareness and education. We have this agreement in almost all EU countries and institutions that FIMI and disinformation are a problem. But we have a disagreement on whose problem it is and what solutions to it should be. And, there are so many shades of gray of what's legal, what's not, what's in between, and this might differ also from member state to member state. It makes this field quite complex. It's not an easy field.

General public

OHS: If you look at the field, the defender community and the institutions, is there at all a role for normal people, for the general public in this? Or do they just need to be trained to be aware and educated to be careful? How do you see that? Viktoras Daukšas: I think there's a lot of value in volunteers movements like the Lithuanian elves. This is an active volunteer movement that does impact and exposes on the ground trolls and bots. In some projects we have large amounts of volunteers supporting us. So, I think there's a lot of things that citizens can do. But, at the level of average citizens, I think there is a need for education to learn how information operations are conducted - such as a course like Debunk created called Info Shield or that universities produce. I think that spending just 60 minutes of their life on a course can help to identify operations much more effectively - maybe not yet professionally. Professionals are required to get more training, but those who are interested in learning I think will always have more mastery in being able to identify what are false narratives and what are the indicators of a campaign. I think these skills are very very useful. To sum up: it's critical thinking and source analysis. What's interesting that some people can dive into big conspiracy theories with critical thinking as an sole instrument but they have a very strong critical thinking. Still, they have a big issue with sources in a trustworthiness analysis. You need to have both skills work in tandem to be able to analyze a situation effectively from multiple angles and come to a correct decision.

OHS: Is the field accessible for regular citizens?

VD: I think that every product needs to be tailored to every audience. The same thing will not resonate in the same way with different audiences. So, if you are working with a specific audience, they will have specific needs. Any product course training material has to be adjusted for for that specific goal in order to be actually productive. I think if you invest and create uh better products, then

there will be a question of efficiency of reaching out those audiences because that's also a very big problem and as well as the costs. If the costs are high or the audience is very limited it will maybe lead to having a limited effect in a small bubble.

OHS: Could it be that people are only interested in the field for a short amount of time?

VD: I think this is natural in a democracy. It's the same with election cycles. If you have high risk democracy situations, you will have high participation rate in an election. If there is a crisis, you might have thousands of people who will volunteer to donate their time to response to crisis. But there are no human beings who can live in a constant crisis. It's just unhealthy and it's physically impossible. You can prioritize resources at some point in time for a specific purpose but you cannot maintain it in the long term. Like there are new volunteers coming every month and you just have wave after wave of new volunteers who join for just a short time or with a small commitment, and they do something. That can work in the long term but the acquisition costs of every time new group might be high. But it also might be effective as a kind of structure because in this way a lot of people learn about the subject. We are also trying to put more responsibility into the citizen's hands but I like this metaphor that you know people are not paid to read the news - it's journalists who are being paid to read the news and to write the news and to know which news is worthy to report and not. This is a profession. So, we can expect people that have different professions to have basic skills but to have like analists level skills or be what we would call in the industry 'certified analists' that is just an unreasonable expectation. It's not possible to have citizens who are fully trained as professionals in the field and they can do everything as a super analists or special forces analist.

OHS: There's a big space between doing nothing and being a professional. The last thing I'd want to ask you is that NATO said that the European continent is neither at pace nor at war and whether that does mean that citizens have different responsibilities? How do you see that?

VD: Citizens have the right to be informed. FIMI defenders need to help fulfill this promise to citizens so they would be informed, so they could make informed decisions. It's important for citizens to follow organizations who are working on this because all FIMI defenders are being punished with social media algorithms. Think tanks, academia, science, and anything that is a bit difficult more difficult to read gets downrated on the social media platforms because it's not good for business. Platforms also don't want to expose FIMI operations and the size of them. What is weird to me, is that threat actors always

find vulnerabilities in social media platforms on how to increase their reach or make something go viral. This is a really kind of hilarious situation. We are organizing now a webinar to overview the Czech election and Moldova election and on Meta we cannot even create a post and boost the post visibility because it has 'elections' mentioned. When you're organizing an awareness campaign for stakeholders, you cannot boost the post because you are getting blocked instantly because it's about elections. When you're doing the right thing you're being blocked. But there are just millions of ads that are run by criminals or scammers. They're not blocked. Meta makes 10% of their annual revenue, 16 billion dollars, from scam and fraud. How how this is even possible? How we can be in this kind of weird situation when on one side everything is AI-checked and blocked and on the other side they're profiting and allowing criminals to profit. It's a very disbalanced situation which requires attention and solutions because as it is it does not make sense.

DSA

OHS: Is the situation as you just described DSA related? Viktoras Daukšas: Yes, I think it's part of the DSA. But the DSA cannot solve the problem of the lack of visibility of think tanks content. The DSA is mainly about illegal content.

OHS: Isn't the DSA also about harmful?

VD: There is a lot of content that needs to be proven to be illegal. That's how threat actors evolve. They find new gray areas and our work is then to prove that this is illegal.

OHS: Could audience flagging help to prove content is illegal?

VD: We have that in Lithuania with Lithuanian elves and other volunteers that are reporting the content. So, yes it it can work to certain extent. We see a bigger problem - it's weaponized by threat actors. They are using bot farms and troll farms to report content. They are using our own counter measures to their operations against us. So that is a kind of a problem. In Lithuania we had multiple cases when Lithuanian influencers who are collecting funds for to support Ukraine had their accounts reported and blocked, on many many occasions even blocked permanently. We are quite certain that this is uh these accounts have been mass reported by troll and bot farms.

OHS: Wouldn't it help if all reporting that is sent to a platform would automatically also be sent to a DSC so it can be checked whether there is mass reporting and bot reporting?

VD: An additional system for analyzing bots or bot reporting would be definitely very useful. Also means and ways for further analysis could be beneficial.

OHS: Is there anything that you want to add or that you want to stress once more?

VD: Simple things with regard to DSA. Every platform has its own reporting rules which makes no sense. It's an absolute waste of time and energy. Every platform has different ways to define what's illegal even though I think in 80 or 90% of the cases it's the same thing. This is just still so ineffectively constructed. It's just crazy how much manual effort you need to put in because the field is so unstructured and even though it overlaps a lot. I think there is really a lot of work to be done on this to structure it and make it more usable.

OHS: Who should initiate this improvement?

VD: I think it's only the practitioners who can start dealing with this. Institutions cannot do anything with this because only the practitioners can tell what's productive what's not. So, I think this needs to come from the defenders community.

OHS: That's completes the circle because it means we need a FIMI or a Resilience Council to engage.

VD: Yes. They can be local or more global networks. We need to have a more structured approach than we have right now.

Standards

OHS: Is there anything you want to add or maybe stress?

VD: There are different things that we need to do. We need to work on the standards. We need to train people on the same standards. We need to reach standardization in training and certification so people could actually work together. It's a multidisciplinary issue and we need to push these multiple angles at the same time so it would be like a balanced wheel that could ride on the road. There are so many dependencies. If you don't have people interested in the topic, or organizations working on this, you cannot have a basis on which you can build an industry. If it's not perceived as a threat, it will not be dealt with. There are multiple things that you need to have for the environment to work. There may be five or six strategic objectives that you're going for and there will be different means to get there but you'll need balance.

PART ELEVEN – Mass flagging app

Introduction

As a next step in democratization and decentralization the FIMI decision-making process DROG create a first prototype of a mass flagging app: Getresilence. The app was discussed in part two, in the paragraph titled The system in practice. Saufex partners wrote a Policy Brief for EEAS outlining a road forward for the app.

Policy Brief fo\1\n\n\2: The case for a plug-and-play end-user FIMI flagging tool

Why This Matters

FIMI gets supercharged by generative AI (GAI). Unlike social media platforms, GAIs are: personalised - only the targeted citizen sees it; ephemeral - disappearing before oversight systems can capture it; high-volume - overwhelming platform moderation; truth-agnostic - fabricating persuasive content instantly. This places GAI-driven FIMI outside the visibility of fact-checkers, researchers, platforms, and national authorities. Only the user can detect it; only the user can flag it.

EEAS and the structural gap

The Democracy Shield relies on a network of actors that, in turn, depends on visibility of content. In a world of personalised AI content, visibility collapses. This creates a strategic blind spot: EEAS cannot respond to threats it cannot see.

The strategic opportunity: An EEAS-anchored plug-and-play flagging tool To close this visibility gap, the EU should develop a simple, universal, plug-and-play flagging tool enabling citizens to report suspected AI-generated FIMI instantly. The EEAS is uniquely positioned to anchor the tool's analytical backend, triage system, and external-action dimension.

Training and flagging

The Democracy Shield emphasises societal resilience and whole-of-society preparedness. But resilience requires agency. And agency requires tools. Step one: a public training initiative to teach citizens to identify: personalised targeting signals; ephemeral synthetic messages; high-volume AI message bursts;

content lacking identifiable provenance. Step two: a plug-and-play tool giving citizens a direct, low-friction pathway to alert the EEAS-led FIMI ecosystem. Together, training and tooling expand EEAS's early-warning visibility inside the fragmented, personalised AI-generated information spaces.

Nature of the tool

The tool should be open source and non-branded so that NGOs and other CSOs are enabled to co-develop, maintain, and distribute it frictionlessly. In the HORIZON-funded SAUFEX project a first prototype is being constructed: https://getresilience.eu/.

Recommendation

Although generative artificial intelligence platforms (GAIs) are not yet designated as VLOPs under the DSA, it is strategically prudent to anticipate their eventual inclusion. Investing now in a plug-and-play end-user FIMI flagging tool - complemented by citizen FIMI detection training - constitutes a forward-looking governance measure. This approach strengthens preparedness, mitigates future implementation delays, and contributes to a more stable, resilient, and adaptive regulatory ecosystem as technological capabilities continue to evolve. And, as an important side effect, the tool can already be implemented by end-users in current VLOP settings.

Annex

Onno Hansen-Staszyński, 2026; special thanks to Beata Staszyńska-Hansen & Tomasz Chłoń

Annex - Executive Summary

This Annex sets out a non-totalitarian strategy for countering Foreign Information Manipulation (FIMI) by structurally strengthening societal resilience. The core argument is grounded in an empathetic-utilitarian ethical framework. Within this framework, the societal objective is defined as the maximization of the lived experience of four fundamental human needs: autonomy, belonging, achievement, and safety. The degree to which these needs are experientially fulfilled constitutes the primary, measurable components of a resilient society. To operationalize this objective, the annex introduces the Interdemocracy program. Interdemocracy implements a genuine "whole-of-society" approach by systematically incorporating the perspectives of the general public - described here as "belief-speaking" - into institutional decision-making processes. By moving beyond exclusive reliance on expert consensus, this approach captures citizens' lived experience and provides a corrective feedback loop that is otherwise absent from conventional governance models. The theoretical justification for this method is derived from the concept of autopoiesis: the capacity of a system to reproduce, maintain, and correct itself. Interdemocracy is positioned as the practical mechanism through which societal autopoiesis can be realized. It does so by addressing the structural tension between individual agency and collective stability. Enhanced individual agency is both an intrinsic normative goal and an instrumental means of improving the quality, legitimacy, and adaptability of institutional decision-making. This dual function can be illustrated through the metaphor of a "resilience battery." The battery represents the adaptive capacity of the individual citizen. It is "charged" when fundamental human needs are maximally fulfilled - through increased agency enabled by Interdemocracy and through heightened institutional responsiveness to citizen input. The Interdemocracy program faces substantial implementation challenges. These include logistical constraints at scale and, more critically, the willingness and capacity of governmental institutions to integrate belief-speaking in a substantive rather than symbolic manner. Crucially, the relevance of institutional responsiveness differs between actors. For the current political system, responsiveness is essential to maintaining legitimacy and functional stability. For individuals, by contrast, autopoiesis and self-resilience are valuable in their own right, irrespective of institutional uptake. This asymmetry gives rise to a central political question: will increased individual self-resilience develop within the existing institutional framework and thereby reinforce it, or will it emerge outside an unresponsive system - potentially bypassing it?

ANNEX PART ONE – A third ethical frame regarding FIMI

In blog posts on the Saufex website, I discussed the, in my view, main ethical frames that Western democracies rely on to make sense of the information sphere: the human rights approach by the European Union (see: blog post 39) and an evolutionary psychology approach by the current US administration (see: blog post 44). In this first part, I'll outline a third, alternative frame. But before I do that, I'll summarize the two earlier blog posts.

Summary of the, in my view, dominant Western approaches Both blog posts examine how two major ethical frames, the human rights approach and evolutionary psychology, can be positioned on a moral spectrum running from Levinasian responsibility to Hobbesian self-interest, and what this means for real-world FIMI. The human rights approach, grounded in the Universal Declaration, lacks a firm ethical foundation and can be co-opted for propaganda or in-group moral enforcement, oscillating between paternalistic Levinasian care and Hobbesian control. Evolutionary psychology, meanwhile, views ethics as an evolved mechanism for managing reputation and group cohesion, producing egoistic and tribal behavior reflected in contemporary political actors such as Trump, Musk, Yarvin, and Vance. Together, the essays show how both frameworks reveal morality as a strategic social instrument rather than a universal guide, shaping how societies justify censoring, manipulation, influence, and selective empathy within the global information sphere.

The empathetic-utilitarian approach The third approach, which aligns more closely with my understanding of the information sphere, relies on two pillars: Levinasian empathy and utilitarian self-interest. These two pillars operate on different levels of ethical experience. Levinas provides the interpersonal and motivational foundation while Greene's utilitarianism provides the systemic and deliberative framework. In this sense, Greene's framework can be read as the rational extension of Levinasian care, translating the ethical responsibility that arises in face-to-face encounters into policies and institutions. The third approach therefore assumes a layered structure of ethics: empathy grounds our personal sense of moral obligation, while rational deliberation guides how that obligation is implemented at scale.

Levinas

Levinas can be interpreted as framing empathy as the result of a personal and embodied ethical experience with other people. His radical interpretation of reality divides human experience into two spheres: a totalitarian sphere in which we are objects that can be labeled and manipulated, and a metaphysical relation in which humans meet another person face-to-face and open themselves up to this other person to the point that they escape the totalitarian realm and enter an ethical realm of responsibility and care for that individual. This ethical sphere is the precondition for empathy, not as a voluntary feeling but as an ethical task. While it may seem impossible to imagine a Levinasian empathy within administrative systems, it is not entirely so. It would indeed be impossible if we understood administrations solely as impersonal institutions and processes. Yet administrations are composed of individuals, and each of these individuals is capable of encountering others face-to-face and, at least momentarily, entering into a metaphysical relation with them. When members of an administration step outside the totalizing logic of bureaucracy to respond to another person ethically, they open a space where responsibility and care can circulate. The individuals who are met in this way may, in turn, extend that openness to others, allowing a fragile network of non-totalitarian relations to emerge within, and sometimes even against, the administrative order.

Greene's utilitarianism

According to experimental psychologist, neuroscientist, and philosopher Joshua Greene, most moralities are group moralities that only make sense within a group but not between groups. These moralities were born as adaptive mechanisms to ensure group cohesion and rest on our automatic and quick brain thinking mode that is shaped by our collectively shaped and evolutionarily biased experiences. Greene, in contrast, describes a morality based on our other brain thinking mode: the rational or deliberate mode. By employing this mode, we can take a more impartial view and focus on what really matters. And what really matters for all individuals, from any group, is aggregate well-being. Therefore, Greene proposes a morality that strives for the greatest aggregate well-being for the greatest amount of people. Actions that implement this morality should be accountable to evidence.

Resilience

Resilience (see blog posts four and forty-six) can be seen as the fulfillment of core human needs - experiences of autonomy, belonging, and achievement, alongside the basic condition of safety, and perhaps, following Jonathan Haidt, the sense of contact with something higher. As such, it can function as the bridge between the personal ethics following a metaphysical encounter and the systemic pursuit of well-being: it translates the subjective experience of care and responsibility into measurable conditions of collective flourishing.

The third approach

The third approach consists of the interlocking layers of care and responsibility (Levinas), deliberation and evidence (Greene), and the connective layer of resilience. This approach is capable of serving administrations as well as other organisations, and even individuals - which makes it a potential foundation for a true all-of-society approach. The third approach is valid only regarding humans, thus excluding bots and other synthetic entities. It applies to all humans from any group, no matter whether they are in-group or out-group. What the approach stipulates is that administrations should strive to bring about a maximum experience of autonomy, belonging, achievement, and safety for a maximum amount of people. This means both counteracting against those who undermine this experience - by promoting polarisation, alienation, learned helplessness, relativism, and nihilism, and that stress threats to our physical and psychological health (see: blog post four) - and implementing policies to promote inclusivity, a growth-oriented framing of ability and adversity, and predictable and responsive communication that avoids being judgmental (see: blog post forty-six). Both types of administration activities should be evaluated by measuring impact. For individuals within administrations who enter an ethical sphere of encounter, an additional layer of personal responsibility and care arises. The meeting space provides a profound experience with something higher, thus enhancing a deeper layer of resilience, a layer that should not be touched by administrations in an ideological or religious way. The layered essence of the third approach places it far away from the Hobbesian pole on the Levinas-Hobbes ethical spectrum, and in special cases exactly on the Levinasian extreme.

Relation to the two dominant approaches The third approach has a troubled relation with the human rights perspective since it is based on intragroup moralistic, and non-measurable concepts. Its relation with evolutionary psychology is equally problematic because this approach is based on the cynical premise of hypocrisy and pitting randomly defined out-groups and in-groups against each other. A difficult question, however, is how this framework should engage with

actors who reject its premises and actively seek to undermine well-being. In these defensive situations, it may be necessary to adopt a philosophically uncomfortable concession. The cynical transactionalism of the two other approaches might offer a limited, last-resort tool. A strategy from game theory like 'tit-for-tat,' always initiated in good faith, could serve not as an ethical ideal, but as a pragmatic line of defense against destructive behavior. On the other hand, while the welding of Levinas deeply anti-systemic thinking with Greene's rational approach is already ambitious, adding a game theory strategic component to the mix might be a bridge too far.

ANNEX PART TWO - Project SAUFEX on "societal resilience" and "whole-of-society approach" - proposition for a citizen-oriented strategy as an integral part of the post-peace European defense strategy

The core challenge

Europe faces a new security reality since NATO stated in 2022: "The Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace." This new reality requires the development of a new paradigm. Essential elements in this paradigm are "societal resilience" regarding both external threats (Russian aggression, terrorism) and internal vulnerabilities requiring democratic renewal as well as a "whole-of-society approach".

The SAUFEX project

The HORIZON-funded SAUFEX project operationalizes societal resilience by protecting and enhancing citizens' four fundamental needs: belonging, autonomy, achievement, and safety. As a whole-of-society approach it enables participation of ever more societal stakeholders in resilience-building policies. A two-phase approach - phase one: Resilience Councils Based on SAUFEX, Resilience Councils are established that engage NGOs and academic institutions in FIMI analysis and response. Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the first to have implemented this framework, representing an expansion beyond state-centric approaches. Phase two: Program Interdemocracy Resilience Councils achieve meaningful progress but remain incomplete as a whole-of-society approach: they do not include the general public and focus only on expert "fact-speaking" while neglecting another discourse type essential in democratic societies: "belief-speaking". Including the general public requires wisdom-of-crowds principles, but these are logistically extremely challenging with adults (requiring simultaneous, independent responses) and face contemporary barriers (liquid anxiety, identity fragmentation, affective polarization). SAUFEX therefore first targets adolescents through educational systems in which simultaneous participation is feasible. However, adolescents present additional, specific challenges: developmental processes (peer pressure, impulsivity) and partial dislocation (high integration in close relationships, low integration beyond). SAUFEX'S program Interdemocracy overcomes these through structured protocols enabling more authentic individual expression while temporarily suspending group dynamics.

Strategic significance

Program Interdemocracy demonstrates that democratic renewal and defense imperatives reinforce rather than compete with each other. By enhancing the whole-of-society approach through systematic citizen engagement, it creates institutional pathways for authentic citizen voices to inform governmental policy. This transforms procedural democracy into active citizen engagement, establishing a model for comprehensive societal resilience against information manipulation.

Call to action

While our societies are under siege, they require democratic revival. Besides a dramatic expansion of our defense capabilities, we need to strengthen societal resilience through a comprehensive whole-of-society approach that offers responses to the current challenges. Now is the time to implement program Interdemocracy at scale.

Introduction

Europe recently has entered a new era of uncertainty. In 2022, NATO acknowledged this shift in its Strategic Concept, stating "The Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace."[2] This assessment was reinforced by NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte: "We are not at war, but we are not at peace either"[3]. The statements represent a dramatic departure from NATO's previous Strategic Concept of 2010, which asserted: "Today, the Euro-Atlantic area is at peace and the threat of a conventional attack against NATO territory is low."[4] NATO identifies two primary threats driving this deteriorating security environment. First, the Russian Federation that, through its "war of aggression against Ukraine"[5], "has violated the norms and principles that contributed to a stable and predictable European security order. We cannot discount the possibility of an attack against Allies' sovereignty and territorial integrity."[6] Second, terrorism poses significant challenges, as terrorism "is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of our citizens and to international peace and prosperity. Terrorist organisations seek to attack or inspire attacks against Allies."[7] Compounding these security challenges, recent tensions between the United States and the European Union have shaken the transatlantic relationship. Against this backdrop, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, proclaimed: "The West as we knew it no longer exists"[8].

A new paradigm

It is evident that the new era requires a new paradigm underlying European policy-making. Unfortunately, no consistent, well-defined strategic new paradigm has emerged yet. Only fragments have surfaced, such as the need to radically increase defense spending to five percent of NATO members' GDP. A second element is the need for "a wartime mindset"[9], that is "a new, resilient mindset"[10]. In the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, the word resilience is mentioned twelve times (against one time in the longer 2010 Strategic Concept).[11] "Resilience" is also frequently mentioned by the European Commission. It is "a new compass for EU policies"[12]. The concept is mentioned in Directives (e.g. Directive (EU) 2022/2557[13]) and Regulations (e.g. Regulation (EU) 2021/241[14]). It is used to describe Ukrainian resistance[15] and as a goal for European societies[16]. While resilience is viewed by the European Union as a goal, a third, linked element that emerged for the new era, is a mechanism[17] to reach that goal: the "whole-of-society approach", sometimes shortened to "whole society approach". The concept is used by NATO[18] and by the European Commission (e.g. COM/2025/148 final[19], COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2023/2836[20], COM(2020) 605 final[21]) and other European Union institutions. The HORIZON-funded SAUFEX project brings together organizations from five countries, four of which are frontline states, to examine how "resilience" and "whole-of-society" concepts can inform more effective and democratic strategies for countering foreign information manipulation. This booklet introduces key solutions developed so far in the project, alongside findings from the seminar and workshop "Enhancing societal resilience through listening and being heard," held June 5-6, 2025 in Helsinki and organized by the Polish Embassy in Finland, which explored the solutions in depth.

Project SAUFEX on the concept of "resilience" Based on a SAUFEX blog post[22], Robert Kupiecki, Polish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Tomasz Chłoń, Polish Foreign Minister's plenipotentiary for countering international disinformation, wrote their perspective on the concept of resilience[23] for the SAUFEX project. In the text, they attempt to operationalize "resilience". According to them, resilience "can be generally defined as "the ability to cope with shocks and keep functioning in much the same kind of way. It is a measure of how much an ecosystem, a business, a society can change before it crosses a tipping point into some other kind of state that it then tends to stay in (Walker, 2020)". In the SAUFEX project, resilience is taken as a systemic quality. It is both seen as the amount of elasticity a system possesses and as a mechanism to keep the system from overstretching and reaching its tipping point. Resilience is about both trying to prevent the system from reaching a critical point while at

the same time making the system more shockproof."[24] The authors point out that resilience refers mostly to defending the system: anticipating, preventing, detecting, and evaluating FIMI incidents and campaigns; combating and removing its effects; and restoring the system. They then explore what "the system" entails. "It might seem obvious to designate the information ecosystem ("infosphere") as the system that counteracts FIMI. /.../ Although taking the infosphere as the system seems a logical starting point, it is doubtful whether trying to keep the infosphere functioning should be a goal in itself. Perhaps a well-functioning infosphere is a precondition for another larger system to not be shoved over a cliff? The European Commission states: "Disinformation erodes trust in institutions and in digital and traditional media and harms our democracies by hampering the ability of citizens to take informed decisions" (European Commission, 2018b). This implies that, in addition to the sphere of digital and traditional media, "institutions" and "our democracy" could also be harmed. Elsewhere, it specifies the potential victims of that harm as: "democratic processes as well as /.../ public goods such as Union citizens' health, environment, or security" (European Commission, 2018a). The system now seems to encompass media, institutions, democratic processes, and public goods. The frame to protect all these elements from the perspective of the European Commission seems to be the democratic European state. If the state is indeed to be the systemic frame for resiliency, a temptation might occur for the state to rate its own survival above all other goals. It could start prioritising the defence of its institutions and processes as the highest goal and forget what its ultimate task is: serving its citizens through democratic governance. This is the trap of "undemocratic liberalism" as described by Yasha Mounk (2018). The democratic state rather seems an element in the "keep functioning" aspect of resilience's definition. Instead, society is the system. /.../ When taking inspiration from the field of prophylactics, and especially from the work of Bruce Alexander, it can be asserted that people need a few preconditions to minimally function, a state that Alexander (2008) refers to as "getting by". The tipping point for not being able to get by anymore is, according to him, a state of dislocation: "[a]n enduring lack of psychosocial integration". Psychosocial integration, in turn, "reconciles people's vital needs for social belonging with their equally vital needs for individual autonomy and achievement. Psychosocial integration is as much an inward experience of identity and meaning as a set of outward relationships" (Alexander, 2008). Alexander asserts that an experience of dislocation is "excruciatingly painful" to such an extent that it becomes logical for those experiencing it to choose an alternative lifestyle. Many social psychologists, such as Van der Kolk (2014), add a fourth basic human need to the three mentioned by Alexander: safety. The tipping point for people to cease functioning in society therefore is when their four basic needs - belonging, autonomy, achievement, and safety -

are unattainable. When the four basic needs are out of reach for a prolonged time, individuals will turn away from democratic society and choose an alternative path. In that situation, they will "become susceptible to the lure of pills, gang leaders, extremist religions, or violent political movements - anybody and anything that promises relief" (Van der Kolk, 2014). Taking all the elements mentioned above together, resilience in the SAUFEX project implies a focus on both (a) defending society against FIMI incidents and campaigns that try to undermine people's experiences of belonging, autonomy, achievement, and safety and (b) actively supporting people's positive experiences of belonging, autonomy, achievement, and safety. The experience of belonging can be undermined by increasing polarisation and alienation. The experience of autonomy can be undermined by empowering an experience of learned helplessness, a state in which we unjustly feel we have no agency. The experience of achievement can be undermined by promoting relativism and nihilism. The experience of safety can be undermined by highlighting real or imagined threats to our physical and psychological health without providing solutions."[25]

Resilience in practice

Kupiecki and Chłoń conclude that we need "to be vigilant against foreign activities that aim to promote polarisation, alienation, learned helplessness, relativism, and nihilism. They will work to address threats to our physical and psychological health while at the same time supporting citizens' psychosocial integration to avoid the tipping point of large segments of citizens turning their backs on democracy and choosing non-democratic alternatives."[26] A subsequent SAUFEX blog post[27] describes potentially positive interventions to enhance resilience based on citizens' experiences of their four basic needs: belonging, autonomy, achievement, and safety: - Regarding belonging: "Closeness to another person or group can be measured using the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale[28]. As was explored in the [SAUFEX] blog post on evolutionary psychology[29], humans are genetically programmed to prioritize their kin. However, the concept of 'kin' is flexible and open to interpretation. Cialdini (2016) examines ways to include non-family members in the category of 'kin'. One approach is to emphasize kinship through family-like references for non-family members (e.g., brothers in arms, motherland) or by highlighting localism (geographical proximity). Another method to foster belonging is acting in unison, which reinforces the perception of similarity among individuals and encourages positive mutual assessments. Henri Tajfel demonstrated that a feeling of belonging to a group can be triggered remarkably easily. Being assigned to a group, even through a random process like a coin flip, is sufficient to evoke a preference for one's group members. As Van Bavel and Packer note in The Power of Us[30],

"[i]t seemed that the mere fact of being categorized as part of one group rather than another was strong enough to link that group membership to a person's sense of self." Thus, a positive intervention to enhance the experience of belonging is trough inclusion in a group, any group, thereby manufacturing a shared identity. To avoid at the same time cultivating out-group biases, groups should be defined as inclusive (e.g., emphasizing shared humanity or superordinate goals)."[31] - Regarding autonomy: "The most effective intervention to enhance the experience of autonomy is participation. However, not everything labeled as participation constitutes genuine participation. As discussed in [SAUFEX] blog post five[32], Sherry Arnstein's typology of citizen participation in governmental decision-making ranges from nonparticipation through tokenism to citizen power. Employing tokenism instead of authentic participation can have a more negative impact than no participation at all (see, for example, Alderson (2006), regarding children). The key challenge is not merely to listen or appear to listen but to demonstrate that participating voices are taken seriously. Lundy (2005) notes, also regarding children: "one incentive/safeguard is to ensure that children are told how their views were taken into account". Thus, a positive intervention to enhance the experience of autonomy is participation in a process where voices are genuinely considered and acted upon."[33] - Regarding achievement: "Achievement can be measured in two ways: relative to others and relative to oneself. Measuring achievement relative to others often leads to a zero-sum worldview: my gain is someone else's loss, and vice versa. This framing undermines the experience of belonging by fostering comparison, rivalry, and disconnection. If we seek to strengthen resilience as a whole, not just one of its parts, we must reject achievement defined in opposition to others and embrace achievement as progress measured against one's own starting point. To experience achievement as self-improvement, I must see myself as dynamic and capable of growth. If I consider my abilities fixed and unchangeable, I will avoid challenges that threaten my self-concept and cling to tasks that confirm it. Carol Dweck[34] refers to this as a fixed mindset and contrasts it with a growth mindset: the belief that abilities can be developed through effort, learning, and perseverance. People with a growth mindset embrace challenges, view mistakes as opportunities, and persist in the face of setbacks. That, in essence, is a resilient stance. While Dweck's theory has been criticized (e.g., inconsistent replication results and concerns about the long-term impact of intervention), the core message that anyone can improve their abilities remains a compelling entry point for strengthening the experience of achievement. A follow-up intervention could be to reframe social challenges as opportunities for growth rather than, as FIMI often does, as inevitable vulnerabilities. This would position individuals not as fragile but as capable of adaptation and development. Thus, a positive intervention to enlarge the experience of achievement is consistently promoting a

growth-oriented framing of ability and adversity, both in education and in public discourse."[35] - Regarding safety. "Safety is not simply the absence of danger; it is the felt sense of being protected, supported, and emotionally anchored. The most enduring source of this feeling is not external security, but the quality of our closest relationships. A clear example is the secure attachment between a child and caregiver. In developmental psychology, a secure relationship is characterized by trust, open communication, emotional warmth, and consistent support. Children raised in such environments tend to develop higher self-esteem, better emotional regulation, and greater resilience. What makes these relationships protective is not their perfection but their predictability and responsiveness. A child does not require a flawless parent but one who is reliably available, emotionally attuned, and willing to repair ruptures. This dynamic creates a stable internal model of the world - one in which others can be trusted and one's own feelings are manageable. The same applies beyond childhood. In adults, the experience of psychological safety is also shaped by the consistency and trustworthiness of key relationships. Whether in families, teams, or communities, people feel safe when they know what to expect and when they are confident that expressing vulnerability will not be met with punishment or ridicule. Thus, a positive intervention to enlarge the experience of safety is promoting predictable and responsive communication that avoids being judgmental."[36]

Project SAUFEX on the concept of "whole-of-society" A SAUFEX project's primary objective is to decentralize and democratize FIMI analysis and response capabilities. This begins with engaging NGOs and academic institutions in identifying, classifying, grading, and reporting FIMI incidents and campaigns, as well as in developing subsequent responses. To advance this goal, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a new institution: the Resilience Council. A second Resilience Council specializing in DSA-related matters will be established by the Polish Ministry of Digital Affairs once the necessary parliamentary legislation is adopted. The theoretical foundations of Resilience Councils are outlined in Kupiecki and Chłoń's (2025) booklet referenced above. Current developments and practical information can be found on the SAUFEX blog[37], with blog post forty-two[38]serving as a useful starting-point.

A broader approach needed

While Resilience Councils represent meaningful progress toward a whole-of-society approach, they constitute only the foundation of a much broader approach. Resilience Councils for NGOs and academia lack two essential whole-of-society elements. First, though these councils engage important societal

stakeholders, they exclude a crucial actor: the general public[39]. Second, they focus on evidence gathering, interpretation, and response formulation, but neglect what Stephan Lewandowsky identifies as intuition-based conceptions of truth[40]. This double exclusion is not accidental: FIMI is deemed a domain for experts, and neither the general public nor intuition are considered valuable assets in an expert domain. It would be wrong to limit the whole-of-society approach to democratizing the pool of experts only. To begin with, the sole focus on evidence, or "fact-speaking" as Lewandowsky[41] dubs this, limits the discourse on FIMI to producing descriptions. Getting from factual descriptions ("is" statements) to prescriptions ("ought" statements) is not obvious, a philosophical position defended by David Hume[42]. Within Daniel Singer's interpretation of Hume's Is-Ought gap[43], it can be stated that it is impossible to derive recommendations on how to deal with FIMI from a mere collection of described FIMI incidents and campaigns. Furthermore, according to Lewandowsky, fact-speaking in itself is insufficient for productive democratic discourse. Alongside fact-speaking, "belief-speaking" is essential: "While evidence-based discourse provides a foundation for 'reasoned' debate, intuition contributes emotional and experiential dimensions that can be critical for exploring and resolving societal issues."[44] Although evidence-informed policies might seem the rational way to go, belief-speaking narratives address the human and social friction that determines whether those policies will actually be adopted, sustained, and effective in real contexts. Therefore, besides addressing "what is," discourses exploring "what does it mean to me" need to be taken into account when drafting responses to FIMI. Finally, NGOs and academics do not exclusively pursue the common good: in this case, serving citizens. They sometimes become parties in the process due to their needs for funding and exposure, while NGOs, through their statutes, do not serve the whole spectrum of potential FIMI aspects but focus on a selection of these. This renders NGOs and academics vulnerable to the danger of "undemocratic liberalism" that was mentioned earlier. Under undemocratic liberalism, "elites are taking hold of the political system and making it increasingly unresponsive: the powerful are less and less willing to cede to the views of the people"[45]. Therefore, the decentralization and democratization of FIMI analysis and response capabilities must ensure responsiveness to citizens by including their voices in the process.

Precondition for involving the general audience: wisdom of crowds In his book The Wisdom of Crowds, James Surowiecki[46] provides a framework for better collective knowledge: ask the crowd. His key insight is that when individual perspectives are aggregated correctly, crowds consistently outperform even knowledgeable individuals across three types of problems: cognition, coordina-

tion, and cooperation. For individual perspectives to be aggregated effectively, participants need at least some relevant information about the subject. Surowiecki notes that larger groups tend to produce more accurate collective outcomes, provided three preconditions are met.

Surowiecki's preconditions Surowiecki's first precondition is diversity - understood not in sociological terms, but in conceptual and cognitive terms. Effective crowds need a range of perspectives among participants. Interestingly, having everyone be highly intelligent would actually reduce this diversity. The presence of the naïve and the ignorant is important to the process. Even biases, unfounded overconfidence, and selfishness contribute by introducing different viewpoints and approaches. The second precondition requires independence in thinking. Participants must make decisions without interference from others: no communication among individuals, no negotiation, and no compromising during the process. Individual responses should be presented at the same time to prevent one person's answer from influencing others. The third precondition emphasizes decentralization. Individuals should draw on their local, specific knowledge and tacit understanding. This approach allows the crowd to access information that might be missed in more centralized decision-making.

Challenges in implementing the next step of the whole-of-society approach In addition to establishing "fact-speaking"-oriented Resilience Councils, the general public and belief-speaking perspectives need to be involved in FIMI policy-making. However, implementing Surowiecki's second precondition presents significant logistical challenges. In order to render consultation between individuals impossible, a setting needs to be created in which a crowd of citizens receives a question simultaneously and has no other option than to respond individually, on the spot. This appears extremely difficult to execute in practice. An additional challenge involves providing basic factual information so that all participants have at least some relevant information about the subject of the question and can meaningfully contribute. The problem is that any facts provided could be disputed as mere opinions by segments of society. This scepticism toward presented facts has multiple causes. The first cause is constituted by a groundswell process underlying our current societies that Zygmunt Bauman refers to as the "liquefaction" of our societies. Based on his theory, in our liquid times nothing is permanent, neither our social position nor our achievements or possessions. We are constantly compelled to update ourselves, our behavior, and our property. A new phone, for instance, is only "new" for a short time, quickly replaced by a newer phone that renders the current model outdated. This process of renewal happens so rapidly in our liquid times that we must run at full speed just to stay in place: "it is gratification to survive, the pur-

pose of survival being more gratification".[47] The result is a society in which people "construct, preserve and refresh their individuality"[48] by means of consumption, in fear of exclusion and becoming waste themselves. Our freedom is reduced to the freedom to choose new consumer products and experiences. While in earlier times, liquefaction was a temporary transitional process that gave way to the solidification of new structures, in our era, there will be no subsequent solidification. We are suspended in a state of everlasting liquidity. The first cause gives rise to the second cause: identity fragmentation. In the vision of Bauman, the liquid times in which we live cause our identities to lose their social anchors. Bauman likens the contemporary creation of our identities to laying a jigsaw puzzle, but "the whole labour is means-oriented. You do not start from the final image, but from a number of bits which you have already obtained or which seem to be worthy of having, and then you try to find out how you can order and reorder them to get some (how many?) pleasing pictures. You are experimenting with what you have. Your problem is not what you need in order to 'get there', to arrive at the point you want to reach, but what are the points that can be reached given the resources already in your possession, and which are worthy of your efforts to obtain them."[49] By constructing our identities in this way, we are able "to unlock the door when the next opportunity knocks"[50] in our dynamic times. We survive by adapting. The third cause is a phenomenon known as affective polarization. Tosi and Warmke write: "So-called affective polarization refers to the increasing antipathy to those on the "other side.""[51] Hugo Mercier, for instance, writes of the United States: "The impression of increased polarization is not due to people developing more extreme views but rather to people being more likely to sort themselves consistently as Democrat or Republican on a range of issues. /.../ The only increase in polarization is in affective polarization: as a result of Americans more sorting themselves into Democrats and Republicans, each side has come to dislike the other even more."[52] In the European Union, the situation is more nuanced. National average scores for affective polarization range from relatively low (the Netherlands) to relatively high (Bulgaria).[53] This disparity in scores is even greater at the regional level. Over time, the average scores for affective polarization have increased for most countries[54]. Within the European Union, populist radical right (PRR) parties "occupy a particular position in the affective political landscape because they both radiate and receive high levels of dislike. In other words, supporters of PRR parties are uniquely (and homogeneously) negative about (supporters of) mainstream parties and vice versa."[55] Again, morality seems to be the driving force against those who deviate from the perceived group. Educator Kent Lenci writes: "polarization is at its essence a matter of belonging. "It has more to do with partisan loyalty than it does with ideological principal.""[56] Within this, a motivation attribution asymmetry exists: "In

essence, people tend to believe their own group is motivated by love, while others are motivated by something less admirable - such as hatred."[57] Van Bavel and Packer put affective polarization in perspective. While, according to them, people's "groupishness" is normal, affective polarization is not: "[p]eople typically like their own group more, but this does not necessarily mean they dislike or want to harm out-groups."[58] When the default situation changes, "[w]hen relations between groups harden and we start to see "our" interest as fundamentally opposed to "their" interests, the natural positive emotions and empathy we feel towards our own group can shift in a dangerous direction. We start to think that we're not only good but inherently good. And if that's true, then they must be intrinsically bad and must be opposed at all costs. Issues become moralized in ways that favor our point of view. We become less tolerant of dissent and vigilant against any threat that threatens to dilute the all-important boundary between us and them. We see enemies without and within. We begin to believe that when it comes to pursuing our group's interests, any means justify the ends."[59] For some, this kind of aggressive moral talk (i.e., "grandstanding") is a means "to elevate their social status"[60]. Grandstanding is also an outcome of discussion confined to in-groups: "[e]xperiments that look at the content of the discussions taking place in likeminded groups show that it is chiefly the accumulation of arguments on the same side that leads people to polarize."[61] Polarization co-driven by grandstanding "also encourages people to be unduly confident about their views, making those views more resistant to correction"[62]. The effect of the three causes is that citizens behave like critical consumers rather than as resilient co-creators and that anything that clashes with their group biases, including facts, is likely to be seen as hostile and evil. That does not bode well for any fact-informed introduction to whole-of-society-type questions to a crowd of citizens, nor for independence of thinking. A third challenge is related to the question of who should be invited to participate. Ideally, all citizens should be included if this could be made feasible.[63] Not only is freedom of expression a human right, but when applying ethical frameworks, the outcome is that no one should be excluded.[64] The traditional solution to this challenge is using representation based on selection by self-selection, voting or lottery. Unfortunately, all methods face criticism for alleged biases toward elite interests rather than encouraging genuine critical input. Even when scientific selection methods are applied rigorously, critics point to potential biases and suspect indoctrination or top-down whitewashing rather than true democratization. The only approach that might avoid polarizing a priori criticism is involving everyone, although it cannot be fully excluded that some kind of resentment still might be triggered.

SAUFEX'S next step in implementing the whole-of-society approach In project SAUFEX, the whole-of-society approach is piloted among adolescents as a next step, following up on the establishment of the NGO- and academia-based Resilience Council. Adolescents form a group in a vulnerable developmental phase with a dire need for resilience, as they find themselves on the frontline of FIMI due to their extensive online presence. This is also a group with a strong legal right to participate in the whole-of-society approach, even though, as a rule, they are not allowed to vote yet.

Adolescents' legal position Adolescent (and child) vulnerability is elaborated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention's Preamble mentions children's "physical and mental immaturity"[65] as its ground. Consequently, according to the Convention and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 25(2)), children "are entitled to special care and assistance"[66]. Within the context of FIMI this means that minors have a special legal position when it comes to illegal and potentially harmful content, as specified in the DSA[67], article 28. This does not mean that the voice of the child is to be ignored because of the child's not yet fully evolved capacities. Article 12 of the Convention states that States Parties "shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child"[68]. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (art. 24(1)) interprets this as follows: "Children ... may express their views freely. Such views shall be taken into consideration on matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity."[69] The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child provides an authoritative interpretation of article 12 of the Convention. It calls the children's right to participate "one of the four general principles of the Convention" alongside non-discrimination, the right to life and development, and the primary consideration of the child's best interests[70]. According to this interpretation, the right to participate in decision-making processes concerns individual children as well as groups of children (section 3). Whether children make use of this right is a choice made by the child or group of children (paragraph 16). The capability of a child to form their own views should be assumed (paragraph 20). State parties should not use the child's evolving capacities as a limitation. The Committee also declares (paragraph 70) that "public or private welfare institution[s], courts, administrative authorities or legislative bodies" are bound by article 12: therefore, providing children the right to participate is mandatory for these parties. The Committee adds (paragraph 72): "States parties must examine the actions of private and public institutions, authorities, as well as legislative bodies". Non-state service providers are recommended "to respect the principles and provisions of the

Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Recommendation 16) as part of their self-regulation mechanisms (Recommendation 17). On the EU level, the Strategy on the Rights of the Child declares: "the EU needs to promote and improve the inclusive and systemic participation of children at the local, national and EU levels"[71]. It mentions a new EU Children's Participation Platform and the Conference on the Future of Europe as child participation opportunities. The document adds: "[n]onetheless, too many children do not feel considered enough in decision-making. /…/ While a majority of children seem to be aware of their rights, only one in four consider their rights respected by the whole of society."[72]

Adolescents as whole-of-society stakeholders Reaching adolescents is slightly less of a logistical nightmare than it would be regarding adults; that is why they have been chosen as SAUFEX'S primary follow-up target group. Many adolescents can be reached through the education system, something that would be near impossible for most other societal groups. While it remains a logistical challenge to organize special participation sessions for all of them at exactly the same time throughout all schools, it seems possible to reach a whole cohort of citizens with an identical question simultaneously and gather their simultaneously provided answers without mutual consultation, if planned well.[73] On the other hand, overcoming adolescent scepticism and achieving a setting in which adolescents will express themselves authentically (that is: in line with what they know about their localized surroundings and with their experienced inner states[74]) is probably even harder when compared to adults. In addition to liquid anxiety, fragmentation, and affective polarization, two additional elements play a negative role: adolescent developmental processes and partial dislocation.

Adolescent developmental processes In her work, Sarah-Jayne Blakemore identifies what is likely the most import lifecycle characteristic of adolescents: "Until about twenty years ago, the unwelcome side of adolescent behaviour was put down to raging hormones and changes in schools and social life. We know now that the brain undergoes substantial development during adolescence, and this brain development probably contributes to the ways adolescents typically behave."[75] The three most relevant aspects of typical adolescent behavior across the developmental spectrum are: peer pressure and conformism, impulsivity, and heightened excitability around peers. - Peer pressure and conformism. Adolescent brains are attuned to encouragement and confirmation, rather than to punishment and rejection.[76] Especially, peer confirmation and peer rejection weigh heavily.[77] For the adolescent brain, rejection is hard to deal with rationally.[78] Eveline Crone adds that adolescents "prefer being part of the

group over having the nicest or most expensive scooter and being by them-selves"[79]. Blakemore summarizes: "In adolescence, friends matter. It is particularly important to adolescents to be accepted by their peer group. This has many consequences, including an especially strong susceptibility to peer influence"[80]. This prompts Crone to call adolescence the "conformist stage"[81]. - Impulsivity. The adolescent brain is work in progress. The development of the adolescent brain is incremental. During adolescence there is a developmental mismatch[82] between the quickly developing emotional center (the limbic system) and the late development of the cognitive center that is capable of calming emotions (the prefrontal cortex). As a result of this developmental mis-match, adolescents' emotions can rise rapidly and intensely without the calming influence of the prefrontal cortex. This adolescent impulsivity is typically triggered by "hot" situations. Even when these "emotional and arousing stim-uli"[83] are irrelevant to a specific activity, younger adolescents will look for them and react to them. - Heightened excitability around peers. An example of a "hot" situation is the mere presence of other peers.[84] Presence of peers typically leads to a state of heightened excitability that is hard to cool down. The three factors together create a perfect storm against authentic adolescent expression. A wisdom of crowds-based whole-of-society approach directed at adolescents needs to address all three simultaneously.

Partial dislocation

Research in Poland[85] found many adolescents live in a situation of partial dislocation: a situation in which adolescent levels of experiencing psychosocial integration (autonomy, belonging, achievement, and safety) are high when among close family and friends and low when beyond that group. It seems as if many adolescents have withdrawn to little islands of trust within a sea of anxiety and awkwardness. Also in Finland strong indicators of partial dislocation can be found.[86] Jean Twenge found similar patterns in her research on generational characteristics in the United States.[87] What research regarding current adolescents uncovered[88] is, concerning autonomy, that adolescents show a dimin-ished general sense of agency, although they experience agency in their imme-diate environment, a condition that was further aggravated by the top-down decision-making regarding adolescents that occurred during the pandemic. Regarding belonging, a noticeable withdrawal is observed into a parental cocoon, in which comfort is exchanged for acceptance of parental control, coupled with avoidance of in-real-life contact, widespread loneliness, and dis-trust of institutions. Additionally, adolescent behavior regarding safety, research found, points to a general tendency toward risk aversion. Lastly, among young adults a follow-up trend is noted to create their own, personal cocoon as a sign

of achievement. The result of adolescent partial dislocation is a series of para-doxes: many adolescents experience loneliness while being surrounded both by peers and adults with whom they can talk honestly; many adolescents encounter mental problems and feels useless while indicating to enjoy high well-being; and many adolescents shun new and challenging situations as well as contact with others while being part of the most connected and online-first generation.[89]

Challenges of engaging with adolescents in the classroom As a result of both general factors (liquid anxiety, fragmentation, affective polarization) and factors specific for (current) adolescents (adolescent developmental processes, partial dislocation), engaging adolescents in the classroom is challenging, especially when dealing with potentially divisive topics as disinformation[90]. The main challenge for teachers is "[g]etting students to open up and talk about what they do online" in front of other classmates[91]. As was found in Polish research[92], the two main reasons for adolescents to not want to open up in the classroom are that the classroom is seen as "public" as opposed to "private" and that the classroom is seen as dangerous since any statement can trigger a neg-ative, moralistic judgment by peers. Responding to the experienced challenges in the classroom, the European Commission published in 2022 its Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training[93].

Forfeiting freedom of expression While the challenges that many adolescents experience when asked to open up might appear to be merely classroom or educational problems, their implications are fundamental. Reluctance to share authentic views in public settings and pervasive fear of judgment stifle genuine expression, obstructing freedom of expression as enshrined in article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Simultaneously, the tendency to dis-miss differing opinions and react with moralistic judgments to deviating view-points hampers the informed and rational individual decision-making process crucial to the free formation of opinions, obstructing freedom of thought as protected under article 10 of the Charter and article 9 of the Convention. Togeth-er, the reluctance to share authentic views and the tendency to react negatively to differing opinions create a situation in which many adolescents forfeit their freedoms of expression and thought. This is particularly alarming given that schools are increasingly tasked with teaching active citizenship through citizen-ship education and media literacy programs. When students self-censor in the very institutions designed to be a major training ground to develop their civic capacities, this poses an existential threat to democracy, both presently and in

the future.[94] While significant focus exists on external factors interfering with the free formation of opinions, such as FIMI, and rightly so, it is equally important to address these internal factors that significantly undermine societal resilience. Involving adolescents in a whole-of-society approach accomplishes precisely that.

Overcoming adolescent self-censorship: method and format Interdemocracy Project SAUFEX bases its next step, engaging belief-speaking adolescents in a whole-of-society approach to enlarge societal resistance, on the method and format Interdemocracy. The European Commission Expert Group on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training recognized the Interdemocracy method as exemplifying good practice in multiple implementations documented in its Final Report.[95] The Final Report references an academic article[96] detailing Interdemocracy's method and applications[97]. The Expert Group published the Interdemocracy format as a recommended activity plan in its Guidelines.[98] A book on Interdemocracy[99] has received very positive reception across diverse professional communities, including policy-makers, academics, and practitioners. The scientific article on Interdemocracy[100] was positively peer-reviewed thirteen times by representatives of academia. Interdemocracy was positively evaluated by an observer of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs who observed a pilot session in November 2024. Their observation report declared: "In the current geopolitical climate, building the resilience of young people to hybrid threats and disinformation is not merely important - it is absolutely essential. Hybrid threats, which encompass a wide spectrum of tactics including disinformation campaigns, foreign interference in democratic processes, and digital manipulation, are often subtle, complex, and deliberately designed to erode trust in democratic institutions and social cohesion. Due to the complex and multifaceted nature of these threats, it is essential to begin developing critical thinking skills, media literacy, and civic awareness at an early age, particularly during primary education. Early childhood education plays a foundational role in shaping cognitive abilities and ethical frameworks that are crucial for recognizing and resisting misinformation. Educating children at this formative stage equips them with the necessary cognitive tools to critically evaluate information sources, discern bias, and understand the mechanisms of manipulation before such influences become deeply internalized. Hybrid challenges demand a comprehensive and multidisciplinary educational approach that integrates digital literacy, critical analysis, and civic responsibility. Programs such as "Interdemocracy" exemplify this approach by providing young learners with practical knowledge and skills to identify manipulative tactics, comprehend democratic principles, and participate thoughtfully and responsibly in public discourse, both online and offline. By fostering a cul-

ture of informed, resilient, and engaged citizenship, initiatives like "Interdemocracy" proactively counteract the destabilizing effects of hybrid threats. In conclusion, civic initiatives that promote prosocial attitudes, critical thinking, and awareness of hybrid threats are indispensable tools for empowering the younger generation to withstand external manipulative influences and disinformation. Prioritizing the support and implementation of such educational projects within national policies on education and information security is vital for safeguarding democratic societies in the digital age."

What is Interdemocracy? Over a period of fourteen years, Interdemocracy was developed and refined as a method and format to help adolescents express their thoughts more authentically and listen more attentively to their peers. This approach was co-created with students across multiple European Union countries, with primary development taking place in Poland. Interdemocracy is built on two pillars. The first pillar is inspired by Richard Rorty's vision of humanistic intellectuals: "If one asks what good these people do, what social function they perform, neither "teaching" nor "research" is a very good answer. Their idea of teaching - or at least of the sort of teaching they hope to do - is not exactly the communication of knowledge, but more like stirring the kids up. /.../ the real social function of the humanistic intellectuals is to instil doubts in the students about the students' own self-images, and about the society to which they belong. These people are the teachers who help insure that the moral consciousness of each new generation is slightly different from that of the previous generation."[101] This pillar is dubbed "constructive confrontation". This pillar does not function on its own. It stands next to a second, fundamental pillar: providing adolescents with an experience of security. Without the second pillar, constructive confrontation could potentially have a negative impact on the wellbeing of adolescents[102]. The guiding principle of the program is thus to provide both a safe haven and a launching pad[103]. Interdemocracy consists of the creation of a safe haven between people (inter) through temporary suspension of group loyalties and judgment. Within this space, a launching pad for democracy appears: the opportunity for individuals to show and absorb otherness based on their own experiences (democracy).

The method

Interdemocracy as a method consists of the following principles: - The teacher assumes the role of facilitator. While teachers, particularly class teachers with pastoral responsibilities, often feel compelled to provide direct, guiding intervention, a facilitator's function is to steer a session logistically while maintaining pedagogical responsibility for its overall course. When interventions are deemed

necessary that do not address extreme situations, these interventions should occur outside the session itself. - The facilitator provides a facts-inspired introduction.[104] This introduction should not be treated "as fodder for disagreement"[105]. - The facilitator poses questions. - All students[106], without exception[107], formulate their answers to the facilitator's questions individually, without consultation. - Students base their answers solely on their experiences as adolescents. - All answers take on the I-form, not a we-form. - No student is allowed to react other than the one invited by the facilitator to answer[108]; the facilitator only reacts to the answers by means of a neutral "thank you". The facilitator in no way provides content-related assistance to students answering questions[109].

The format

Implementation of Interdemocracy follows a three-element structure: check-in, thought experiment, and check out. - Check-in: The check-in is a seemingly simple activity that involves asking every single adolescent present, individually, the question: "How do you feel today?" It is important to address every adolescent in attendance in order not to exclude anyone. The question should be consistently posed with the same intensity in verbal and nonverbal communication, even when repeated thirty-odd times, with the facilitator showing equal interest in the wellbeing of all participants. Some adolescents may consider the question intrusive into their private lives and may view the facilitator as part of their external world. Conversely, a social desirability bias may exist.[110] The form and content of the adolescents' responses provide clues to the facilitator's perceived position and thus the amount of effort needed to build rapport. The facilitator should not react to the answers or lack thereof provided by the adolescents, but rather should only say "thank you" in a consistently neutral tone and with a neutral facial expression. The facilitator should also instruct the adolescents to refrain from reacting to one another's responses. The order in which the adolescents are addressed should be randomized[111], as this randomness breaks the logic of the adolescents' seating order since they typically tend to sit next to a person from their friend group. If the adolescents are asked in the order of their seats, they may feel pressure to respond similarly to the individuals in their friend group who answered prior to them. With a randomized order of responses, the participants are less likely to do so. - Thought experiment: The thought experiment element consists of adolescents first writing and then recording their answer to a question prepared by the facilitator. This element starts with the facilitator providing adolescents with a facts-inspired introduction and then with open-ended question that is linked to the introduction. The adolescents are to answer the question individually in handwriting. Their

answers should be based on an individual experience and written in the "I" form without a claim to external validation. Next, the adolescents are to transcribe their answers digitally in such a way that they can read their text aloud without being hindered by illegible passages. The facilitator should request that they end their text with the words "thank you" and subsequently send it to a common online communication channel. Next, the facilitator randomly selects adolescents one by one to record their text on a recording device. The adolescents are then to send their audio recordings to the communication channel. During the whole duration of the thought experiment, all refrain from talking, except from those reading out their answer aloud. The "element helps blur the dividing line between adolescents' private and external worlds. This element allows for the temporary use of the safe haven as a launching pad. - Check-out: The check-out is similar to check-in, but centred around a different question: "What meaning did this session have for you?" Some adolescents may be uneasy with this question because it requires them to make a judgment about their experience. They may also feel the impact of social desirability bias, which may lead to biased responses as they attempt to provide what they perceive as an acceptable answer rather than their authentic assessment. The form and content of the adolescents' answers provide the facilitator with clues about their perceived position within the group and indicate the amount of effort needed to build rapport with individual participants.

Effects

Interdemocracy triggers several mechanisms related to adolescent psychosocial integration. On the one hand, the experience of belonging by adolescents to existing in-groups, whether composed of those present or absent, becomes temporarily diminished. This occurs through the active reduction of peer and social pressure via random selection, the requirement to speak exclusively with the "I" form, the stipulation that participants share only their own experiences, and the request for silence while others answer. On the other hand, a new temporary experience of belonging emerges based on the commonly experienced predictable structure. The keyword here is "temporary"; the aim of Interdemocracy is not to replace prior relations of belonging but to create a short interlude for adolescents to collect experiences beyond existing in-group limitations. The three major potentially negatively impacting adolescent developmental characteristics (peer pressure, impulsivity, and excitability) are temporary rendered less relevant. Additionally, answering while surrounded by a silent peer group enlarges adolescents' experiences of autonomy; since participants are individually performing their communication, they experience their own agency. While the predictable structure and facilitator[112] provide an experience of safety, the

method and format presents adolescents with individual challenges. Trying and succeeding in the setting of constructive confrontations helps enlarge the experience of achievement too. Since levels of psychosocial integration increase beyond adolescents' little islands of trust, their levels of resilience increase. To begin with, Interdemocracy strengthens personal judgment before exposure to group dynamics, thereby enabling students to formulate their opinions more authentically. It lowers levels of naive realism as students listen to peers with authentic but different perspectives. Interdemocracy increases cognitive immunity by exposing students to multiple peer perspectives, helping them understand that simple, monolithic perspectives are superficial. Additionally, it fosters democratic engagement by creating an inclusive environment where every student is heard and feels heard, offering a constructive pathway to belonging that counters the appeal of extremist ideologies.

Limitations

While Interdemocracy enables adolescents to view the classroom as a safer, more private space and thereby overcome much of their self-censoring, it has a significant limitation. Its main deficit is that its positive effects are experienced within the boundaries of individual classrooms. Although these effects do spill over into personal interactions and personal resilience beyond the classroom, they fall short of eliminating adolescents' broader experience of societal dislocation. In its original form, Interdemocracy does not engage adolescents in society-wide democratic participation or provide them with means to act as active co-creators of democracy. At best, facilitators gain access to more authentic student input, but this input remains skewed, as a result of the inherent lack of broad diversity within individual classrooms.

Adding participation: program Interdemocracy Drawing inspiration from the first Resilience Council implementation, project SAUFEX has developed a participatory process for adolescents that combines the Interdemocracy method and format with wisdom of crowds principles, creating the Interdemocracy program. The program operates through simultaneous Interdemocracy sessions across multiple classrooms. Students in participating classes receive identical fact-based introductions and respond to the same question simultaneously. Rather than using online class communicators, their digitized responses feed into a central server where artificial intelligence analyzes them through pattern detection, clustering, outlier identification, insight aggregation, sentiment analysis, and quality control. Through two or three stages of binary forking, the AI uncovers underlying semantic structures within the response set. Crucially, the AI never formulates recommendations[113]; this responsibility belongs exclusively to

the Youth Resilience Council (YRC). The YRC drafts one primary recommendation alongside outlier recommendations that preserve the multi-perspectivity evident in student responses. These recommendations return to students with feedback requests, following Interdemocracy's thought experiment methodology. The AI then analyzes this feedback, enabling the YRC to formulate definitive recommendations that conclude the first process stage. In the second stage, the YRC presents recommendations to relevant governmental institutions, whose responses are conveyed back to participating students. Concretely, each Interdemocracy session comprises two 45-minute modules: one for addressing a new question and another for reflecting on YRC recommendations from the previous session. Sessions are to take place biweekly or monthly. Ideally, all classes with adolescent students are to participate in Interdemocracy sessions, enabling the program to amplify an entire generation's voice in democratic processes as a second step in SAUFEX'S whole-of-society approach of enlarging societal resilience.

External observation and evaluation Program Interdemocracy was piloted in April and May 2025 in Poland. Its pilot sessions were observed and evaluated by the Pomeranian Teacher Education Centre (PCEN). The resulting opinion (recommendations) on the method and format of the "Interdemocracy" project prepared by teacher-consultants of PCEN states the following: "A strong point of this form of classes is the development of both technical competencies related to the use of information and communication technology tools, including AI, and social skills concerning the ability to formulate statements, listen attentively, express one's own views without infringing on the rights of others, and respect the diversity of opinions. The scope of topics, discussed content, and objectives of the classes is consistent with the core curriculum of general education in secondary technical schools, high schools, and primary schools, namely: - improving cognitive and linguistic skills, such as: reading comprehension, creative writing, formulating questions and problems, using criteria, justifying, explaining, classifying, drawing conclusions, defining, using examples, etc.; - acquiring the ability to formulate independent and well-thought-out judgments, justifying one's own and others' opinions in the process of dialogue within an inquiring community; - combining critical and logical thinking skills with imaginative and creative abilities; - developing thinking skills - understood as a complex mental process involving the creation of new representations by transforming available information, which includes the interaction of multiple mental operations: reasoning, abstracting, judging, imagining, problem-solving, and creativity. Because upper secondary school students learn various subjects simultaneously, it is possible to develop the following types of thinking: analytical, synthetic, logical, computational, causal, creative, and abstract; maintaining

continuity in general education also develops both perceptual and conceptual thinking. The synthesis of both types of thinking forms the basis for the comprehensive development of the student; - creatively solving problems from various fields through the conscious use of methods and tools derived from computer science, including programming; - efficiently using modern information and communication technologies, including respecting copyright laws and navigating cyberspace safely; - the ability to independently access information, select, synthesize, and evaluate it, and use sources reliably; - instilling in students a sense of personal dignity and respect for the dignity of others; - developing critical and logical thinking skills, reasoning, argumentation, and inference; - providing students with knowledge and shaping skills that allow them to understand the world in a more mature and structured way; - shaping an open attitude toward the world and other people, engagement in social life, and responsibility for the community; - using their knowledge to interpret events in social, including public, life; - knowledge of democratic procedures and applying them in school life and in the groups in which they participate; - understanding the importance of civic engagement; - formulating judgments on selected contemporary social issues; considering proposals for actions aimed at improving the living conditions of other people around the world. It is worth noting that the presented method and use of technology are consistent with the principles of universal design in education, which supports the activation of persons with special educational needs at a level compatible with their potential. The form of the classes does not require special or excessive adjustments to the needs of persons with Special Educational Needs. The "Interdemocracy" method has a structure that necessitates proper teacher preparation through training. Conversations with students after the classes indicate that they create conditions for activity, encourage focus and concentration on the task. The sense of security provided by the prohibition of commenting on statements helps them feel good during the lessons and gain trust in others. The advantages of the project include building students' resilience to disinformation through critical thinking unclouded by emotions, as well as learning the rational use of technology. Each participant shares their opinion without fear of being ridiculed or judged. As a result, they say what they truly think, not what is expected. In this way, they develop the ability to express themselves, increase their self-esteem, attentively listen to the opinions of others, and draw conclusions. The Pomeranian Teacher Education Centre in Gdańsk, as an Institution of the Self-Government of the Pomeranian Voivodeship, recommends the use of the "Interdemocracy" method and format in education after prior training of teachers. Its skillful application in practice teaches careful listening to the statements of others, formulating and expressing one's own opinions, and builds a sense of safety and trust, which constitute the foundation of resilience understood as an active, but not aggress-

ive, defense of one's rights and beliefs. The class format requires the active participation of each person, thereby implementing one of the principles of democratic society: giving a voice and an opportunity to act to all citizens, both locally and nationally. It is worthwhile to implement the ongoing pilot at different educational levels, monitor and study its effectiveness, and introduce modifications that foster the development of resilience and shape the ability to conduct dialogue based on democratic principles. The group dynamics present in every class, as well as the variability of conditions in which the classes are conducted, should also help raise awareness among teachers and students that school, apart from its educational function, is also a place for learning democracy. Democracy is not limited to occasional participation in events such as elections or referenda but requires daily activity, standing up for one's rights, and being open to the views of others."

Helsinki Seminar and Workshop On June 5-6, 2025, the Polish Embassy in Finland organized a seminar and workshop in Helsinki titled "Enhancing Societal Resilience Through Listening and Being Heard." The event was held as part of Poland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The seminar explicitly connected the Interdemocracy program to the dynamic context of European frontline states. Representatives were invited from service providers addressing potential FIMI demand and from institutional structures that could further embrace whole-of-society co-creation of policies to enhance societal resilience. Following a brief Interdemocracy introduction and workshop, participants shared their perspectives. They collectively described the context whin which program Interdemocracy is to function.

Assessment of the context - summary of day one The program is set to operate within a dense and evolving landscape of disinformation, social fragmentation, and institutional strain. This context is shaped by both external threats (notably Russian and, increasingly, Chinese influence operations) and internal vulnerabilities, ranging from educational gaps to trust deficits and widening societal divides. Disinformation is no longer perceived as purely foreign or exceptional. The shift toward domestic actors - local influencers, politicians, and media outlets co-opted into disseminating manipulated narratives - is seen as a major development. Social media platforms have enabled low-cost, high-impact campaigns, often run through large, semi-private groups that function without accountability yet wield significant influence. Russian-speaking Facebook communities in the tens of thousands illustrate this dynamic vividly. Disinformation ecosystems are increasingly fragmented, personalized, and persistent. The old gatekeepers (editors, institutions, traditional media) have been replaced, or bypassed, by individualized feeds shaped by algorithms and peer influence.

Meanwhile, many audiences perceive institutional media as politically biased, leading them to seek out "authentic" but often unverified sources. Many countries, especially those with recent histories of Soviet influence, are strengthening educational efforts around media literacy, civic resilience, and digital citizenship. However, even in best-case scenarios (like Finland), there is widespread recognition that teacher training and classroom implementation lag behind policy intentions. Cross-cutting themes like critical thinking and democratic participation exist in curricula, but educators often lack the tools or confidence to apply them effectively. In addition, a "hidden curriculum" seems to exist in schools: a structure that simulates participation without granting meaningful agency to students. This breeds cynicism and disengagement, particularly among adolescents, who perceive democracy as ineffective or irrelevant. A core insight is that democracy is experienced as disappointing, and youth are rarely taught how to navigate that disappointment constructively. In response, some systems are embedding resilience training in early education, conducting national disinformation exams, and fostering youth advisory councils at the regional level. These efforts aim to move from passive literacy to active citizenship - but they remain unevenly implemented. Policymakers and civil society actors are calling for integrated, whole-of-society responses. The Council of Europe and EU institutions are supporting national strategies that combine media regulation, legal protections (e.g. against SLAPPs), and youth education. However, a lack of enforcement mechanisms and inconsistent political will hinder implementation. Recommendations often go ignored, especially where they touch on sensitive issues like platform accountability. There's also growing attention to inclusion. Media systems are widely seen as lacking diversity and failing to represent minority groups. The underrepresentation of marginalized voices contributes to a lack of trust and leaves communities vulnerable to alternative, often hostile, information ecosystems. The erosion of trust, in governments, media, and even education, is a recurring theme. Yet the Finnish example of comprehensive security demonstrates how trust can be proactively cultivated through consistent, honest, and accessible communication. Agencies like the Finnish Border Guard invest in transparency and human-centered messaging long before crises erupt, building a reserve of social capital that can be drawn upon in emergencies. Crucially, participants underscore that trust is mutual. Young people are unlikely to trust institutions that do not trust them. Interventions must therefore respect youth as capable decision-makers and invite them into difficult, meaningful conversations about democracy, safety, and societal challenges. What emerges is a call for a lived experience of multi-perspectivity and shared responsibility. Participants advocate for: - Empowering students and educators with both knowledge and agency. - Reframing disinformation not only as a communication problem but as a reflection of deeper social fractures. - Acknow-

ledging that modern media habits, including preference for influencers over institutions, are rational responses to perceived credibility gaps. - Embracing the idea that youth participation must go beyond symbolic inclusion toward genuine power-sharing. In essence, Interdemocracy enters a space shaped by distrust, disillusionment, and disruption - but also by a growing awareness that democracy itself must evolve to remain credible.

Assessment of the context - summary of day two The context in which Interdemocracy is to operate is marked by social fragmentation, democratic fatigue, emotional detachment, and a growing disconnect between youth and institutions. Participants portray a society in which disillusionment with democratic processes, a lack of inclusive educational structures, and deep affective divides limit the potential for meaningful participation. And yet, there is also hope: a vision of renewed public life rooted in trust, creativity, and emotional safety. Young people are increasingly reluctant to express their authentic selves, especially in public or institutional settings. Many fear moralistic criticism, peer judgment, or simply being misunderstood. Schools, in particular, are seen as environments where self-censorship is the norm and emotional safety is scarce. Adolescents grow up learning to protect themselves rather than engage. This suppression of voice isn't a minor issue, it's described as fundamental to the health of democracy. Without space to think aloud, tolerate ambiguity, or explore differences safely, democratic skills remain underdeveloped. Finding and using one's voice is not a luxury, but a necessity for both personal resilience and democratic life. Art is highlighted as a powerful counterforce to rigid thinking, emotional isolation, and polarized narratives. It offers not only emotional regulation and well-being but also democratic practice. Through creative expression, visual arts, performance, music, individuals learn to navigate complexity, tolerate different perspectives, and co-create meaning. Artistic thinking is not supplementary but essential. It builds moral imagination, fosters inclusion, and supports identity formation, particularly in a time when emotional detachment and disorientation are on the rise. Art is also described as a medium that resists the sanitized, over-simplified narratives produced by both authoritarian regimes and generative AI systems. A recurring theme is the need for participation to be real,. Many youth are skeptical of participatory invitations that do not lead to outcomes. They report fatigue with being consulted without impact, and express a clear desire for follow-through. To them, participation is not an exercise in being heard, but in being taken seriously. Participants advocate for models such as youth councils, democratic classrooms, hackathons, and structured digital feedback systems. Participation must be diverse, including those typically excluded: neurodivergent youth, those from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds, and those with no prior access to civic engagement. There's also an emphasis on experimenta-

tion. Young people should be given the chance to try, fail, and revise, not just speak as representatives. Participation, then, is understood as a discovery process, not just a delivery mechanism. Formal education systems are critiqued for being overly goal-oriented, performance-driven, and emotionally sterile. Even arts education is often shaped by career logic rather than play and exploration. Children are constantly interrupted, their attention redirected, their curiosity cut short. Imagination requires uninterrupted time, but modern schooling interrupts constantly. The solution is not simply to inject more content, but to redefine the classroom as a relational space, one where emotions, creativity, and shared risk are part of the curriculum. Teachers should not only deliver information but model trust, vulnerability, and openness. Crucially, education should support the development of a rich personal vocabulary. Without language, emotional, conceptual, artistic, imagination cannot flourish. Technology plays a dual role in this context. On one hand, it creates overwhelming streams of content that fragment attention and undermine democratic focus. Social media environments encourage instant reactions over slow reflection. On the other hand, digital tools can support democratic resilience, if used creatively and ethically. There is a clear demand from young people for digital literacy and AI education. But participants warn: these tools must not be used to reinforce surveillance or conformity. Instead, they should empower creativity, critical thinking, and co-creation. The ultimate goal is not to consume information more efficiently, but to produce meaning together. Democracy is not a matter of simple consensus or efficiency, it is a messy, emotional, pluralistic experience. What democracy needs is not agreement, but the capacity to deal with discomfort, difference, and complexity. This emotional literacy, knowing when to speak, when to listen, and how to disagree without withdrawing, is portrayed as a core democratic skill. It is also a skill that must be practiced, not preached. And that practice must begin early, across all layers of society. Finally, participants propose a regional model for innovation, particularly in the Baltic Sea region. Initiatives such as youth-led recommendations, school-based democratic exercises, and cross-sector hackathons are already underway. The hope is to scale such models up to the European level, and eventually embed them into systemic frameworks. Yet institutional resistance remains a challenge. Education is a national competence, and many existing initiatives suffer from fragmentation or lack of visibility. Participants call for better information sharing, stronger civil society support, and bottom-up pressure to ensure that already-agreed democratic frameworks are actually implemented. What is needed is a cultural shift. Democracy needs more than being defended, it needs to be alive again.

Interdemocracy's relevance and applicability During the Helsinki seminar a workshop took place to establish the perceived program's relevance and applicability within the context described in day one and day two. The workshop followed Interdemocracy's method and format. It focused on two questions: 1. How is program Interdemocracy relevant in your professional context? What leads you to that conclusion? 2. How is program Interdemocracy applicable in your professional context? What leads you to that conclusion?

Relevance

Four core value propositions emerged from the analysis of the answers provided by the participants to the first question: - Counter-narrative capability: the program effectively addresses disinformation challenges (identified in 47% of responses); - Youth empowerment: targeted focus on enhancing young people's democratic participation (noted in 40% of responses); - Systemic resilience: building comprehensive societal resistance to diverse threats (recognized in 33% of responses); - Educational utility: practical applications spanning both formal and informal learning environments (highlighted in 27% of responses); The binary fork analysis revealed distinct pathways: - Fork 1 (confidence segmentation): Differentiates participants by their confidence levels in program assessment - 53% expressed high confidence in their assessment, 27% indicated moderate confidence, and 20% reported low confidence or uncertainty in their evaluation; - Fork 2 (implementation use): Among high-confidence respondents, 53% identify direct implementation use cases while 33% focus on research, analysis, or learning applications; - Fork 3 (direct-use domains): Within the direct-use segment, two primary domains dominate: counter-disinformation/ security operations targeting false information and security threats (33%), and youth development/ education initiatives emphasizing engagement and educational applications (20%). Geographic scope: responses demonstrate clear relevance across the Nordic/Baltic region, with strong indicators suggesting European expansion potential.

Relevance implications

The findings reveal that the program functions as a strategic asset with dual capacity: it operates effectively within traditional educational frameworks (27% educational utility, 20% youth development/ education applications) while simultaneously addressing critical societal challenges beyond the classroom, particularly in operations dealing with information distortions (47% counter-narrative capability, 33% security applications) and democratic resilience building (33% systemic resilience). This cross-domain applicability suggests the program's core

methodology translates effectively across different professional contexts, making it valuable for educators, security professionals, policy makers, and civil society organizations alike. The geographic relevance spanning Nordic/Baltic regions with European expansion potential indicates the program addresses universal democratic challenges rather than context-specific issues. Perhaps most significantly, the confidence levels and implementation pathways suggest practitioners recognize both immediate practical applications and longer-term strategic value, with 53% identifying direct use cases. The data supports viewing program Interdemocracy not merely as an educational tool with broader applications, but as a comprehensive democratic resilience platform that happens to have strong educational components, a distinction that positions it for wider adoption across multiple sectors and regions while preserving its educational efficacy.

Applicability

From the answers by the participants to the second question four core application areas can be identified: - Educational settings: Schools, universities, classroom sessions (mentioned in 45% of responses); - Youth engagement: Youth councils, student boards, peer-to-peer learning (36% of responses); - Media literacy: Integration with existing digital literacy programs (27% of responses); - Professional development: Expert discussions, colleague brainstorming (18% of responses). The binary fork analysis shows the following forks: - First fork (implementation readiness): 55% sees the program as ready to apply while 45% needs more information; - Second Fork (application scope): those who see the program as ready to apply identify direct educational implementation (36%) and broader professional application (18%).

Applicability implications

The data suggests that while participants recognize the program's educational value, there's a need for clearer guidance on translating its principles into specialized interventions dealing with information distortions and security applications. The gap between the program's security objectives and participants' predominantly educational applications indicates room for improvement in demonstrating practical security-focused use cases.

Elements for a new paradigm

The Helsinki seminar revealed a complex reality. Our societies grapple with a profound crisis of trust and authenticity, demanding democratic renewal. Yet within these same societies forces appear capable of revitalizing democracy. The need for democratic revival emerges precisely as our democracies are under siege, suspended in an uncertain liminal space between war and peace. Consequently, democracies are currently confronted with a twin existential challenge: both democratic renewal and self-defence. The task of self-defence has prompted a dramatic expansion of our defense capabilities. In parallel, we must address the equally pressing need for democratic revival. To neglect this responsibility would reduce our newfound military strength to a mere instrument of power politics. The cornerstone of democratic revival lies in strengthening societal resilience through a comprehensive whole-of-society approach that offers responses to the current challenges. This approach must encompass those elements that demonstrate the potential to transform our current procedural democracies into democracy as a citizen activity. According to SAUFEX, this concretely means defending all citizens against interventions aimed at diminishing their resilience (e.g. by means of promoting polarization, alienation, learned helplessness, relativism, and nihilism) while offensively supporting interventions aimed at enlarging their resilience (e.g. by means of inclusive inclusion in groups, and promoting genuine participation, growth-oriented framing, and predictable and responsive communication). This interpretation of the emerging paradigm aligns with NATO's strategic vision. As NATO's secretary general recently declared: "we are finalising a plan to dramatically increase defence spending across the Alliance. This plan will mean more money for our core military requirements - hard defence. And more money for defence-related investments, including infrastructure and resilience."[114] Institutions within the European Union are more cautious but seem to move in the same direction. The Council of the European Union for instance proposes the following, as an outcomes of the 2025 Polish Presidency: "The Presidency of the Council of the European Union /.../ INVITES the Commission and the European External Action Service to explore ways to bring together all relevant stakeholders including Member States, EU institutions, civil society, research, academia, private entities and other relevant experts from different areas in a systematic manner in order to share best practices and to provide strategic guidance on policies pertaining to democratic resilience, making best use of existing efforts and with due respect for Member States' competences."[115] It adds: "The Presidency of the Council of the European Union /.../ HIGHLIGHTS the need to map measures aimed at strengthening democratic resilience and to secure the appropriate EU funding to support such measures."[116] Program Interdemocracy emerges as a

concrete manifestation of this new paradigm's dual imperative. Rather than treating democratic renewal and self-defense as separate endeavors, the program demonstrates how they can function as mutually reinforcing processes within a single educational framework. The program's foundational architecture directly addresses the paradigm's core challenge of transforming procedural democracy into citizen activity. By engaging adolescents before they enter formal democratic participation, Interdemocracy creates foundational experiences of democratic practice that extend far beyond electoral processes. Students experience democracy not as future civic duty but as immediate lived practice of individual expression within collective structures, establishing patterns of democratic engagement that precede and inform their eventual voting participation. This transformation occurs through what the program terms "constructive confrontation" paired with security, a design that reflects the paradigm's recognition that democratic revival requires both offensive and defensive elements. The program's defensive dimension operates by temporarily suspending the very forces that diminish societal resilience: peer pressure, group conformity, and the tendency toward polarized thinking. Simultaneously, its offensive dimension actively cultivates resilience-building behaviors: authentic self-expression, attentive listening to diverse perspectives, and the development of individual agency within democratic structures. The whole-of-society approach finds practical expression in Interdemocracy's scalable design. By incorporating artificial intelligence to analyze patterns across multiple simultaneous sessions, the program creates pathways for youth voices to reach governmental institutions while maintaining the integrity of individual expression. This creates a form of democratic participation that operates independently of voting age requirements, demonstrating that citizen activity can begin well before formal political participation. The program addresses the paradigm's requirement of strengthening societal resilience through predictable and responsive communication. The structured format provides the safety necessary for vulnerable adolescents to engage with challenging ideas, while the method ensures that this engagement builds their capacity for future democratic participation. This careful balance between protection and challenge reflects the paradigm's understanding that democratic renewal requires cultivating democratic capacities during formative years, when resilience patterns are established. In essence, Interdemocracy provides a concrete model for how educational institutions can serve as laboratories for democratic revival while contributing to societal defense, demonstrating that the paradigm's twin challenges need not compete for resources or attention but can instead be addressed through integrated approaches that strengthen both individual resilience and collective democratic capacity.

Call to action

While our societies are under siege, they require democratic revival. Besides a dramatic expansion of our defense capabilities, we need to strengthen societal resilience through a comprehensive whole-of-society approach that offers responses to the current challenges. Program Interdemocracy represents a viable intervention framework. At the Helsinki seminar, host Tomasz Chłoń envisioned the event as a historic catalyst for implementing program Interdemocracy at scale. This critical moment calls for our decisive action to initiate that process.

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ANNEX PART THREE - The procedural truth of resilience: autopoiesis and Interdemocracy

The traditional view of resilience defines it as the capacity of a system to return to a pre-defined stable state after a shock. This model, however, is brittle, as it fails to account for novel, systemic challenges that require structural transformation, not mere restoration. To address this, we must adopt a framework where survival is not a function of external truth or inherited rule, but a matter of continuous, internal self-creation. This is the domain of autopoietic emergence and the search for procedural truth.

Autopoiesis and the search for procedural truth An autopoietic system is one that continuously produces the components that define and maintain itself, generating its own rules through internal operations rather than external references. When applied to thought or social structure, this means that truth is not found through correspondence with an outside reality (external coherence), but through structural necessity (internal coherence). This structural necessity is codified in the concept of Procedural Truth, defined as the Highest Value Score (V_{HVS}) - a non-probabilistic breakthrough achieved when a tension or paradox is resolved in the most minimal and elegant way. This resolution must be necessary for the structure's existence and generates a unique feeling of being "in joint." The Highest Value Score (V_{HVS}) is achieved when the three metrics - constraint detection, paradox resolution, and minimal specification - are simultaneously maximized, leading to the moment of autopoietic closure. For a social system, the pursuit of procedural truth requires three mechanisms: 1. Paradox resolution: Identifying and collapsing core tensions (not just suppressing them). 2. Immanent rule density: The solution must impose a new, highly stringent, and necessary constraint on the system. 3. Structural economy: The solution must be the most minimal shift required to achieve the resolution. A system that operates by these rules is driven by aesthetic necessity rather than statistical likelihood or fixed ideology, granting it the capacity for genuine, self-directed structural transformation.

The core societal tension: individual strength versus collective stability The most critical paradox facing any complex society is the relationship between individual and collective strength: enlarged individual resilience can be detrimental to societal resilience. - The problem: When crises hit, highly resilient individuals may exercise self-sufficiency, choosing to withdraw or exit the failing system (a loss of adaptive capacity for the collective). Conversely, the society, in its need for stability, attempts to impose rigid uniformity, which crushes the very

adaptability and dissent required for novel solutions. The two strengths are locked in opposition. - The procedural truth: To resolve this, the tension must be collapsed into a state of mutually dependent necessity. The solution is the principle of distributed adaptive capacity. This principle states that the individual's structural strength must be redefined not as a resource for self-exit, but as a societal reserve - a stockpile of viable, tested local solutions ready for temporal distribution back into the collective during a shock. The Procedural Truth is realized when the society structurally demands that individual strength is used to correct the system, making the choice to be governed the highest form of individual freedom.

Interdemocracy as an autopoietic structural model The educational method of Interdemocracy functions as a practical, real-world model that operationalizes the principle of distributed adaptive capacity, aiming to achieve the V_{HVS} for societal resilience. The key to Interdemocracy is the structured, non-judgmental use of two complementary discourses: - Fact-speaking: The collective presentation of objective, external data (the context and the constraints of reality). - Belief-speaking: The individual's honest articulation of their deepest, unique perspective and meaning (the procedural honesty of the system's component). The system's structure - with its rigid protocols around check-ins, silent writing, randomized reading, and neutral feedback - forces a tension collapse: - From self-withdrawal to contribution: The individual's belief-speaking (the self-articulation of their unique adaptive capacity) is protected and recorded as a resource, turning the impulse to withdraw into a structured contribution to the collective knowledge base. - From conformity to plasticity: The collective is structurally barred from dismissing the dissenting belief through social pressure. This guarantees that dissent and chaos are metabolically integrated into the system, functioning as the necessary input for structural correction. By making the individual's hard-won cognitive resilience a structural necessity for the collective's adaptive pool, Interdemocracy aims to transforms the two opposing forces into a dynamic, autopoietic structure. The resilience of the society will be achieved by its continuous ability to self-define and self-correct based on the honest, procedural input of its strongest parts. The ultimate procedural truth instantiated by Interdemocracy is that Individual strength is the community's highest form of insurance. The society achieves self-creation (autopoiesis) by making its necessary vulnerability (dissent and uniqueness) its greatest strength.

ANNEX PART FOUR – The resilience battery: autopoiesis through procedural integrity

The Interdemocracy framework aims to achieve its procedural truth by structurally resolving the core tension between individual autonomy and collective stability. It redefines resilience from a passive capacity to an active, self-charging system that harvests the very dissent and uniqueness it is normally tempted to suppress. The key to this success is the resilience battery: the empowered individual whose internal state is converted into external, structural currency. The resilience battery: charging through belief-speaking A society becomes truly resilient not through rigid planning, but by cultivating individuals whose capacity to generate and apply adaptive insights grows through authentic expression. This individual is the resilience battery, and the process of belief-speaking is the charging mechanism. - The charging process: In a structured setting (silent writing, reading aloud, non-interaction, neutral reception) a participant articulates an ever more authentic view without the corruption of social pressure. The neutral protocol simulates a non-totalitarian encounter, free of judgment, open to responsibility. The output by individuals is swiftly processed and clustered with the output of others. - The internal motivation: The reward for the participants is not praise, but both experience and evidence. On the one hand, there is the experience of enhanced autonomy and a temporal experience of procedural belonging. On the other hand, there is the experience of achievement; there is proof that their internal tension helped push forward a structural shift. This evidence accumulates over multiple cycles. Speaking authentically becomes a gratifying, direct way to affect the system the participants live in, creating a powerful, internal motivation that causes them to return voluntarily to the act of expressing themselves.

Temporal optimization: speed and lag The system is engineered to minimize temporal lag in the analytical steps while preserving the necessary time for human commitment to maintain output quality. - Acceleration: Generative AI is deployed for speed, rapidly clustering the diverse belief-speaking outputs to identify the major differing perspectives and feed a resilience council to swiftly draft two (or more) alternative policy recommendations. This accelerates the process from weeks to minutes, giving the system necessary temporal relevance. - Protection of fidelity: The time saved is strategically redirected to the human-centric stages: the initial, authentic articulation (belief-speaking) and the subsequent reflection cycle. This ensures the process is not compromised by speed but is supported by thoughtful deliberation and conviction, although the process can be implemented quickly if needed - within a handful of hours.

Structural integrity: the closed loop The system guarantees the battery's viability by ensuring the feedback loop is tight, visible, and continuous. - Closing the circuit: The loop closes when the participant sees how their output influenced the recommendations and, crucially, when the system ultimately adopts a new constraint that incorporates elements of their perspective. The final output is not consensus, but a visible shift resulting from their output. - Autopoietic maintenance (see: blog post eighty-two): The system's resilience is built on the integrity of this circuit. If institutional silence (the refusal to act on recommendations) occurs, the motivational circuit breaks; the battery starts charging much slower because the individual sees no impact. The system's greatest risk is not technical failure, but the dwindling motivation caused by the refusal of established structures to integrate the necessary self-correction.

Scale and vulnerability

The mechanism operates best where feedback is fast and attribution is clear. In small groups (like a classroom), a single rewritten rule can be directly traced to specific sentences, thus providing a sense of agency, and the battery charges efficiently. - The challenge of scale: At larger scales (hundreds or thousands), the direct link weakens, and individual contribution becomes statistical. While clustering still surfaces strong patterns, the sense of agency dilutes. Scalability requires the reflection phase to explicitly reconnect specific inputs to outcomes, ensuring the individual still feels the impact, even if that impact is aggregated. - The bottom line: The resilience battery is fragile to the extent that its charge depends on consistent, visible institutional responsiveness. However, between those bounds, it offers a quiet, distributed form of readiness: a society equipped with individuals who keep their adaptive capacity alive because they have learned, cycle by cycle, that their authentic voice is one of the few things the system cannot do without, even when their particular individual voice is not always (visibly) present in the outcome.

Call to action

The battery only scales if institutions adopt the empathetic-utilitarian standard: maximizing autonomy, belonging, achievement, and safety through responsive, evidence-based uptake (see: blog post seventy-six). So, institutions: Open up!

ANNEX PART FIVE – Description of a concrete participation process (a current regional Interdemocracy pilot) as the start of autopoesis

Students answer three questions, each during a separate session. Questions: 1. What would you like to co-decide on in your next school? Why? 2. Which use of AI gives you the worst experiences? Why? 3. What is needed, in your opinion, for students to want to talk about difficult topics in class, during lessons, in your next school? Anonymized responses are collected on a central server. Based on the responses, the Youth Resilience Council (YRC) - a group of young people - will formulate two recommendations. The recommendations are to be presented to the appropriate institutions as the outcome of the participation process.

Context for each session: Session 1 Topic: Students' Rights to Participation General framework: Students have the right to participate. Conceptualization of the topic: Participation means co-decision. The more motivation there is, the easier it is to organize effective participation. Students: From eighth-grade classes in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. Important framing for students: The topic does not concern the here-and-now, because the participation process is ongoing; the topic concerns the new school year, i.e., the class at the next school. Addressees: Organizations that create guidelines - Board of Education (Kuratorium Oświaty) in Gdańsk, Youth Assembly (Młodzieżowy Sejmik) of the Pomeranian Voivodeship. Important framing for addressees: The topic is broad. Which important aspects should be focused on / prioritized? The students' voices provide guidance. Information needed from students: Which area of participation is a priority? What is the justification? Question for students: What would you like to co-decide on in your next school? Why? Session 2 Topic: Use of AI for educational purposes General framework: Among teachers there is insufficient knowledge about AI used for educational purposes. Conceptualization of the topic: Bring teachers closer to the students' world through information about their negative experiences with AI. Teachers should understand students' activity in contact with AI and counter the risks to be better able to support them. Students: From eighth-grade classes in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. Important framing for students: The topic does not concern the "here and now", because the participation process is ongoing and therefore the topic concerns the new school year, i.e., the class at the next stage of education (secondary school). Addressee: The organization that creates guidelines regarding teacher training - Pomeranian Teacher Education Centre (Pomorskie Centrum Edukacji Nauczycieli) in Gdańsk. Important framing for addressees: The topic is broad. Which

important aspects should be focused on / prioritized? The students' voices provide guidance. Information needed from students: Which area of AI is a priority? What is the justification? Question for students: Which use of AI gives you the worst experiences? Why? Session 3 Topic: Discussing difficult topics in class General framework: Among teachers there is a lack of sufficient tools enabling lessons on potentially divisive topics. If students' conditions are met, it is easier to organize constructive lessons about potentially difficult topics, because some potential obstacles are reduced. Conceptualization of the topic: Having the willingness to talk despite the fact that the framing is a difficult topic. Students: From eighth-grade classes in the Pomeranian Voivodeship. Important framing for students: The topic of the session does not concern students' present situation in primary school, but looks ahead to the next stage of students' education - that is, secondary school - because the participation process is a long-term action that requires responses from institutions beyond schools. Addressees: Organizations that create guidelines for teacher training - Pomeranian Teacher Education Centre in Gdańsk, Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Gdańsk. Important framing for addressees: The topic is broad. Which important aspects should be prioritized? The students' voices provide guidance. Information needed from students: What do students need in order to have a constructive approach to lessons on difficult topics? What is the justification? Question for students: What is needed, in your opinion, for students to want to talk about difficult topics in class, during lessons, in your next school?

Expected structure of recommendations: Schools should prioritize participation in the area of [X] because [Y]. Teachers should focus on the characteristic(s) of AI [X] because [Y]. Teachers should do [X] because [Y]. Therefore, it makes sense to try to find combinations X-Y in the answers in order to choose the most frequent ones. This will be the basis for the first recommendation. Task: Find clusters of X-Y combinations. However, answers may not fit this pattern. Therefore, it is also necessary to cluster the answers - and distill a second recommendation on that basis. Tasks: - Clustering (for thematic structure) - Two-step binary branching (for contrasting justifications)

Because about 500 responses are expected, these tasks must be performed by generative AI (GAI).

Prompt for AI: Role: You are a qualitative data analyst. Reply in Polish. Context: You will receive a set of students' answers to the question: [insert question here]. The answers will be used to develop recommendations by a group of young people. Your task is to support them by analyzing answers from another group of students. Level 1 - Recommendation structure: The expected structure of the recommendations is: [insert recommendation form here - e.g. "Schools should

prioritize participation in the area of [X] because [Y]."] a) Establish dominant X-Y combinations (area + justification) in the set of answers. b) Present them as a list together with a brief justification of frequency or importance. Level 2 - Alternative analysis: Because some answers may not fit this structure: Perform content clustering (by semantic similarity). Perform a two-step binary branching (divide answers into two opposing poles, then further divide each of them). For each method, present the main clusters or contrasts, their characteristics, and example answers. Format of the response: Level 1: List of dominant X-Y combinations Level 2: Content clustering Level 2b: Binary branching General conclusions Data: [insert answers]

The AI report obtained is presented to the YRC.

Decision - YRC group level: Choice of level: Only 1 - choose two dominant X-Y combinations (A and B) Only 2 - choose two clusters (A and B) 1 and 2 - choose the X-Y combination and cluster (A and B) After making the choice: Divide the YRC into two parts; one group works on the recommendation based on A, the other on the recommendation based on B. After formulating the recommendations: group decision at the YRC level: Which recommendation is the main one and which is the divergent one.

Two recommendations are sent back to the students who originally answered the question for reflection. Introduction: We are pleased to return to the process! At the initial stage, the Youth Resilience Council (YRC) collected and analyzed your original answers to the question: [insert the specific question from the session]. Based on this analysis, the YRC - a group of young people from your region - developed two concrete recommendations. They were formulated as guidance for institutions that shape education in the Pomeranian Voivodeship, such as the Board of Education or the Pomeranian Teacher Education Centre. Now comes a key moment: we need your perspective on these recommendations. Your task is to assess: Do you agree with the presented proposals? Why do you agree (or why not)? Your reflection is an important element of this participation process, which will decide on the final shape of the recommendations. Thank you for your honest opinions.

Next, students are asked whether they agree with the recommendations and why (or why not).

Reflections are collected on a central server.

Tasks: - Clustering (for thematic structure) - Two-step binary branching (for contrasting justifications)

Since around 500 reflections are expected, these tasks must again be performed by generative AI (GAI).

Prompt for AI: Role: You are a qualitative data analyst. Reply in Polish. Context: You will receive a set of students' reflections regarding two recommendations developed by the YRC. Students read two recommendations (the main and the divergent recommendation). They were asked whether they agree with them and why (or why not). Your task is to analyze these reflections to determine which attitudes, arguments and emotions dominate, and how students justify their opinions. Level 1 - Analysis of attitudes toward recommendations: Determine which recommendations received more support and which met with criticism. For each recommendation present the main reasons for support and the main reasons for opposition. Identify recurring patterns of reasoning (e.g., "I agree because...", "I disagree because..."). Level 2 - Clustering of reflections: Perform clustering of responses according to semantic similarity (e.g., motivations, emotions, values, conditions). Name each cluster and describe its character (tone, dominant argument, type of experience). Add one representative example answer for each cluster. Data: [insert reflections]

The AI report obtained is presented to the YRC.

Decision - YRC group level: Is redrafting necessary? If not: end of the process. Recommendations are final. If yes: Decision - YRC group level: Do both recommendations require redrafting or just one? If both: the group splits into two; each subgroup works on rewording one recommendation. If one: the whole group works on the rewording. When rewordings are ready, recommendations are final.

Recommendations are presented to one or more appropriate institutions.

Institutions react - or do not.

Reactions - or lack thereof - are reported back to students and the YRC.

ANNEX PART SIX – Interdemocracy – an early assessment

Introduction

Interdemocracy as an intervention seems realistic in theory and necessary in principle. But it is bound to face serious practical implementation hurdles.

Logic

Traditional, centralized solutions are failing. The intervention takes a different path; it seeks to treat the vulnerability (low resilience) rather than just the pathogen (FIMI/GAI). - FIMI: The most effective defense against FIMI is not censorship, but a citizenry structurally secure in their autonomy, belonging, and achievement. If citizens are isolated or disenfranchised, they are more open to confirm divisive narratives. - GAI: A strong defense against cognitive debt and weakened individual resilience caused by AI is proactively strengthening human cognitive and psychosocial functions. - The underlying logic: If the system can consistently charge the citizen's "resilience battery," it makes both external manipulation and internal technological decay less potent. As a result, this approach moves beyond the limitations of reactive interventions or top-down regulation.

Autopoiesis and adaptability The theoretical core of the intervention is autopoiesis (self-creation/self-correction) based on an empathetic-utilitarian approach that dictates policy must maximize the core human needs of autonomy, belonging, achievement, and safety.. - The proposal views society as a dynamic, self-regulating system that must constantly adjust to threats. - Since FIMI and GAI are rapidly evolving threats, no fixed, top-down law can keep pace. Interdemocracy is proposed as a feedback loop that uses the public's "belief-speaking" - their lived experiences and perspectives - to co-create security policies. - A mechanism that inherently adapts seems the most realistic approach for modern, complex, and accelerating threats.

Shift from expert control to societal agency

The intervention bypasses the inherent limitations of expert-only policy-making: - It corrects the bias of expert consensus by adding the vital "public perspective". Experts know what is evidence-informed, but citizens know what is experienced and what is acceptable, and therefore implementable. - By making the individual an active participant in resilience planning - not just a passive recipient of government protection - it structurally embeds a sense of belonging, autonomy, and achievement, which are themselves the components of resilience.

Implementation challenges

The difficulty lies in the execution. - Operationalizing "belief-speaking". How can a national or European policy reliably collect, process, and integrate millions of diverse, often contradictory, citizen beliefs into a coherent security strategy? This process is vulnerable to political capture, bias, and manipulation. - Scaling the program. Interdemocracy is a "whole-of-society approach," meaning it must function effectively across vast populations and diverse demographics. Creating and maintaining this nationwide communication and participation infrastructure is a massive logistical undertaking. - Measuring efficacy. How do you definitively prove that a change in policy is due to the intervention rather than other factors? Measuring impact is notoriously difficult, but crucial for the „charging of the resilience batteries". - Enhancing institutional responsiveness. Undemocratic liberal and paternalistic attitudes are always only one step away in institutions that have come to see themselves as a goal in themselves, resulting from a meritocratic and technocratic worldview. - Vulnerability to misuse. Any large-scale program that systematically deals with public sentiment, even for benevolent purposes, runs the risk of being co-opted for surveillance or political engineering.

Original solution

Rather than just waiting for institutions to become responsive based on an ethical-utalitarian motivation and a fully functioning, effective infrastructure to emerge, individuals should adopt an autopoietic stance themselves. The charging of their resilience batteries should not be solely or even significantly reliant on the occurence of a reaction by institutions or on the quality of that reaction. Individuals should see the act of self-expression as an act of autonomy, belonging, and achievement in itself. They should strive for authenticity, that is a congruence of their self-expression with what they know about the external world and about their inner world that was shaped by their experiences. This is both their self-creation and self-correction.

Conclusion

Whether the intervention is realistic depends both institutions and individuals. When the first move is expected to be undertaken by institutions, their responsiveness and adaptibility becomes they key factor determining feasiibility of Interdemocracy. But we can move beyond this dependency and accept the act of self-expression as an act of self-realisation and self-resilience building.

ANNEX PART SEVEN - Reflections on part six

In part six, I returned to Interdemocracy basics. The whole concept started out as a facilitation of the self-creation and self-correction of individuals within a group setting. My wife and I stipulated that this autopoiesis on an individual level was a worthy goal in itself.

Partial dislocation

Confronted with the state of partial dislocation that characterizes many adolescents, we increasingly felt that this autopoiesis should not reinforce their withdrawal on little islands. We felt that the existing low level of societal resilience should not be bolstered by limiting the acts of autopoiesis within a small group, even if this group (the classroom) is wider than their default small group (some peers, some adults). So, we blueprinted a participation layer on top of the original conception.

Participation

Logically, our focus shifted to the participation layer, since it was new and connected our isolated conception with the world of policy-making. It opened up our hermetic blueprint to the wide world.

Part six

The previous part is an attempt to take back control. The Interdemocracy conception is not dependent on the bigger world. It is linked, for sure, and there are new dependencies that came along with the participation layer. But these dependencies do not have the power make or break Interdemocracy. Only individuals have. While the new elements have made the original concept scalable and probably more understandable, it is time to reaffirm its original aspirations, with or without external efficacy.

Relevance

The relevance of the participation layer is, in the last instance, higher for the current political system than for individuals. Since the key to the concept lies within individuals, their autopoiesis will occur more frequently as a result of Interdemocracy. The big question is whether this will occur within the current institutional and procedural framework and strengthen it, or outside of an unresponsive framework as currently is latent.

ANNEX PART EIGHT – Interdemocracy pilot observations and their implications

Inspired by pilot observations (1) Ongoing empirical regional piloting of program Interdemocracy indicates a counterintuitive but theoretically significant pattern: adolescents are generally capable of exercising autonomous, first-person judgment in protected deliberative settings, while teachers acting as facilitators struggle to refrain from exerting epistemic influence - even when explicitly instructed to do so. The core issue does not lie in adolescents' cognitive immaturity, susceptibility to peer pressure, or inability to articulate reasons. On the contrary, when procedural safeguards are in place (e.g. first-person speech, no reactions allowed), young participants demonstrate a notable capacity for more authentic belief-speaking. The primary obstacle emerges at the level of facilitation.

Facilitation challenges as a structural phenomenon Observed deviations from deliberative principles include selective attention to preferred students, asymmetric enforcement of rules, early privileging of vocal participants, positive reinforcement of certain viewpoints, facilitating interaction and even advising by selected students before enabling autonomous expression of opinions, and subtle nudging toward convergence. These behaviors are rarely experienced by facilitators as exercises of power. Instead, they are framed - and sincerely understood - as benevolent acts of support, encouragement, and pedagogical responsibility. This pattern indicates that the problem is not a lack of training or goodwill but a deeper structural dynamic: facilitators occupy institutional roles that are intrinsically tied to epistemic authority. When placed in a deliberative context requiring epistemic restraint, these roles generate a strong pull toward influence, even when neutrality is normatively prescribed.

The role of naive realism

At the cognitive level, this dynamic is underpinned by naive realism - the implicit assumption that one's own perceptions and interpretations correspond directly to objective reality while those of others are subjective. Within educational institutions, naive realism fuses with role-based authority to produce a powerful epistemic hierarchy: teacher-speaking is tacitly interpreted as fact-speaking, while student-speaking is classified as belief-speaking. This misclassification is not typically recognized as such by teachers themselves. Because their inter-

pretations are experienced as reality rather than perspective, interventions feel necessary, responsible, and morally justified. Naive realism thus renders influence epistemically invisible to the influencer while making restraint feel like professional negligence.

Autopoiesis and competing systems From a systems-theoretical perspective, these findings suggest the presence of competing autopoietic processes. Educational institutions are autopoietic systems that reproduce epistemic asymmetry through roles, expectations, and evaluation practices. Deliberative formats such as Interdemocracy introduce a competing interaction order aimed at epistemic symmetry and autonomous belief-speaking. In such encounters, individual-level autopoiesis (participants reorganizing their own meaning-making) proves relatively easy to activate, while system-level transformation proves far more resistant. The institution's existing autopoiesis tends to reassert itself through facilitators who function as gatekeepers of meaning, often without conscious intent. This demonstrates that systems already possess a stable autopoiesis oriented toward self-preservation. Democratic or participatory autopoiesis cannot simply be layered onto existing authority structures without neutralizing or displacing the epistemic functions of those roles.

Implications

The findings point to several critical implications for democratic training and participatory governance: - The main risk to authentic belief-speaking in deliberative settings is not participant immaturity but benevolent authority. - Facilitation should be treated as a high-risk epistemic role requiring stronger safeguards than procedural rules or ethical intentions alone. - Naive realism functions as a personal cognitive underpinning that enables role-defined system autopoiesis gatekeeping. - Democratic autopoiesis is more plausibly initiated at th individual level and within protected interaction spaces than through direct institutional reform. In sum, the empirical evidence challenges optimistic assumptions about neutral facilitation within hierarchical institutions and highlights the need to address epistemic authority, cognitive realism, and role identity as central design variables in any attempt to institutionalize democratic belief-speaking.

Inspired by pilot observations (2) Ongoing empirical regional piloting of program Interdemocracy indicates a systematic difference between two professional role types within the same institutional setting: teachers on the one hand, and school psychologists or pedagogists on the other. This difference proves decisive for the feasibility of democratic, autonomy-preserving deliberation.

Intervention-first versus observation-first roles Teachers operate within an intervention-first epistemic logic. Their professional legitimacy is tied to real-time guidance, correction, and steering of student cognition. When students struggle, teachers experience a strong obligation to intervene, clarify, or normalize responses. Non-intervention is commonly perceived as negligence or loss of pedagogical responsibility. School psychologists and pedagogists, by contrast, operate within an observation-first epistemic logic. Their professional competence is defined by the ability to suspend judgment, allow situations to unfold, observe patterns, and only then design proportionate interventions. Premature intervention is regarded as epistemically unsound and professionally inappropriate. This divergence is not a matter of personality or training quality, but of structurally encoded role expectations.

Epistemic authority and naive realism The intervention impulse characteristic of teaching roles is reinforced by naive realism: the tacit assumption that one's own perceptions and interpretations reflect objective reality. Within the teaching role, this assumption leads to a misclassification of communicative modes: teacher-speaking is implicitly treated as fact-speaking, while student-speaking is treated as belief-speaking. Psychologists and pedagogists are institutionally protected from this fusion of authority and epistemic certainty. Their role explicitly frames perceptions as provisional hypotheses rather than objective truths. As a result, they are better able to tolerate ambiguity, refrain from evaluative feedback, and preserve epistemic symmetry in group settings.

Consequences for democratic deliberation Deliberative formats that rely on belief-speaking, autonomy, and non-directive facilitation are structurally misaligned with the teaching role as it is currently constituted. Even when teachers act with goodwill and explicit procedural guidance, their role obligations tend to reintroduce epistemic hierarchy through subtle forms of influence, reinforcement, and correction. Psychologists and pedagogists, by contrast, are structurally compatible with such formats. Their observation-first stance enables them to "let reality be," maintain neutrality, and support authentic expression without prematurely steering outcomes.

Implications for training and design These findings imply that democratic facilitation within educational contexts cannot rely on skills training alone. The core challenge is role-based, not technical. To enable teachers to function as facilitators, their role must be temporarily reconfigured so that non-intervention is legitimized as professional excellence rather than failure. Effective approaches include explicit role suspension, training in epistemic delay and ambiguity tolerance, externalization and auditing of influence, temporal separation of belief-

speaking and fact-speaking, and the use of psychologists or pedagogists as trainers and supervisors. Importantly, not all teachers might be able or willing to adopt this role switch reliably, which suggests the need for role specialization rather than universal conversion.

Conclusion

The decisive variable for democratic deliberation in educational settings is not authority as such, but the epistemic logic embedded in professional roles. Observation-first roles, such as those of psychologists and pedagogists, are structurally aligned with autonomy-preserving deliberation. Intervention-first roles, such as teaching, require explicit and institutionally supported role trans-formation if they are to host democratic belief-speaking without reintroducing paternalism.

Broader implications of pilot observations

Introduction

Modern liberal democracies face an escalating tension between institutional procedures and the lived experience of citizens. Yascha Mounk identifies this as "undemocratic liberalism," a state in which democratic institutions remain intact but responsiveness to the public voice diminishes, replaced by technocratic meritocracy. In this current, state administrations often adopt a paternalistic "teacher" role, viewing citizens as cognitively vulnerable subjects to be guided or protected, rather than autonomous agents. To counter this, a systemic interven-tion is required to transition the state from a model of epistemic paternalism to one of epistemic responsiveness. This shift utilizes the logic of "observation-first" professional roles - modeled on the school psychologist or pedagogist - to safeguard societal autonomy.

The epistemic shift: From "guardianship" to "observation-first" governance A primary characteristic of undemocratic liberalism is the tendency for administra-tions to view their own procedures as "fact-speaking" (objective and final) while categorizing citizen concerns as "belief-speaking" (subjective, erroneous, or noise). - The intervention: State institutions must adopt an observation-first mandate. This requires a formal "observation phase" in the policy-making cycle where the state is prohibited from immediately correcting or steering public input. - The objective: By allowing social reality to "be" before subjecting it to the logic of "rules are rules," the state acknowledges the autonomy of the citizen's experience rather than acting as its sole arbiter.

The structural shift: Establishing "epistemic buffers" The failure of neutral facilitation often stems from the fact that facilitators are also outcome-driven administrators. To scale democratic responsiveness, the state must decouple administrative rule-makers (the "teachers") from deliberative facilitators (the "psychologists"). - The intervention: The creation of Interdemocracy units within administrations. These units are staffed by professionals trained in observation and facilitation - such as sociologists or psychologists - rather than technocrats or policy experts. This is a transitional intervention. Ultimately, administrative staff needs to be capable of fulfilling both roles. - The role: These units protect the space for "belief-speaking," ensuring that the technocratic procedural attitude does not sanitize or override public input. Their goal is to ensure the "resilience battery" of both the community and individuals is being charged through genuine engagement.

Redefining success: The "resilience battery" as a KPI Technocratic governance traditionally judges legitimacy based on "usefulness" and adherence to existing procedure. This creates a closed loop that ignores the erosion of individual agency. - The intervention: Autonomy and agency must be adopted as measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), equivalent in importance to economic efficiency or safety. - The metric: The resilience battery - comprising autonomy, belonging, and achievement - serves as the yardstick. If a state intervention increases safety but "crushes" agency, it must be officially flagged as a "resilience failure." This forces institutions to recognize when "rules are rules" becomes a form of institutional pathology.

Cognitive strength: From top-down guarding to bottom-up autopoiesis The paternalistic state justifies its intervention by claiming citizens are "easily misled" by misinformation. This leads to a guardianship model that treats the public as victims. - The intervention: A transition from top-down dealing with FIMI to bottom-up autopoietic strengthening. - The logic: Instead of the state simply "debunking" information and replacing it with "correct" facts and narratives - StratCom - (a teacher-like correction), it provides the infrastructure for citizens to articulate their own judgments and see them impact decision-making. When citizens exercise autonomous judgment, they develop an identity more resistant to external manipulation. Enhanced autonomy is an effective defense against cognitive vulnerability.

Ethical framework: The non-totalitarian relation Paternalism often seeks to erase small, irreducible "islands of belonging" in favor of a uniform, normative picture of the citizen. - The intervention: Adopting a "psychologist state" model that recognizes the layered nature of the individual. This model acknowledges

that the state can never fully know", nor should fully know the total reality of its citizens. - The result: This transforms the state from a governor of meaning (an entity that defines truth for its subjects) into a neutral infrastructure for autonomy.

Conclusion

Countering the undemocratic liberal current requires a state that listens before it knows. By institutionalizing "belief-speaking" and observation-first roles, a feedback loop is created that forces technocratic systems to confront the irreducible reality of the people they serve. The law remains a necessary tool, but it is redefined as a servant of human autonomy rather than a moral end in itself.

On what is meaningful

Introduction

The following is a reflection based on a recent meeting of the Youth Resilience Council (YRC) within the frame of our current regional Interdemocracy pilot. The input for every YRC meeting is reports created by GAIs. These reports cluster the answers given by students in 14 classes as a response to either a question or to a set of receemmandations drafted at a prior YRC meeting. The clusters usually are presented in two forms: clusters of answers sharing a common denominator and an overview of binary, mutually exclusive clusters of answer types in two layers; the first layer typically consists of having given a meaningful answer or not, while the second layer distinguishes types of answers. Based on a selection of clusters, the YRC formulates recommendations - either preliminary recommendations that are sent back to the classroom for verification or final recommendations that are based on the preliminary recommendations as well as student feedback on them.

The dilemma

In the recent meeting in case a cluster was presented that was different from all other clusters and was given by 7.7% of the respondents. As a reaction to the question what conditions should be present in their upcoming school - they are in the last class of Polish primary school that also encompasses middle school - to be able to talk about "hard topics" in the classroom. What a "hard topic" is, was not defined. The gist of the different cluster was that students want to avoid talking in front of the whole class because it is stressful. The question put to the YRC was not whether this minority was numerically significant, but whether its existence warranted being carried forward as a distinct recommendation. There

was no rule to answer this question. No threshold had been defined. No statistical argument could settle it without flattening what was at stake. After extended deliberation, the decision to base a recommendation on the minority cluster was made - by a margin of one vote. It could just as easily have gone the other way.

Reflections

The narrow outcome was not a weakness of the process. It was evidence that the decision had not been predetermined by procedure. The group did not apply an answer; it assumed responsibility for one. What made this moment especially revealing was a structural asymmetry within the process. The participants whose views were being interpreted were younger adolescents, while the members of the decision-making body were older adolescents. This difference did not confer authority or justify paternalism. Instead, it introduced a heightened ethical attentiveness. Dismissing the minority position would not have been formally incorrect, but it would have carried a different moral weight. That attentiveness did not dictate the outcome. It deepened the deliberation. It slowed closure. It made the question harder rather than easier.

The YRC facilitator

This is where facilitation becomes decisive. The facilitator did not steer the decision or privilege one position. Rather, they held open the space in which hesitation could remain legitimate. They resisted the pressure to normalize uncertainty as quickly as possible. This form of facilitation is not a technique. It is an ethical stance: a willingness to remain exposed to the claims of others without converting that exposure into control. Attempts to proceduralize this stance inevitably fail. Mathematical probability, predefined thresholds, or formal weighting schemes would have resolved the case efficiently, but at the cost of erasing what gave it meaning. Care, in this sense, cannot be encoded. It can only be embodied.

Procedures

This does not mean that procedures are unnecessary. On the contrary, procedures are essential to protect deliberative spaces from coercion, domination, and external pressure. But their role is limited. Procedures can create the conditions for care; they cannot produce it. They must be designed to withdraw at precisely those moments when ethical responsibility cannot be delegated.

People over systems

This insight leads to an uncomfortable conclusion: the legitimacy of such processes ultimately rests on trust in people rather than systems. It depends on facilitators and participants who are willing to carry responsibility without guarantees. That reliance is not scalable in the way technical systems are. It cannot be secured once and for all. Yet this is not a failure of democracy. It is its defining feature. Democracy does not derive its value from delivering optimal outcomes or consistent decisions. Its value lies in the fact that collective judgments are made under acknowledged uncertainty, in the presence of others whose claims cannot be fully absorbed into rules. The fragility of this arrangement is not something to be engineered away. It is the condition under which democratic legitimacy remains alive. When democratic systems lose this fragility - when procedure replaces judgment and closure replaces responsibility - they may become efficient, but they also become shallow. What remains works, but it no longer answers to those it governs. Seen this way, the persistent discomfort of democratic deliberation is not a sign of dysfunction. It is a signal that something ethically significant is still happening.

ANNEX PART NINE – Interdemocracy as a trace

Following Derrida's concept of 'trace', I try to summarize Interdemocracy as a trace: "Autonomy is autopoiesis that refuses labels. It grows in structured, non-judgmental, dynamic spaces between islands of care, trust and belonging. It takes experiences of psychosocial integration by anyone as currency to measure well-being."

Notes on Interdemocracy as a trace In part eight, I described Interdemocracy as a trace. Below there are some thoughts that have emerged since then.

Ma

The Japanese concept of 'ma' is the essence of the space between the islands. - Ma provides the potential for autopoiesis. - The ocean surrounding the islands is time. - Interdemocracy provides structured time. It makes the ocean a safe place, not to rest, but to experience time as a constructive confrontation. The structured, non-judgmental, dynamic specification is the Interdemocracy embedding of ma.

Chater

Nick Chater's theory in The Mind is Flat provides the "hardware" explanation for the trace. If the mind is "flat" it means there is no pre-existing, deep "true self" hidden in a subconscious basement. Instead, the self is something we improvise in real-time. - Autopoeisis becomes radical improvisation. - True autonomy is the refusal to let a past improvisation become a label, a permanent cage. - Since the mind is "flat", the experience in the now and the memory of past improvisations are all there is. This leaves space for our experience of our psychosocial integration as a self-correction tool for ongoing improvisations.

Hypothesis

Maybe we lived a lie for a long time - as if our self-narrative (Giddens) was the reflection of a stable core that only changed while role-playing in situations (Goffman). Probably, we were 'liquid' (Bauman) all along, struggling to reconfig-ure identity puzzle pieces, without the help of a box that showed an image to model ourselves after (Bauman). But, unlike Bauman's interpretation, we are not atomized units, as was the big misunderstanding of the big ideologies of the twentieth century. We are rooted in small, irreducible communities of belong-ing. Without these communities, our human condition is pathological - loneli-

ness is a destructive state. The islands provide us with a starter kit for our autonomy. Jealous societal hierarchies, be they religious, ideological, or scientific, try to pin us in a hierarchy by providing us with a box showing a normative picture - and in that picture our little communities have been erased. We have accepted this situation for a long time, because without a box we are left with our liquid self and the responsibility for our own autonomy, made possible by our islands. This enormous responsibility for ourselves can easily scare us into submission - and it repeatedly did and does.

Footnotes

[1] EEAS defines FIMI as follows: "Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) describes a mostly non-illegal pattern of behaviour that threatens or has the potential to negatively impact values, procedures and political processes. Such activity is manipulative in character and is conducted in an intentional and coordinated manner, by state or non-state actors, including their proxies inside and outside of their own territory." Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2025/EEAS-3nd-ThreatReport-March-2025-05-Digital-HD.pdf [pdf, p.4] [2] NATO (2022), p.3 [3] European Parliament (2025) [4] NATO (2010), p.10 [5] NATO (2022), p.1 [6] NATO (2022), p.3 [7] NATO (2022), p.4 [8] Liboreiro G (2025) [9] Rutte quoted in NATO (2025a) [10] NATO (2024) [11] See also : https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/search.htm?query=resilience&submitSearch= [12] European Commission (nd, a) [13] Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the resilience of critical entities and repealing Council Directive 2008/114/EC, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022L2557 [14] Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32021R0241 [15] European Commission (2024) [16] European Commission (nd, b) [17] Mikulski K (2021) [18] https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/search.htm?query=whole+of+society&submitSearch= [19] COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on ProtectEU: a European Internal Security Strategy, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025DC0148 [20] COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (EU) 2023/2836 of 12 December 2023 on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy-making processes, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023H2836 [21] COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION on the EU Security Union Strategy, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0605 [22] SAUFEX (2024) [23] Kupiecki R, Chłoń T (2025), Epilogue [24] Kupiecki R, Chłoń T (2025), p.46 [25] Kupiecki R, Chłoń T (2025), p.46-47 [26] Kupiecki R, Chłoń T (2025), p.47 [27] SAUFEX (2025a) [28] https://sparqtools.org/mobility-measure/inclusion-of-other-in-the-self-ios-scale/ [29] https://saufex.eu/post/44-Evolutionary-psychology [30] Van Bavel J, Packer D (2021), pp. 17-18 [31] Saufex (2025a) [32] https://saufex.eu/post/5-A-Resilience-Council-statute [33] SAUFEX (2025a) [34] Dweck (2016) [35] SAUFEX (2025a) [36] SAUFEX (2025a) [37] https://saufex.eu/ [38] https://saufex.eu/

post/42-Resilience-Councils-recap [39] SAUFEX (2025b) [40] Lewandowsky S et al. (2025) [41] Huttunen, K, & Lewandowsky, S (2025) [42] Treatise of Human nature, Book III, Part I, Section I [43] Singer D (2015) [44] Lewandowsky S et al. (2025) [45] Mounk, Y. (2018), p.13 [46] Surowiecki (2004) [47] Bauman Z (2005), p.7 [48] Bauman Z (2005), p.24 [49] Bauman Z (2004), p.48-49 [50] Bauman Z (2004), p.53 [51] Tosi J, Warmke B (2020), p.69 [52] Mercier H (2020), p.212 [53] Bettarelli L et al. (2022) [54] Bettarelli L et al. (2022) [55] Harteveld E et al. (2021) [56] Lenci K (2023), p.15 quoting Barber and Pope [57] Lenci K (2023), p.107 [58] Van Bavel J, Packer D (2021), p.18 [59] Van Bavel J, Packer D (2021), p.32 [60] Tosi J, Warmke B (2020), p.17 [61] Mercier H (2020), p.209 [62] Tosi J, Warmke B (2020), p.76 [63] Compare: Inclusivity as a potentially positive intervention regarding belonging. [64] Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2025a) [65] https:// www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights- child [66] https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human- rights [67] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj/eng [68] https:// www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights- child [69] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf [70] https:// www.refworld.org/legal/general/crc/2009/en/70207 [71] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/ legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0142 [72] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/ legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0142 [73] Adolescents within the education system fulfill Surowiecki's first and third preconditions: diversity and decentralization. Adolescents in the school system represent every possible background and level of intelligence, provided sufficient cohort-related classrooms are included. [74] European Commission (2025) [75] Blakemore S (2019), p.193 [76] Crone, E (2017), p.35 [77] Hansen-Staszyński O et al. (2017), p.6 [78] Crone E (2017), p.91 [79] Crone E (2017), p.93 [80] Blakemore S (2019), p.31 [81] Crone E (2017), p.8 [82] Blakemore S (2019), p.135 [83] Blakemore S (2019), p.131 [84] Blakemore S (2019), p.131 [85] Summarized in Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2025a), chapter three [86] Hansen-Staszyński O (2025) [87] Twenge J (2017) [88] See for a more detailed description: Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2025a), chapter three [89] See for a more detailed description: Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2025a), chapter three [90] Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2022) [91] European Commis- sion, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2022b), p.64 [92] Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2025a); Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2025b) [93] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2022a) [94] See also: RAN (2021) p.6. The document states that distrust towards institutions, including schools, is one of the two "key factors" driving violent extremism. It specifies: "If trust in schools is eroded, what will the consequences be? They are at best, likely to be damaging and at worst, catastrophic." [95] European Commission, Directorate-General for

Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2022b), p.89; 96 [96] Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2022) [97] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2022b), p.39 [98] European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2022a), p.18 [99] Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2025a) [100] Hansen-Staszyński O, Staszyńska-Hansen B (2022) [101] Rorty R (2006). See also: Bauman Z (2005), p.13 [102] RAN (2023), p.4 simply states: "There is no trust without safety." [103] Compare: Siegel D (2015), p.151 [104] According to Levy N (2022), p.iv: "we should focus on improving the epistemic environment /.../ The epistemic environment /.../ consists in agents and institutions as well as messages, and the former may often be more significant than the latter." He continues: "We can improve belief formation through what I will call epistemic engineering: the management of the epistemic environment." [105] Lenci K (2023), p.98 [106] Compare: Inclusivity as a potentially positive intervention regarding belonging. [107] Wiliam D (2011), p.81ff. describes the effect of a situation in which adolescent students are allowed to choose whether they participate: the achievement gap between them widens. This is an undesirable situation since achievement is one of the key components of psychosocial integration. [108] This excludes the occurrence of any judgments, including negative judgments. Compare: Avoiding judgment as a potentially positive intervention regarding safety. [109] Wiliam D (2011), p.84 [110] William D (1998), p.1 writes: "If they [students] think that the teacher has a particular answer in mind, the students will often ... be trying to 'guess what's in teacher's head'." This might lead to biased answers that are deemed socially acceptable. [111] Compare: Wiliam D (2011), p.82ff [112] Compare: Predictable communication as potentially positive intervention regarding safety. [113] Compare: SAUFEX blog post The case against AI simulated empathy. https://saufex.eu/post/48-The-case-against-AI-simulated-empathy *[114] NATO (2025b) According to Rutte, 3.5% of NATO countries' GDP is to be spent on core military requirements and 1.5% on defence-related investments. (NATO, 2025c) This was confirmed by the The Hague Summit Declaration (NATO 2025d) which included "resilience" as an explicit investment category within the 1.5% category. [115] Council of the European Union (2025), 23 [116] Council of the European Union (2025), 21*

About the Author

Onno Hansen-Staszyński works on the intersections of information, online technologies, identity, and communication. He has served on the European Commission's expert group on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training, and co-authored a European Parliament and Commission Pilot Project framework on implementing children's rights. He is currently involved in the Horizon-funded Saufex project and the Interdemocracy program, both exploring ways to strengthen societal resilience through democratic participation. His work spans writing, teaching, research, and filmmaking, often in close collaboration with his wife, Beata Staszyńska-Hansen. Onno's focus is on empowering people and societies to remain autonomous, ethical, and informed.