

Geopolitics and manipulated realities: the diplomatic response to disinformation campaigns

Andreea-Alexandra BĂDULESCU, Cristian-Gabriel IANC

Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania

andreea.badulescu@rei.ase.ro, cristian.ianc@rei.ase.ro

Abstract: *Disinformation has emerged as a central instrument of geopolitical strategy, with the Russia–Ukraine war amplifying its use in destabilizing democratic states. Romania, as a frontline EU and NATO member bordering Ukraine and Moldova, has become a key target for Russian-linked disinformation campaigns aimed at undermining public trust, electoral legitimacy, and regional alignment.*

Over the past four years, Romania has faced coordinated influence operations that promoted anti-Western narratives, manipulated political discourse, and amplified social divisions. These efforts intensified around national elections, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, and debates over economic hardship, with actors exploiting Romania's low media literacy and deep institutional distrust.

This study investigates how Romania's diplomatic institutions have responded to these campaigns. It addresses the broader problem of how mid-sized democracies in strategic regions adapt to foreign disinformation as part of hybrid warfare. Here we examine Romania's case through a qualitative analysis of official statements, academic literature, and monitoring platforms.

We find that Romania has primarily responded by aligning with EU and NATO messaging frameworks while issuing reactive diplomatic rebuttals. However, proactive and strategic public diplomacy remains underdeveloped. These findings suggest that current responses are insufficient in the face of evolving digital threats.

Keywords: Disinformation, Strategic communication, Hybrid warfare, Romanian diplomacy, Narrative manipulation.

1. Introduction

In the past decade, disinformation has become a powerful tool of geopolitical influence, used to undermine public trust, disrupt democratic processes and destabilize institutions. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine marked a shift in the use of disinformation as an integral component of hybrid warfare, operating alongside cyber operations, energy pressure and conventional threats (Hybrid CoE, 2023). This strategic use of manipulated narratives is central to Russia's broader goal of reshaping influence zones and weakening Western cohesion.

Romania has emerged as a key target in this context. As a frontline member of NATO and the EU with direct borders to Ukraine and Moldova, Romania faces

constant exposure to Russian-backed disinformation campaigns. These operations do not attempt to promote Russia's image directly, given historical tensions, but instead aim to erode trust in the West. According to the EU DisinfoLab, Russian-linked narratives circulating in Romania often focus on themes such as national sovereignty, energy insecurity and cultural decay, while co-opting local actors to enhance credibility (EU DisinfoLab, 2023).

Between 2020 and 2024, disinformation in Romania intensified around key moments such as the COVID-19 pandemic, refugee arrivals from Ukraine and electoral events. Narratives have included claims of electoral fraud, vaccine conspiracies and portrayals of Romania as a "colony" controlled by NATO and the EU. These narratives were amplified by nationalist-populist figures, religious institutions and media outlets with obscure funding (Pop, 2023).

Romania's vulnerability to disinformation is exacerbated by systemic weaknesses in media literacy and institutional trust. Balan (2025) notes that widespread conspiracy beliefs, nostalgia for authoritarianism and limited civic education create fertile ground for manipulation. A 2023 survey cited by the EU DisinfoLab found that 65% of Romanians believed COVID-19 was a tool of global control and more than 50% expressed favourable views of the communist past (EU DisinfoLab, 2023).

Despite growing exposure to foreign influence operations, Romania's institutional and diplomatic responses remain fragmented. The MFA, National Defence Council and intelligence agencies have acknowledged the threat, but comprehensive and sustained diplomatic strategies are still lacking (Pop, 2023; Balan, 2025).

In parallel with security and diplomatic dimensions, the paper also acknowledges that disinformation circulates through digitally mediated environments that increasingly include virtual education and hybrid learning settings. In this sense, digital literacy and media-and-information literacy developed through education represent not only social-policy priorities but also resilience levers relevant to reducing susceptibility to foreign influence campaigns.

This article investigates Romania's diplomatic response to disinformation campaigns in the context of Russian hybrid tactics. Using a qualitative case study approach, it draws on academic research, official reports and media monitoring data to examine the narratives deployed, the state's response mechanisms and the challenges involved. It seeks to answer the central research question: How has Romania adapted its diplomatic practices to respond to the challenges of foreign disinformation campaigns? The findings aim to highlight not only gaps in Romania's current approach but also concrete recommendations for improving digital resilience and diplomatic communication.

To complement the qualitative analysis, this paper introduces a short quantitative context snapshot that captures structural conditions linked to susceptibility to disinformation. We compute a Vulnerability Context Index (VCI) using three observable indicators: media literacy, basic digital skills coverage, and a trust-in-media benchmark. The VCI is used descriptively, as a baseline for

interpreting why certain narratives can diffuse and persist in the Romanian information environment.

2. Literature review

Disinformation has increasingly been studied as a core component of hybrid threats that combine military and non-military tools to influence populations and weaken democratic institutions. Scholars conceptualize hybrid warfare as a strategy in which information manipulation, cyber operations, economic pressure, and political influence are integrated into broader security competition. Patel et al. (2020) describe disinformation and misinformation as key elements of hybrid warfare, especially in the context of Russia's actions in Ukraine, where information operations function as extensions of military conflict by eroding public trust and shaping perception. Patel et al. (2020) further emphasize the need to distinguish disinformation (intentional deception) from misinformation (unintentional inaccuracy), underscoring its strategic use by state actors.

Russia's use of information warfare is well documented in analyses of hybrid strategies. Academic work on Russian hybrid warfare emphasizes the role of the information space in contemporary conflicts. For example, studies on Russia's hybrid toolkit show that disinformation is deeply integrated with influence operations, where narratives are crafted to exploit social divisions and question the legitimacy of Western institutions (Bachmann & Gunneriusson, 2015). These accounts align with research that positions disinformation as a deliberate element of strategic competition aimed at disrupting consensus among allies and weakening opponents without direct military confrontation (Hansen, 2017). The European Union and NATO have recognized this threat and developed institutional frameworks to enhance resilience, monitor disinformation, and coordinate responses. Ahmadly (2022) notes that NATO and the EU have adjusted their security paradigms to combat hybrid threats, including disinformation, through structured monitoring, strategic communication initiatives, and joint resilience efforts.

The relationship between disinformation and diplomacy is increasingly central to scholarly discussion. Studies of digital and hybrid diplomacy argue that the rise of online influence operations poses new challenges for public diplomacy and foreign policy. Research on digital diplomacy identifies misinformation and disinformation as significant barriers to effective diplomatic engagement, undermining state credibility and complicating international cooperation on issues ranging from health crises to conflict resolution (Munteanu, 2025). This literature suggests that diplomats must adapt their roles to incorporate strategic communication practices in contested information environments (Genini, 2025).

Within this broader context, the literature also highlights how disinformation affects democratic societies. Arribas et al. (2023) show that disinformation and historical revisionism have been used as instruments of foreign influence, particularly by Russia in the post-Soviet space. These narratives, often rooted in manipulated historical references, aim to legitimize aggressive policies and distort

public understanding of conflicts such as the war in Ukraine. Arribas et al. (2023) further demonstrate that such influence campaigns rely on recurring narrative patterns that can be mapped and anticipated. Similarly, research on state–society interactions emphasizes that open, democratic environments are more vulnerable to hybrid threats because free speech protections can be manipulated by malign actors to spread false narratives widely. Genini (2025) argues that this vulnerability calls for new diplomatic strategies that balance openness with resilience to information threats.

Critical research also examines how institutions respond to these challenges. Hybrid CoE (2025) maps how democratic states grapple with limited resources against well-financed information aggressors. The report argues that cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors is necessary to detect, monitor, and react to disinformation, and that states should explore tools such as sanctions, labeling, and legal measures to impose costs on adversaries. Munteanu (2025) further shows that NATO has increasingly framed disinformation as a multidimensional threat, capable not only of eroding trust but of weakening collective defense frameworks, making strategic communications central to allied resilience.

The expansion of online and hybrid learning has also made virtual education environments relevant to disinformation dynamics, both as exposure channels and as resilience-building spaces. The European Commission’s Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) frames digital education as a strategic priority for strengthening digital competences and ensuring quality and inclusive digital learning in response to the acceleration of online learning (European Commission, 2020). In parallel, EU guidance for teachers explicitly links education to societal resilience by emphasizing that digital literacy education should include the ability to identify and evaluate information, understand manipulation techniques, and respond responsibly in online environments where disinformation circulates at scale (European Commission, 2022). UNESCO similarly positions media and information literacy as a sustainable public-good approach for building resilience to disinformation and strengthening trust in the information ecosystem (UNESCO, 2021). In practical terms, research on “prebunking” (inoculation) suggests that scalable learning interventions can reduce susceptibility to misinformation by training users to recognize common manipulation strategies before encountering them in real contexts (Roozenbeek et al., 2020).

Despite these contributions, there is still a gap in the literature when it comes to examining how specific diplomatic institutions operationalize responses to foreign disinformation. Much of the existing work focuses on macro-level frameworks for resilience or comparative defense strategies, but fewer studies explore national diplomatic behavior and narrative management in response to coordinated influence campaigns. Romania, as an EU and NATO member on the eastern flank of the alliance system, exemplifies this research need given its exposure to disinformation operations linked to the Russia–Ukraine war. Filling this gap requires deeper engagement with literature on hybrid warfare, strategic

communication, and diplomacy that not only identifies threats but also analyzes institutional responses and strategic adaptations.

2.1 Problem statement / research question

The increasing use of disinformation as a tool of geopolitical influence poses a serious threat to democratic stability, institutional trust and international diplomacy. In the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, disinformation has become central to hybrid warfare, targeting not only military and political institutions, but also public perceptions of legitimacy, sovereignty and alliances. Situated at the eastern border of the EU and NATO, Romania has emerged a frontline state in this strategic information conflict. Russian disinformation campaigns in Romania aim less to generate support for Russia than to undermine confidence in Western institutions, discredit democratic processes and exacerbate internal divisions. These campaigns are amplified by local vulnerabilities, including low media literacy, polarized public discourse and limited institutional capacity for strategic communication.

While the literature offers extensive conceptual work on hybrid threats and disinformation, fewer studies explain how diplomatic institutions translate these frameworks into operational practice, particularly in frontline EU and NATO states. In Romania's case, sustained exposure to influence operations linked to the Russia-Ukraine war increases the need to understand not only institutional response capacity but also the societal resilience conditions that shape disinformation diffusion. These resilience conditions include digital and media literacy, which are increasingly formed in digitally mediated contexts such as online and hybrid learning environments. As diplomacy expands beyond traditional negotiations into the digital and information spaces, it is urgent to understand how diplomatic services confront narrative warfare. Without this understanding, Romania risks remaining reactive rather than resilient in the face of escalating information threats.

The unfolding of disinformation campaigns in Central and Eastern Europe has highlighted the urgent need for coordinated diplomatic responses tailored to the current information environment. In this context, this study aims to analyze how Romania, as an EU and NATO member state bordering Ukraine, has responded to the strategic influence exerted through false and manipulative narratives. The focus is on the period 2020–2024, a period marked by key events such as the pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and national elections. The research aims to identify the main themes of disinformation directed at Romania, to assess the responses provided by diplomatic institutions, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to determine the extent to which these responses were proactive, coherent, and effective in combating narrative manipulation and strengthening public trust. At the same time, the study analyzes the structural and operational difficulties faced by Romanian diplomacy in developing a strategic response, as well as potential courses of action to strengthen resilience in the face of information warfare.

In this respect, we have developed the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the main disinformation narratives targeting Romania in the context of the Russia–Ukraine war and regional destabilization efforts?
- RQ2. How have Romanian diplomatic institutions, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responded to these disinformation campaigns between 2020 and 2024?
- RQ3. To what extent have Romania’s diplomatic responses been proactive, coordinated, and effective in addressing narrative manipulation and restoring public trust?
- RQ4. What challenges and limitations do Romanian diplomatic actors face in developing a strategic response to disinformation, and what opportunities exist for strengthening this response in the future?

Given the expansion of online and hybrid learning, the paper also recognizes that virtual education environments influence digital literacy and verification habits, which in turn shape vulnerability to disinformation and the conditions for restoring public trust. Therefore, in the discussion of future opportunities (RQ4), education-based digital literacy and media-and-information literacy measures delivered through virtual learning contexts are considered as complementary resilience options alongside diplomatic and institutional responses.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to analyze how Romania’s diplomatic institutions responded to disinformation campaigns related to the Russia–Ukraine conflict from 2020 to 2024. Romania was chosen as the case study due to its strategic location in the region and its vulnerability to targeted influence operations. This study relies on academic literature, official communications, policy documents, media analysis, and data from monitoring platforms such as EUvsDisinfo and EU DisinfoLab. These sources were triangulated to ensure credibility. The analysis follows three steps: mapping disinformation narratives, evaluating institutional responses, and identifying gaps in strategy and coordination. Although the study is limited to open-source materials and does not include classified data or interviews, it provides insight into how Romania’s diplomacy operates under pressure from foreign disinformation.

To complement the qualitative mapping of dominant disinformation narratives in Romania, this paper adds a concise quantitative snapshot of societal vulnerability indicators that shape receptivity to misleading content. We operationalise “vulnerability” using (i) Media Literacy Index (MLI) scores and ranks—an index designed to approximate societies’ resilience to disinformation using cross-national indicators (e.g., media freedom, education, and trust-related measures)—and (ii) basic digital skills coverage, which is relevant to individuals’ ability to navigate and evaluate online information environments. As an additional

contextual benchmark, we include Romania’s relative standing on trust in media as reported in a dedicated disinformation landscape factsheet. These indicators do not measure disinformation exposure directly; rather, they provide empirically grounded context for interpreting why certain anti-EU/anti-Western narratives can diffuse rapidly and persist in the public sphere.

Table 1. Quantitative indicators supporting RQ1 (societal vulnerability context)

Indicator	Year	Romania value	Unit/scale	What it captures (how you can interpret it in RQ1)	Source
Media Literacy Index (MLI) Rank	2022	31	Rank (out of 41)	Relative position in resilience to disinformation; lower rank implies higher vulnerability	OSI–Sofia, Media Literacy Index 2023 (table comparing 2023 vs 2022)
Media Literacy Index (MLI) Score	2022	36	Score (0–100 scale)	Level of resilience; decline suggests worsening structural conditions for narrative resistance	OSI–Sofia, Media Literacy Index 2023
Media Literacy Index (MLI) Rank	2023	34	Rank (out of 41)	Deterioration in rank indicates Romania moving toward the more vulnerable cluster of societies	OSI–Sofia, Media Literacy Index 2023
Media Literacy Index (MLI) Score	2023	32	Score (0–100 scale)	A measurable drop consistent with reduced resilience to misleading narratives	OSI–Sofia, Media Literacy Index 2023
Population with basic digital skills	2023	27.8	% of population	Capacity to operate in digital environments (a necessary—but not sufficient—condition for effective information evaluation)	EU Digital Skills & Jobs Platform, “Romania: a snapshot of digital skills”
Population with basic digital skills	2024	27.7	% of population	Near-stagnation suggests limited improvement in digital capability	EU Digital Skills & Jobs Platform, “Romania: a

Trust in media – relative standing	in (repo-rted)	29th / 38	Rank (out of 38)	that could support information discernment	snapshot of digital skills”
				Low trust can create fertile ground for alternative “counter-elite” narrative ecosystems (often used by sovereigntist/pro-Kremlin framings)	EU DisinfoLab factsheet, Disinformation Landscape in Romania

Source: Author's own computation

To summarise the quantitative context indicators in Table 1 into a single interpretable measure, we compute a Vulnerability Context Index (VCI). The VCI is designed as a normalised composite (0 to 1) that increases when (i) media literacy is lower, (ii) basic digital skills are lower, and (iii) trust in media is relatively weaker. This compact index supports Research Question 1 by providing an empirical baseline for Romania's structural susceptibility to disinformation narratives, without implying direct causality.

$$VCI = \frac{1}{3} \left[\left(1 - \frac{MLI}{100} \right) + \left(1 - \frac{BDS}{100} \right) + \left(\frac{r-1}{N-1} \right) \right]$$

$$1 - \frac{MLI}{100} = 1 - \frac{32}{100} = 0.68$$

$$1 - \frac{BDS}{100} = 1 - \frac{27.7}{100} = 0.723$$

$$\frac{r-1}{N-1} = \frac{29-1}{38-1} = \frac{28}{37} = 0.7568$$

$$VCI = \frac{0.68 + 0.723 + 0.7568}{3} = 0.7199 \approx 0.720$$

MLI is the Media Literacy Index score (0–100), BDS is the share of population with basic digital skills (%), and $(r-1)/(N-1)$ is the normalized trust-in-media rank, with r the rank and N the total number of countries.

To synthesise the quantitative context indicators in Table X into a single descriptive measure, we compute a Vulnerability Context Index (VCI). The VCI aggregates three observable dimensions relevant to susceptibility to disinformation: (i) the Media Literacy Index (MLI) score, (ii) the share of the population with basic digital skills, and (iii) a trust-in-media benchmark expressed as a country rank. The index is not intended to establish causality; rather, it provides a compact empirical baseline for interpreting how a country's structural conditions may enable the diffusion and persistence of disinformation narratives.

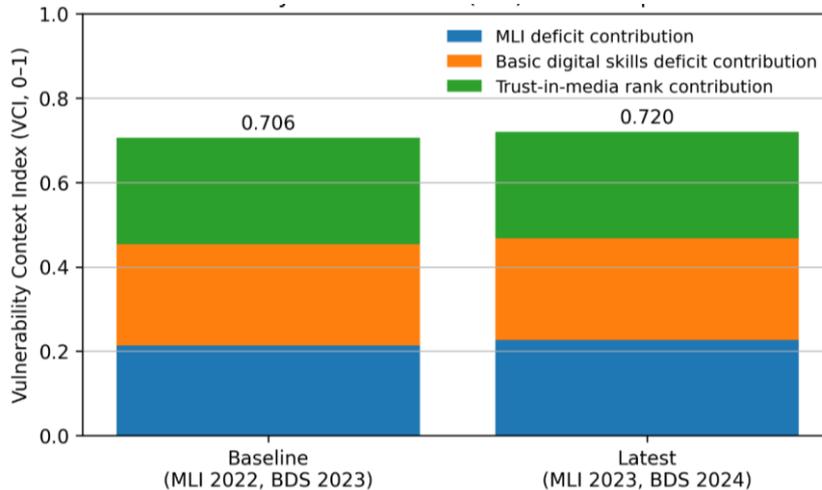


Figure 1. Romania’s Vulnerability Context Index (VCI) and component contributions (baseline vs latest)

(Source: Author’s own computation)

The figure reports the VCI as a normalised composite (0–1) and decomposes it into three additive contributions: (1) the MLI deficit component, (2) the basic digital skills deficit component, and (3) the trust-in-media rank component. Baseline uses MLI 2022 and basic digital skills 2023; latest uses MLI 2023 and basic digital skills 2024. The trust benchmark is taken as 29th out of 38 countries examined.

Interpretations and result

The VCI increases from 0.706 (baseline) to 0.720 (latest), indicating a slightly more vulnerable structural context for disinformation diffusion over the period covered by the underlying indicators. The change is driven primarily by the decline in MLI (36 → 32), while basic digital skills remain nearly unchanged (27.8% → 27.7%), suggesting stagnation in the population’s baseline capacity to navigate digital information environments. The trust-in-media term contributes a substantial and constant share of the index, consistent with the characterization of low trust as a persistent enabling condition for alternative narrative ecosystems. Overall, the index should be read as a descriptive composite (sensitive to the chosen components and equal weighting), useful for contextualising narrative vulnerability rather than making statistical claims about significance or causal effects.

4. Results and discussions

From 2020 to 2024, Romania was the target of repeated disinformation campaigns that claimed election interference, weakened sovereignty due to

EU/NATO ties, and government bias in favour of Ukrainian refugees. These narratives were amplified through local influencers, fringe media, and anonymous channels and were confirmed by monitoring platforms such as EUvsDisinfo and DisinfoLab.

In response, Romanian diplomacy, mainly through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aligned with EU and NATO efforts, issued clarifications, and supported media literacy initiatives. However, these actions were limited and reactive, lacking national coordination. Reliance on supranational frameworks exposed Romania's inability to respond quickly and independently to fast-moving disinformation.

Current strategies fall short of the demands of digital diplomacy today: real-time engagement, narrative building, and building domestic trust. Romania lacks a dedicated communication unit, consistent interagency collaboration, and specialized training for diplomats. These gaps have allowed false narratives to spread unchallenged, eroding public confidence.

To move forward, Romania must invest in a strategic communications centre, incorporate digital resilience into its diplomatic education, and collaborate with civil society to improve outreach. As disinformation becomes more sophisticated, Romanian diplomacy must become more agile and proactive in shaping narratives that protect national security and democratic stability.

5. Conclusions

This study explored how Romania, as a frontline EU and NATO member, has responded diplomatically to disinformation campaigns, particularly those linked to Russian strategic influence between 2020 and 2024. It focused on the narrative patterns used to undermine institutional trust, examined Romania's diplomatic responses and evaluated their effectiveness in addressing both the symptoms and sources of disinformation. The findings provide insight into the intersection of digital influence, national vulnerability and strategic communication in the context of contemporary diplomacy.

Alongside diplomatic and institutional measures, strengthening digital literacy through virtual education and hybrid learning initiatives can support long-term resilience by improving citizens' ability to identify manipulation techniques and evaluate information credibility, thereby reinforcing the trust-restoration dimension addressed in RQ3 and the future opportunities emphasized in RQ4.

Response to research questions

The study first identified key disinformation narratives targeting Romania. These included claims of election fraud, depictions of NATO and the EU as colonial actors, anti-refugee sentiment and economic insecurity linked to external pressure. These narratives aligned with broader Russian strategic goals aimed at destabilizing Romania's alignment with Western institutions and eroding public

trust. Platforms like EUvsDisinfo and DisinfoLab provided detailed tracking of these campaigns, confirming their recurring and coordinated nature.

Second, the research analysed Romania's institutional responses, especially those led by the MFA. While Romania has aligned closely with the EU and NATO counter-disinformation frameworks, national-level diplomatic responses have been limited in both scope and speed. Statements and clarifications have often followed media pressure or public outcry rather than proceeding them. There is evidence of participation in multilateral communication initiatives, but less emphasis on developing Romania's own narrative strategy or diplomatic agility in the digital space.

Third, the findings suggest that Romania's responses have been mostly reactive, fragmented across institutions and insufficiently visible to the public. Despite increasing awareness of disinformation threats, the country lacks a coordinated strategic communication infrastructure to address the information challenge proactively. Efforts in training, digital engagement and public diplomacy remain underdeveloped compared to the scale and sophistication of the threat.

Finally, the study highlighted structural and operational challenges. These include low media literacy among the population, limited digital diplomacy training for Romanian diplomats and over-reliance on external messaging provided by EU and NATO institutions. The lack of localized engagement strategies weakens the state's ability to build domestic resilience against narrative manipulation.

Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to the evolving understanding of diplomacy as not only institutional negotiation, but also narrative defence. Romania's case illustrates how small and mid-sized states are caught between global influence campaigns and limits national capacity to respond.

Practically, the findings suggest that Romania must prioritize public diplomacy as a strategic function of foreign policy, strengthening internal coordination, investing in digital communication training and creating a centralized counter-disinformation hub are all necessary steps to shift from defensive postures to resilient engagement,

The quantitative context results reinforce this interpretation by indicating an elevated vulnerability environment for narrative diffusion. As shown in Table 1, Romania combines low and largely stagnant baseline skills indicators with a relatively weak trust-in-media position; Figure 1 synthesises these dimensions into the VCI. This index should be read as a descriptive composite rather than a test of statistical significance, but it provides an empirical anchor for the paper's broader argument about why disinformation narratives can remain resilient over time. In practical terms, these conditions strengthen the case for proactive and coordinated diplomatic communication measures alongside reactive rebuttals.

Limitations and future research directions

The study relies exclusively on open-source data, public reports and secondary literature. As such, it cannot access classified communications or internal decision-making processes within Romania's diplomatic institutions. Furthermore, the analysis does not include interviews with practitioners or policymakers, which could provide valuable insight into institutional dynamics and internal constraints.

Another limitation is that the study focuses primarily on Romania's response and does not systematically compare it with other frontline states in the region. While this allows for depth, it limits the generalizability of the findings.

Future studies should explore the operational side of diplomatic communication, how strategies are designed, coordinated and implemented within ministries and embassies. Comparative research with countries such as Lithuania, Estonia and Poland may reveal models of successful adaptation to information threats. In addition, integrating perspectives from civil society, media and international partners could provide a more holistic view of the diplomatic ecosystem needed to resist disinformation in the long term.

REFERENCES

- Ahmadly, J. (2022) Overview of NATO and EU's struggle against hybrid threats. *Visnyk NTUU "KPI". Politology. Sociology. Law.* 2(54), 6–11. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/390584912_OVERVIEW_OF_NATO_AND_EU%27S_STRUGGLE_AGAINST_HYBRID_THREATS [Accessed: 19th January 2026].
- Arribas, C.M., Arcos, R., Stoian, V., García-Jiménez, A., Teodor, M., Novăcescu, E. & Surdu, I. (2023) Information manipulation and historical revisionism: Russian disinformation and foreign interference through manipulated history-based narratives. *Open Research Europe* 3, 121. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10509605/> [Accessed: 19th January 2026].
- Bălan, C.-D. (2025) Romania's susceptibility to hybrid threats related to disinformation. *Romanian Military Thinking.* 1, 78–91. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389411703_Romania%27s_Susceptibility_to_Hybrid_Threats_Related_to_Disinformation [Accessed: 19th January 2026].
- EU DisinfoLab (2023) *Disinformation Landscape in Romania* (factsheet). <https://www.disinfo.eu/publications/disinformation-landscape-in-romania/> [Accessed: 19th January 2026].
- European External Action Service (EEAS) (n.d.) *EUvsDisinfo* (website). <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/> [Accessed: 19th January 2026].
- Genini, D. (2025) Countering hybrid threats: How NATO must adapt (again) after the war in Ukraine. *New Perspectives.* 33(2), 122–149.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2336825X251322719> [Accessed: 19th January 2026].

Hybrid CoE (2025) *Countering disinformation in the Euro-Atlantic region: Tools, actors, and strategies* (Research Report 15). Helsinki: European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. https://www.hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Hybrid_CoE_Research_Report_15_Countering_disinformation_Euro_Atlantic.pdf [Accessed: 19th January 2026].

Jungwirth, R., Smith, H., Willkomm, E., Savolainen, J., Alonso Villota, M., Lebrun, M., Aho, A. & Giannopoulos, G. (2023) *Hybrid threats: A comprehensive resilience ecosystem*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC129019> [Accessed: 19 January 2026].

Kralj, L. (2024) Romania: a snapshot of digital skills. *Digital Skills and Jobs Platform* (brief). <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/latest/briefs/romania-snapshot-digital-skills> [Accessed: 19th January 2026].

Lessenski, M. (2023) *Media Literacy Index 2023*. Sofia: Open Society Institute – Sofia. https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MediaLiteracyIndex2023_EN_Final.pdf [Accessed: 19th January 2026].

Munteanu, D. (2025) Euro-Atlantic resilience to disinformation in the digital age: A comparative analysis of existing frameworks. *International Journal of Cyber Diplomacy*, 64, 64–80. https://ijcd.ici.ro/documents/64/Art._D._Munteanu.pdf [Accessed: 19th January 2026].

Patel, S.S., Moncayo, O.E., Conroy, K.M., Jordan, D. & Erickson, T.B. (2020) The landscape of disinformation on health crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine: Hybrid warfare tactics, fake media news and review of evidence. *JCOM: Journal of Science Communication*, 19(5), A02. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8425291/> [Accessed: 19th January 2026].

Pop, A.-M. (2022) Strengthening Romania's resilience to Russian disinformation. In *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Strategies XXI"*, pp. 429–438. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364206777_Strengthening_Romania%27s_resilience_to_Russian_disinformation [Accessed: 19th January 2026].

