



Baltic Engagement
Centre for Combating
Information Disorders

QUARTERLY BRIEF FOR BECID 2

WINTER 2026



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PARTNER ACTIVITIES

Alongside the setup of management structures, BECID partners have actively contributed to strengthening professional networks, advancing investigative skills, and engaging with diverse audiences across the Baltic region and beyond.

Delfi Lithuania (Melo detektorius)

In December 2025, the Lithuanian Innovation Agency published an article highlighting how media organisations across Europe are reinforcing efforts to counter disinformation. The piece featured Delfi Lithuania’s participation in BECID, including insights from Ieva Ivanauskaitė on the role of fact-checking, media responsibility, and the importance of cross-border cooperation. The article also emphasised EU-level support for Delfi-led initiatives as part of a broader European resilience framework.

On 27 January, Aistė Meidutė, editor and lead fact-checker at Melo detektorius, moderated a high-level panel discussion on “Media and AI Literacy – Best Practices and New Frontiers” at the Democracy Matters, Facts Matter conference in Brussels. The conference was jointly organised by the European Parliament, the European Fact-Checking Standards Network, and the European Digital Media Observatory. The discussion brought together representatives of EU institutions, fact-checking organisations, news agencies, and media literacy networks to examine emerging AI-related challenges, policy responses, and practical strategies to strengthen democratic resilience across Europe.

Re:Baltica (Latvia)

In January, Evita Puriņa met with a delegation of members of the German Bundestag to discuss Latvia’s media landscape, focusing on disinformation trends and the rise of populism.

Sanita Jemberga delivered a lecture for upper secondary school students (grades 9–12) on investigative journalism and its role in democratic oversight.

On 27–28 January, Evita Puriņa participated in the joint EFCSN–EDMO–European Parliament conference in Brussels. On 28 January, Sanita Jemberga met with Stephen Clark, Director of the European Parliament Liaison Offices in EU Member States, during his visit to Latvia. Discussions addressed disinformation, fake news, and evolving information environment trends in Latvia and the Baltic region.

On 26 February, Evita Puriņa participated in PROMPT’s closing event in Paris, contributing Baltic perspectives on information resilience and investigative journalism.

University of Tartu (Estonia)

Public lectures, conferences, and expert roles

On 6 December, Maia Klaassen spoke at the Security and Civil Society Conference 2025 in Toila. On 8 December, she participated as a panelist at the conference New Insecurities for Estonia and Europe.

On 11 December, Maria Murumaa-Mengel served as jury member and mentor at the Samsung Student Innovation Competition.

On 19 February, Maia Klaassen represented BECID as a jury member at the Information Resilience Exchange Hackathon in Tallinn.

On 13 February, Maria Murumaa-Mengel conducted two workshops on digital intimacy at a special event at the AHHA Science Centre. On 18 February, she delivered a presentation titled “Social Media as a (Distorted) Mirror of Society?” at the Estonian Supreme Court’s Independence Day ceremony.

Media outreach and public communication

Throughout December, January, and February, **Maria Murumaa-Mengel** gave multiple radio interviews and media commentaries on youth, social media, AI-generated content, online risks, and social media regulation debates. These included discussions on age restrictions for social media use, youth digital habits, and the growing presence of AI-generated content in online environments.

On 10 February, [an in-depth article was published in Postimees Naised](#) highlighting **Inger Klesment**’s work on children’s digital safety and the risks associated with online image-sharing and coercion.

Media literacy training and educational development

On 4 December, Inger Klesment delivered media literacy training at TÜ Rahvaülikool. On 11 December, she conducted a webinar on online games within the Digimentors project. On 14 January, she presented **Estonia’s Media Literacy Development Report (2022–2025)** at a national Media Literacy Network meeting (more on it later).

Maria Murumaa-Mengel contributed to University of Tartu leadership discussions on preventing technologically mediated (sexual) harassment and to supervisors’ training on academic supervision and defence culture (14 January). On 22 January, she delivered presentations in Moldova and within the Women Leaders’ Accelerator programme on social media, disinformation, and digital media literacy.

In February, Inger Klesment and Maria Murumaa-Mengel developed two new educational resources based on student coursework: **“The Information Noise Cookbook”** and **“Monsters in Your Phone”**, designed to support media literacy and critical digital awareness among young audiences.

Delfi Estonia (Faktikontroll)

Delfi Estonia launched **a new video series, “Short Legs”**, focusing on the intersection of AI, technology, and social media. The programme aims to provide constructive guidance and practical tools for navigating rapidly evolving digital environments. The first episode examined how easily fully fabricated images, social media screenshots, and even simulations of trusted news studio settings can be created using AI tools. The initial season is planned to include six episodes. The series is led by **Marta Vunš and Ireene Kilusk**.

On 21 February, [the third episode of “Short Legs”](#) featured Maria Murumaa-Mengel (University of Tartu). The discussion focused on why misinformation spreads particularly effectively during crises, why people tend to believe misleading content on social media, and how individuals can build psychological resilience in the digital environment.

On 20 February, the annual Bonnier Investigative Journalism Prize ceremony took place. Delfi’s investigative and fact-checking newsroom (Martin Laine, Marta Vunš, Mari-Liis Somelar) [was nominated for its investigative series on Russian influence operations published in Eesti Ekspress](#), highlighting continued cross-newsroom collaboration and impact.

Baltic Centre for Media Excellence (Latvia)

In December, the BCME organised two in-person media literacy workshops for library professionals in Liepāja (3 December) and Kuldīga (9 December), within the framework of the BECID project.

Each 2,5-hour session combined theory and practical exercises, aiming to strengthen librarians’ media literacy competencies and provide tools applicable in daily work with diverse audiences. The methodology was developed during the first phase of BECID in cooperation with the University of Tartu and adapted to the Latvian regional context.

The core session, “Media Literacy for Librarians – Theory and Practice,” focused on understanding information flows in digital environments, the role of libraries in supporting access to reliable information, and practical, interactive exercises suitable for working with students and local communities. The workshops were led by media literacy expert Māra Arāja (Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences).

Each event concluded with a moderated discussion on the role and challenges of regional media. In Liepāja, the session was led by Anda Pūce (Kurzemes Vārds / Liepājniekiem.lv), and in Kuldīga by Daiga Bitiniece (Kurzemnieks). Discussions highlighted the importance of local media in shaping the regional information environment and explored cooperation opportunities between libraries and media outlets.

Overall, the workshops strengthened regional library professionals' capacity to implement targeted media literacy initiatives and foster information resilience within their communities.

BECID PROPAWHEEL: NEW HOME AND USE

Since 5 December, the Propawheel has a **new permanent home at the AHHA Science Centre in Tartu**. The interactive tool helps visitors of all ages recognise manipulation techniques in everyday life from social media and advertising to online videos and personal interactions. Updated especially for families and children, the Propawheel now focuses on non-political, everyday manipulation techniques, making it accessible and engaging for a broad audience.

On 21–22 February, the BECID Propawheel appeared at the **Game in Tartu event together with student Killi Agur**. Only this time, the Propawheel was used in a slightly different and innovative way. At the event, Killi presented visitors with six images. Some of them were generated using artificial intelligence, while others were real photographs.

Participants were asked to:

- guess which images were AI-generated and which were real;
- justify their answers on a worksheet;
- discuss their reasoning afterwards.

After completing the worksheet, participants calculated their score (for example, 5 out of 6 correct answers = 5 points). They could then spin the Propawheel to earn bonus points creating a final score.

While the wheel played a more entertainment-focused role this time, it proved to be a highly effective engagement tool. According to Killi, the wheel successfully attracted a wide range of visitors. The wheel created curiosity and lowered the threshold for participation. In this format, the Propawheel demonstrated its flexibility: it can function both as an educational tool and as a gateway to meaningful conversations about digital literacy.

Highlighting this initiative is important for BECID's broader communication strategy. One of the aims of our D4.2 Physical MIL Intervention Guide on Elections is to demonstrate how the Propawheel can be used as a practical, adaptable tool for media and information literacy (MIL) interventions.

After the weekend event, the Propawheel has returned to its current home at the AHHA Science Centre in Tartu, where visitors can continue exploring influence techniques and strengthening their critical thinking skills.

OUTREACH EVENTS

BECID at the HaDEA Cluster event 2025

On December 5, 2025, Gretel represented BECID at the Cluster event for Safer Internet Centres and European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) hubs, organised by the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA).

As the title suggests, the event brought together EDMO hubs and Safer Internet Centres from across the EU, leading to meaningful discussions on policy developments related to social media and children and youth, safer digital practices, and ongoing interventions within the hubs and centres.

As the lead of the discussion room titled “How to Amplify the Effect of Communication Campaigns to Reach Target Audiences,” Gretel presented Baltic best practices, including media literacy and communication initiatives from BECID1, such as the DigiRapid event and the TikTok House. She shared practical materials and lessons learned from BECID’s experience in engaging diverse audiences.

The event also marked the first in-person meeting with the FACT hub, laying the foundation for the ongoing collaboration that BECID has since established with them.

BECID at the HaDEA Showcase

BECID participated in the second **HaDEA Showcase Event in Brussels**, dedicated to EU-funded projects contributing to Europe’s competitiveness and preparedness.

Communications Specialist **Annette Nordmann** represented BECID in a high-level panel discussion, presenting insights from the Baltic region on information resilience, disinformation monitoring, and crisis preparedness. Key challenges highlighted included:

- the speed and cross-border nature of information crises;
- fragmentation in early-warning and response systems;
- gaps between regulation and platform enforcement;
- declining public trust exploited by disinformation actors.

The discussion underscored the role of EU funding in strengthening preparedness through prevention, cross-sector cooperation, and evidence-based approaches. BECID’s work on collaborative platform monitoring, media literacy, and AI-supported verification was presented as an example of how EU-funded initiatives can simultaneously enhance democratic resilience and long-term competitiveness.

BECID also hosted a stand in the **Networking Village**, facilitating exchanges with other EU-funded projects and exploring future collaboration opportunities.

BECID in Moldova

From 20–22 January, BECID experts conducted training sessions at the **State University of Moldova in Chişinău**, focusing on disinformation, foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), and media and information literacy (MIL), with emphasis on curriculum development.

The delegation included **Marju Himma**, **Gretel Juhansoo**, **Maria Murumaa-Mengel**, and **Ragne Kõuts-Klemm** from the University of Tartu.

The three-day programme combined academic and practical perspectives, covering:

- interdisciplinary study programme development (including the “Disinformation and Societal Resilience” Master’s model);
- sociological and data analysis approaches to disinformation;
- the impact of disinformation on local politics and science communication;
- youth media literacy, digital cultures, and AI-driven information manipulation.

The visit aimed to strengthen academic cooperation and support the development of a dedicated study programme in Moldova, in collaboration with local academic and governmental partners. The training emphasised value-based strategic communication, information space analysis, and locally adapted teaching methodologies to build long-term national capacity in countering disinformation.

GLAM-SECTOR WEBINARS: FIRST FINDINGS FROM D4.1

Developing Media Literacy in Memory Institutions (8th of December, 2025)

BECID organised its first official GLAM-sector webinar, bringing together approximately 150 participants from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, including around 60 professionals from Estonia. Discussions focused on how galleries, libraries, archives, and museums currently support media literacy and how they can address emerging information disorders, including digital fraud and AI-generated content.

Participants emphasised the need for:

- practical, easily adaptable tools integrated into daily workflows;
- guidance for working with seniors on digital safety and e-services;
- interactive approaches for youth engagement;
- strengthened staff competencies and clear methodological frameworks.

Insights from University of Tartu student research (D4.1) provided an evidence base for identifying strengths and gaps across Baltic memory institutions. The webinar results will inform the next stages of the GLAM webinar series and targeted support activities.

Culture and Disinformation (2nd of February, 2026)

BECID's second webinar, dedicated to culture and disinformation, gathered 172 participants across the Baltic region.

The session explored how culture functions both as a target of disinformation and as a source of societal resilience. Speakers highlighted how FIMI actors manipulate cultural identity markers – history, language, religion, and shared symbols – using emotionally resonant narratives, humour, and familiar formats to fragment societies and erode trust. At the same time, culture was presented as a powerful resilience mechanism. The arts and the GLAM sector act as trusted storytellers, strengthening social cohesion and enabling critical reflection in emotionally accessible ways.

Breakout sessions featured Baltic case studies:

- **Lithuanian journalist Tomas Valkauskas** demonstrated how documentary storytelling in radio and podcast formats can challenge dominant narratives and amplify diverse voices.
- **Estonian theatre practitioners** discussed the production “Spy Girls” as an example of artistic engagement with information manipulation and ethical dilemmas in hybrid contexts.
- **Latvian cultural representatives** presented participatory art and performance practices that foster critical thinking and narrative awareness in information-disordered environments.

The next GLAM-sector webinar is scheduled for **7 April 2026** and will focus on fraud.

HOT REPORTS

Kremlin-Aligned Influence Operating Inside Estonia

BECID's December Hot Report examines how a Kremlin-aligned propagandist operated for years in central Tallinn with public funding and institutional access, despite repeated national security warnings.

Investigative reporting by Eesti Ekspress revealed that **Oleg Bessedin**, administrator of one of Estonia's largest Russian-language social media platforms (“Tallintšõ”), systematically amplified Kremlin narratives while receiving approximately 800 000 euros from the Tallinn city budget.

Through Facebook (55 000+ followers) and a YouTube network exceeding 200 000 subscribers, nearly 10 000 posts were published over 3,5 years — an estimated 80% echoing pro-Kremlin messaging. Narratives portrayed Ukraine as corrupt and Western-controlled, Russia as a victim seeking peace, and Estonia as a failing, repressive EU state.

Video Games as a Vector of Soft-Power Influence

BECID's January Hot Report examines how Russia increasingly uses video games as instruments of soft power to promote militaristic narratives, distort history, and normalise pro-Kremlin worldviews, particularly among younger audiences.

The report analyses titles such as:

- “Atomic Heart” – subtly romanticising Soviet aesthetics;
- “Smuta” – embedding nationalist historical narratives;
- “Unit 22: ZOV” – openly justifying Russia’s war against Ukraine.

Even where direct state funding is not evident, the immersive and global nature of gaming ecosystems makes them effective vehicles for ideological messaging that is difficult to detect, regulate, or contextualise.

BECID assesses the risk level as medium to high, noting that video games remain a regulatory blind spot within the EU’s disinformation and platform governance frameworks.

Recommendations:

- strengthen critical gaming literacy within media education;
- monitor state-linked cultural and entertainment exports;
- raise awareness among educators, parents, and policymakers of entertainment-based narrative laundering;
- consider gaming ecosystems within broader hybrid threat assessments.

BECID DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

BECID’s Data Management Plan (DMP) defines how project data are collected, stored, processed, and shared in compliance with FAIR principles, GDPR, and the BECID Ethics Report (D1.3).

Data Types

The project generates and processes:

- Platform data accessed via APIs (e.g. social media platforms).
- Expert interviews with policymakers, journalists, researchers, and practitioners.
- Secondary datasets (e.g. anonymised platform exports).
- Analytical outputs, including reports, datasets, visualisations, and training materials.
- Data formats include standard machine-readable files (JSON, XML, CSV), audio recordings (MP3/WAV), transcripts (DOCX/PDF), and analytical outputs (PDF/XLSX/HTML).

Data Storage and Security

Interview data are collected under informed consent and stored securely in the University

of Tartu's protected cloud environment (OwnCloud), with encryption and role-based access control.

- Raw audio files are accessible only to the core research team.
- Transcripts are pseudonymised before wider internal use.
- Only anonymised or aggregated findings are shared publicly.

Data is retained for the project duration plus five years, after which they are deleted unless explicit archival consent has been obtained.

FAIR and Ethical Compliance

Findable & Interoperable: Metadata standards (e.g. Dublin Core/DataCite) and machine-readable formats ensure structured documentation.

Accessible: Access is restricted according to data sensitivity; public dissemination includes only non-sensitive outputs.

Reusable: Only anonymised or pseudonymised data may be reused under controlled conditions and participant consent.

All data processing complies with GDPR and platform terms of service. The University of Tartu acts as data controller, with Work Package leaders responsible for data quality and compliance within their tasks. The DMP is a living document and will be updated as the project evolves.

SECTION OF INTEREST: Estonia's Media Literacy Report 2022–2025: BECID's role in Estonia

Published in early 2026, the [Estonia's Media Literacy Report 2022–2025](#) provides a timely assessment of the country's preparedness in an increasingly complex information environment. Its findings confirm that Estonia operates in a security context where influence operations are systematic, adaptive, and cross-platform. Democratic processes are shaped not only by isolated info manipulation trends, but by coordinated campaigns that combine information disorders to exploit societal vulnerabilities.

The report highlights structural differences in media consumption and trust across linguistic and demographic groups, including Estonian-speaking, Russian-speaking, and Ukrainian communities. Without sustained coordination and evidence-based policy responses, these differences can be instrumentalised by hostile actors seeking to amplify division and undermine trust.

Regional monitoring conducted by BECID demonstrates that foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) campaigns are strategic and data-informed ([read more in the Journal of the Estonian Parliament 52nd issue, page 129–136](#)).

They frequently intensify during elections, geopolitical crises, or other high-attention moments, when information overload and emotional polarisation reduce the public's ability to critically assess narratives.

The report's integration of media literacy into Estonia's broader security and resilience frameworks reflects a necessary policy evolution. Resilience cannot rely solely on reactive measures. Media literacy must be understood not as an isolated educational objective, but as part of democratic defence and societal preparedness.

Estonia has developed a capable ecosystem contributing to MIL: ministries, educational institutions, researchers, public service media, libraries, civil society organisations, and independent journalism. The report recognises this cross-sector foundation while also identifying challenges related to sustainability and coordination. Fragmentation, short-term funding cycles, and uneven outreach to vulnerable audiences can limit long-term impact.

Particularly important is the report's identification of underserved groups, including NEET youth and communities beyond formal education structures. While media literacy is embedded in national curricula and teacher training, resilience gaps remain in informal digital environments shaped by platform algorithms. Policy responses must therefore extend beyond classrooms to include community-level engagement, platform dynamics, and systemic safeguards. That's why BECID has dedicated its 2025–2028 MIL activities to the GLAM-sector, providing [webinars](#), [materials](#), and carrying out [interventions](#) in different GLAM institutions across the Baltic states.

At the same time, structural shifts in [platform governance](#) complicate the landscape. Automated moderation systems (read BECID's commentary in [Quarterly Brief 1](#)), opaque algorithmic prioritisation, and reduced human oversight influence the visibility of credible journalism and the amplification of manipulative content. Educational interventions alone cannot offset these structural effects. Effective resilience requires coordinated monitoring, regulatory dialogue, and alignment with European policy frameworks.

Structured cooperation at the European level is therefore indispensable. As a regional hub within the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), BECID supports cross-border research, comparative analysis, and coordinated responses to disinformation trends across the Baltic region. The Media Literacy Report underscores that international knowledge exchange and alignment with European standards strengthen national capacity and ensure that strategies remain evidence-based and interoperable.

For policymakers, the implications are clear. Estonia possesses strong institutional foundations in media literacy. The strategic task now is consolidation: embedding MIL within long-term funding frameworks, ensuring inter-ministerial coordination, strengthening links between research and policy, and maintaining active engagement with European networks.

Media literacy should be treated as strategic infrastructure. Sustained, coordinated, and continuously evaluated. In an information environment where influence operations are transnational and adaptive, resilience must be equally systematic and forward-looking.