



UNIVERSITY OF TARTU



Disinformation and Societal Resilience

Defending Democracies
in the Digital Age

One-year MA programme

Empower Democracies

Join the Fight Against Disinformation

Misinformation and hostile information operations pose threats to the stability and functioning of democratic societies. The events of 24 February 2022, have made this painfully clear.

Recognizing these challenges, the University of Tartu has created a **unique master's programme for 20 select students**. Drawing on expertise in communication, law, psychology, sociology, data science, and regional studies, this programme will equip you to combat disinformation effectively.

If you are passionate about safeguarding free societies and seeking to augment your professional toolkit with the most advanced academic and practical skills available, this is your opportunity. **Spend a year in Estonia**, a recognized security expert especially in the current geopolitical context, and **prepare yourself for the next decade of defending democracies**.

In Estonia, you'll find **deep expertise in Russian studies and top-tier knowledge of cybersecurity in a digital state**, with the University of Tartu playing a crucial role in disseminating this knowledge. However, this one-year master's programme isn't confined to the classroom; it includes a **four-week internship with leading institutions in the field**. Some examples include the strategic communications team at the Estonian Government Office and the Baltic Engagement Center for Information Disorders (part of the EDMO network).

Additionally, this programme offers the chance to **develop a trusted international network of professionals**—colleagues you can learn from throughout your career.

Spend a year in Estonia where you'll find deep expertise in Russian studies and top-tier knowledge of cybersecurity in a digital state.



Building of the Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Tartu

Recommended by leaders



A key issue for democracies now and in the years to come is how to protect and foster unity within societies while navigating between the digital and the physical space. We in Estonia, at the front line of democracy, have long been aware of Russia's hybrid tactics. They try to influence political and social choices and undermine trust within free societies. And not only within but also between our societies – one of Russia's long-term goals is also to undermine unity between Allies. Education and cooperation have been the key in addressing these challenges.

I am proud of my alma mater for creating a designated master's programme that helps to grow a network of international specialists armed with top expertise in combating disinformation.

Kaja Kallas

Prime Minister of Estonia, alumna of University of Tartu

As our societies become increasingly digital, so do the threats we face. The University of Tartu is addressing the need for a programme that takes on the challenge of protecting individuals and societies from disinformation designed to polarize and sow confusion. We have 20 spots available for select students, who will form an international team of experts. You will be guided by the best of the best. Don't miss this opportunity – I strongly encourage you to apply.

Aune Valk

Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, University of Tartu



Spreading malicious disinformation has become a powerful tool of chaos in the hands of undemocratic forces. It is of utmost importance to grow the resilience of our societies to withstand these attacks of false information and manipulation. I am glad that University of Tartu is now offering a unique opportunity to learn from Estonia's vast experience and cutting edge research to tackle these issues with the best skill set available.

Margus Tsahkna

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

Build a Career in Defending Democracies

All graduates of the Disinformation and Societal Resilience programme will be experts in a rapidly evolving field with fresh career opportunities. As a programme graduate, your specialized skill set will be in demand across all sectors, public, private, and non-profit.

Whether you see your future at a think tank, NGO, in public administration, defence, the media, or in education, your expertise in strategic communication, policy analysis, impact assessment, cybersecurity, and media and information literacy will empower you to drive meaningful change.

With this degree, you won't just be reacting to the day's challenges, you will be helping to shape the future of democratic societies worldwide.



This Programme is for You, if...

...you are passionate about democratic values and are looking for new ways to protect and foster them.

...you are looking for practical skills and knowledge you can adapt to evidence-based action.

...the issue of building and maintaining societal resilience is a matter of professional necessity.

...you are aiming to become a leader in the field of digital resilience and disinformation prevention.



Navigating Your Studies

The Programme Schedule

Compulsory courses

36 ECTS

Theoretical and analytical framework for data-driven research and interventions

FEBRUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2024

Introduction to disinformation and influence activities	9 ECTS
Resilience analysis and practice	9 ECTS
Cyber risks and information security	9 ECTS
JUNE-AUGUST 2024 Summer break	
Geopolitical context and policy analysis	9 ECTS

Internship

9 ECTS

Partners at the forefront of combating information manipulation

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2024

Estonian Government Office <i>or</i> NATO's stratcom CoE <i>or</i> BECID (Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders)	9 ECTS
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Master's Exam

15 ECTS

Practical projects supervised by experienced teachers

SEPTEMBER 2024 TO JANUARY 2025

Master's Exam I: Practical skills and Preparation	3 ECTS
Master's Exam II: Execution of MA Project	12 ECTS

Comprehensive Courses

From understanding media to geopolitical context analysis

Our curriculum is divided into four distinct courses, 9 ECTS each.

Introduction to Disinformation and Influence Activities

- Orientation and terminology
- Understanding media and social media
- Information disorder, influence, and strategic narratives
- Countering information influence activities

Resilience Analysis and Practice

- Societal resilience analysis
- Social cohesion and conflict sources
- Trust as a social indicator, civil society's impact on societal resilience
- Economic context and vulnerability sources

Cyber Risks and Information Security

- Risk perception and social cybersecurity
- Malicious actors, threats, and consequences
- Cyberspace governance
- Information security

Geopolitical Context and Policy Analysis

- International relations
- Russia and Eurasia in contemporary world politics
- Security politics
- Policy analysis

Diverse Learning Methods

We pride ourselves on employing a diverse range of teaching techniques. From lectures and seminars to interactive workshops and group projects, we ensure an engaging, dynamic learning environment.



Individual tasks



Group work



Seminars



Lectures



Workshops



Presentations

Local Focus

Programme is designed to allow students to explore issues specific to their country of origin.

Learn from Experts

Academic competence to tackle real-life problems

Ragne Kõuts-Klemm

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN
THE SOCIOLOGY OF
JOURNALISM



Focuses on media systems and audience research. She engages in extensive international collaboration in the fields of media usage and media systems.

Sten Hansson

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF
COMMUNICATION

An internationally recognised expert in political and crisis communication. His research focuses on political blame games, government communication, and disinformation.

Maia Klaassen

JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOW
IN MEDIA LITERACY



Specializes in information disorders. She trains the third sector in media and information literacy and is involved in producing gamified materials for these subjects.

Mari-Liis Madisson

SEMIOTICS RESEARCHER



Concentrates on cultural, media, and political semiotics. Her academic work covers topics such as conspiracy theories, characteristics of online communication, and information operations.

Maria Murumaa-Mengel

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF
MEDIA STUDIES



Explores how young people interact with social media, different forms of literacy, information resilience, and online risks. She offers a rich understanding of methodological and ethical considerations in researching sensitive topics.

Learn from Experts

Academic competence to tackle real-life problems

Andra Siibak

PROFESSOR OF MEDIA STUDIES



Investigates opportunities and risks surrounding internet use, cyber risks and harms (e.g. fake news, deepfakes, social engineering scams, phishing, surveillance and privacy issues), intergenerational relationships on social media, new media audiences, and privacy.

Heiko Pääbo

LECTURER IN POLITICS OF BALTIC SEA REGION COUNTRIES



Focuses on the foreign policy of small countries (primarily the Baltic states) and collective memory conflicts, with a main emphasis on areas of the former Russian empire.

Thomas Linsenmaier

ANALYST IN POLITICAL SCIENCE



Has an interest in International Relations theory, particularly the English School tradition, and issues related to European integration.

Andreas Ventsel

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN SEMIOTICS



Leads research projects on strategic historical narratives and strategic communication in the context of the Ukrainian war. His main research interests are political semiotics, cultural semiotics, online communication, and power relation research.

Internship: Where Theory Meets Practice

The thrill and challenges of combating information disorders firsthand during a one-month internship

This opportunity will not only deepen your understanding but also expand your professional network, fostering invaluable connections for your future career. The university offers guidance to help students secure internships that best align with their profile and individual interests. We're excited to reveal some of the organizations where you'll have the opportunity to showcase your skills:



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
GOVERNMENT OFFICE

The Government Office of the Republic of Estonia

This key institution supports the work of the government and the Estonian Prime Minister. Its strategic communications team plays a vital role in planning and coordinating the state's strategic messages. One of its core functions is to safeguard the democratic constitutional order of the country and enhance the resilience of Estonian society. It actively monitors and defends against information operations, working diligently to halt the spread of malicious disinformation.



Baltic Engagement
Centre for Combating
Information Disorders

Baltic Engagement Center for Information Disorders

BECID is part of a pan-European EDMO network combating harmful misinformation. For these networks to be effective, each country needs to be strong in its own right. This requires professionals. Neither the EU nor NATO's charter permits direct involvement with this issue, making it crucial for experts to emerge within each country to address this problem internally.

Estonia

A Global Leader in Digital Democracy and Cybersecurity

Estonia shines as a digital society champion, reflected in its strong positions in numerous global rankings. Excelling in media literacy and freedom, internet freedom, democracy, digital public services, and cybersecurity, Estonia embodies the seamless fusion of digital progress and democratic values. With its notable third place in e-participation globally, Estonia solidifies its commitment to citizen-centered digital governance. These achievements highlight Estonia as a leader in digital democracy and cybersecurity.

Media literacy

#4 in Europe

Open Society Institute Sofia (2022)

Media freedom

#8 globally

Reporters Sans Frontières (2023)

Internet Freedom

#2

Freedom House (2022)

Democracy

#1 in region

Freedom House (2022)

Digital public services

#1 in EU

European Commission (2022)

E-participation

#3 in world

UN (2022)

Global Cyber Security Index

#1

International Telecommunications Union (2020)



Tartu: Your Home Away from Home

You'll be staying in Tartu, a true university town. It's a bustling hub of students and a perfect nest for science-based startups.

You'll find that it's cozy here, with delightful cafes, beautiful parks, old wooden houses, with everything you need just a leisurely walk or bike ride away. Tartu has a vibrant rhythm.

There's always something happening, from cultural events to academic gatherings to social activities. These experiences will lead to

unexpected meetings, enduring friendships, and an enriched understanding of diverse perspectives.

In the field of combating disinformation and building societal resilience, some discussions are too sensitive for just digital interaction. Tartu is therefore an ideal setting for creating a closely-knit team of experts, where the sharing of delicate information becomes feasible, and thrust thrives organically.

In Tartu, you'll learn the value of being physically present in shaping dialogues, forming alliances, and creating solutions.



The University of Tartu, founded in 1632, stands among the top 1% of the world's best universities.

Source: QS World University Rankings 2023,
Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023

The University of Tartu is recognized in the top 1% of the world's most-cited universities and research institutions.

Source: ISI Web of Science

Much of this prestige is attributed to groundbreaking research in media and communication.



Entry Requirements

A successful candidate will have:

1. bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification and at least 5 years of professional experience *or* master's degree or equivalent qualification
2. passed the TOEFL or equivalent English test

Applications are evaluated based on

- score of the motivation letter (50% of the final score)
- admission interview (50% of the final score)

Tuition Fees and Available Waivers

The total tuition fee for the programme amounts to 14,000 EUR.

We offer several tuition waivers to ease your financial commitment:

- 8 tuition waivers are exclusively available to citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.
- 2 tuition waivers are available for Estonian citizens.

Please note that only twenty students will be accepted to the programme.

The development of this curriculum is supported by the Embassy of the United States of America and the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND RESEARCH



Need More Information? Contact Us!

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Detailed information of the programme:

<https://ut.ee/en/curriculum/disinformation-and-societal-resilience>