

Polish Parliamentary Elections followed through Facebook

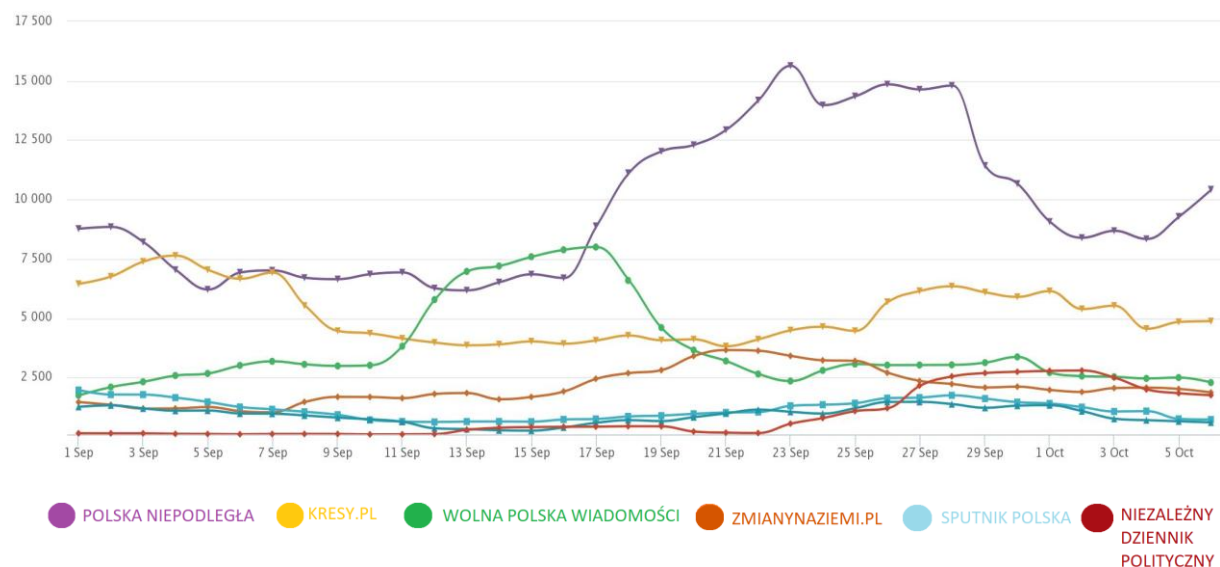
DISINFORMATION CHANNELS

The most popular disinformation pages on Facebook

The initial monitoring¹ regarding pro-Kremlin disinformation and propaganda in the context of the election to the Polish parliament shows that so far there is less activity in this regard than during the campaign in the run-up to the European Parliament elections. Could this be to the predictability of the outcome?

Page Storytellers (PTAT)

The number of people talking about your Page, by story type



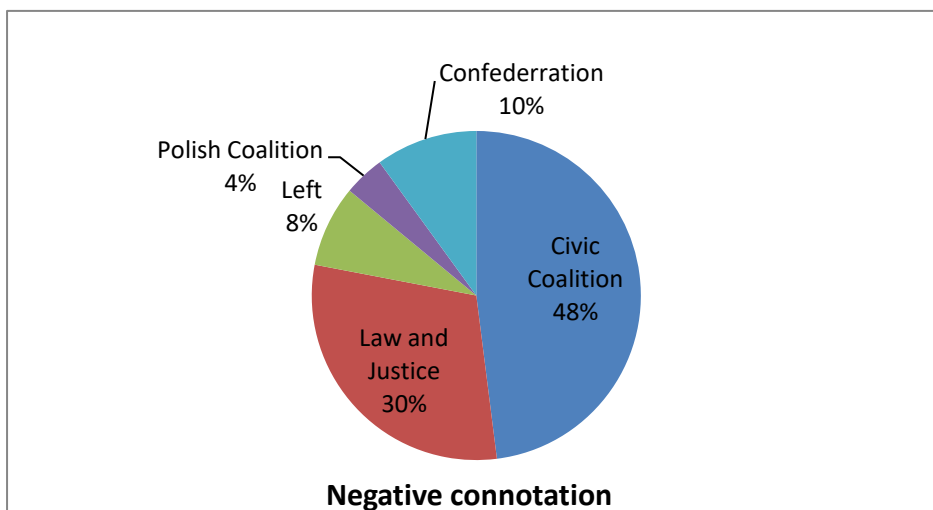
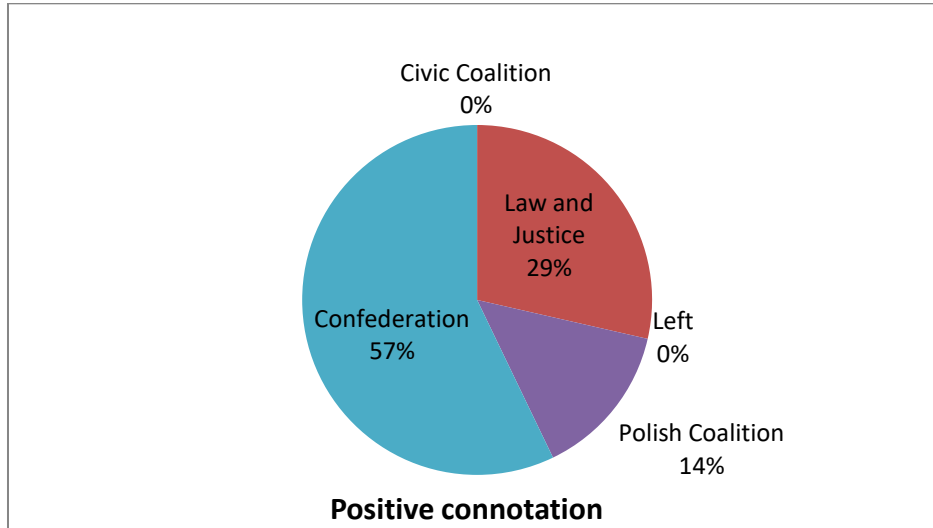
The graph above shows the popularity of the 6 most popular channels on Facebook (out of 14 analysed) known for propagating pro-Kremlin narratives and disinformation content one week before parliamentary elections in Poland.² One week prior to election day, both parties/coalitions leading in the polls are being targeted with negative comments on Facebook. Civic Coalition (Koalicja Obywatelska), which is second in all of the available polls, was portrayed negatively 24 times, while the favourite to win on the 13th of October - the

¹ Based on data from *ZoomSphere*, we identified the 14 most relevant pro-Kremlin disinformation channels in Poland on Facebook based on the following criteria: the number of fans, the number of people talking about the page (see below), and information provided about the parliamentary campaign. Facebook pages were monitored, excluding those officially or unofficially linked to specific candidates. 121 posts relevant to the Polish parliamentary elections were analysed within the timeframe of September 1 – October 6, 2019.

² For more information regarding disinformation cases see: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-cases/>

ruling Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) party, received 15 negative posts from the analysed channels. Other parties/coalitions were almost ignored by the monitored outlets.

PARTIES/COALITIONS



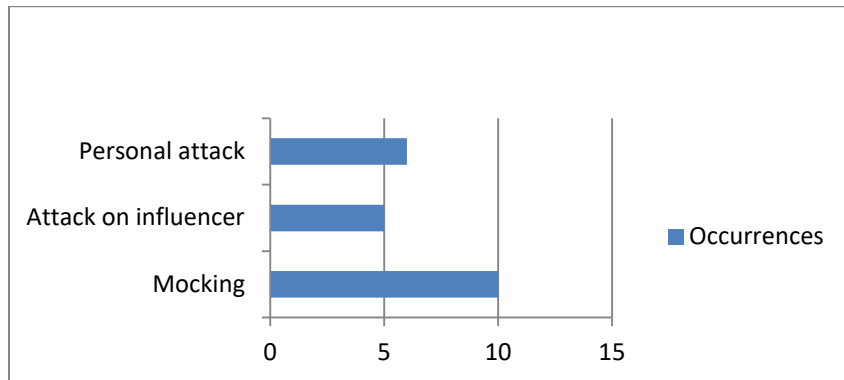
Most popular manipulation techniques

While the number of particular narratives is rather negligible in terms of their quantity and impact, the most prevalent manipulation technique used by the analysed disinformation Facebook pages concerning the upcoming parliamentary election, involves mocking particular candidates (10 posts) or attacking them personally (6 posts).³ As Independent

³ There is a subtle, yet distinguishable difference between the following narratives: "mocking", "personal attack" and "attack on influencer". "Mocking" narrative is less aggressive than "personal attack" narrative and often its goal is to ridicule the opponent. "Personal attack" is more direct in its criticism. An "attack on influencer" narrative includes posts attacking actors and celebrities known for their political preferences.

Poland (Polska Niepodległa) was the most active channel using this method⁴, Independent Political Daily (Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny) published several posts with suggestive titles implying that it has discovered a scandalous and shocking story⁵. An emotional headline often supported by an exclamation mark is a common feature of disinformation outlets.⁶

OCCURENCES



The data was collected between 1.9.2019 and 6.10.2019 from 14 relevant Facebook pages, identified as producing disinformation content and pro-Kremlin narratives: Sputnik Polska, Niezależny Dziennik Polityczny, Wolna Polska Wiadomości, Kresy.pl, Xportal.pl, namzalezy.pl, NEon24, zmianynaziemi.pl, Wolna Polska, Anonymous Info Army Poland, konserwatyzm.pl, Alternews.pl, Stowarzyszenie Klub Inteligencji Polskiej, and Polska Niepodległa. The data was filtered through the term 'wybor' ('election'), and then labelled based on the sentiment toward a party/coalition and the most prevalent narratives/manipulation techniques identified. This report will be followed by a more in-depth study in November, which will cover the whole period of the electoral campaign and the result, as well as a network map of the analysed disinformation Facebook pages.

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⁴ See: <https://www.facebook.com/PolskaNiepodlegla/posts/1689443151187232> or <https://www.facebook.com/PolskaNiepodlegla/posts/1688661301265417>.

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/NiezaleznyDziennikPolityczny/posts/1546091115597376>

⁶ For more see: <http://mythbusters.csm.org.pl/index.php/guide/>