EK Strategic Communications Center

Kremlin FIMI Weekly October 2026

The Battle for Russian-Speaking Voters in Latvia's 2026 Election

Investigations as persecution, criticism as betrayal, officials as deceivers

Sasha Starost, Egor Kuroptev

ekstrategies.org

EK Strategic Communications Center

EK Stratcom is a nexus of information, policy, and resilience in Eurasia and beyond. We provide expertise in strategic communications, analyze and shape key narratives, and support vulnerable societies.

Drawing on 20+ years of experience in media, GR, and PR, and over 12 years in analysis and strategic communications, EK Stratcom is built around a core team of exiled Russian professionals.

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, EK Stratcom has served as a key mechanism for real-time disinformation monitoring, analytical reporting, and targeted messaging — reaching millions inside Russia and advising Western governments on Kremlin FIMI operations.

ekstrategies.org

About authors



Sasha Starost

Analyst & Briefings Specialist

Political activist and interpreter forced to flee Russia in 2022. Since joining Egor Kuroptev's team in 2022, she has monitored Kremlin narratives in Western and European media, as well as disinformation targeting women and children in Russia.





Egor Kuroptev

Director & Chief Strategist

Russian exiled media manager and political expert with over 20 years of experience in communications, democratic development, and countering disinformation.



Table of contents

Executive Summary 6

Promoting the Alliance, Discrediting Its Rivals 8

Political Controversies as Persecution 12

The Battle for the Russian-Speaking Vote 16

Sources 18

Since early September, Russian FIMI channels have intensified election-related messaging ahead of Latvia's October 3 parliamentary election. Their coverage has combined the promotion of Sovereign Power / Alliance of Young Latvians with allegations of political persecution, attacks on Latvian institutions, and efforts to discredit rivals competing for Russian-speaking votes.

Key topics:

1. Promoting the Alliance, Discrediting Its Rivals
2. Political Controversies as Persecution
3. The Battle for the Russian-Speaking Vote

Executive Summary

Ahead of Latvia's October 3 parliamentary election, monitored FIMI actors amplified campaign materials for Sovereign Power / Alliance of Young Latvians (Suverēnā vara / Apvienība Jaunlatvieši), attacked electoral rivals, and portrayed scrutiny of the alliance as political persecution. Their messaging linked the representation of Russian-speaking voters to broader accusations against Latvia's political establishment, security services, and media.

InfoDefense Latvia, part of the international FIMI network run by Russian propagandist Yuri Podolyaka, published an endorsement of the alliance's list by Aleksandrs Gaponenko, a Latvia-based activist whose organization previously received funding from Russia's Russkiy Mir Foundation. The FIMI channel Criminal Latvia distributed campaign material featuring Latvian Russian Union candidate Jūlija Sohina.

In an article published by the Russian-language outlet Revers Press and redistributed by the FIMI channel Baltic Bridge, author Raivis Siliņš accused parties courting Russian-speaking voters of seeking to "collect Russian votes in the elections and then deprive Russians of a voice in real life," presenting Sovereign Power as the exception. Russian propagandist and former Latvian politician Andrejs Mamikins attacked Boriss Cilevičs, a former Latvian parliamentarian who had criticized Sovereign Power, using antisemitic insinuations:

> "Borya, why don't you go to Israel? Russians in Latvia will somehow manage without you."

Political scrutiny was recast as persecution. Following an investigation into financial transfers from her father, whose company supplied anti-tank barriers to the Russian military,

Sovereign Power leader Jūlija Stepaņenko told Russian state-controlled Sputnik Latvia:

> "It seems we have reached 1939, when people start asking questions about my parents."

Following damage to a Soviet military memorial, the FIMI channel Shadows of the Baltics alleged that Nazism was "tacitly, and sometimes quite openly, supported by the ruling elite."

The Kremlin's multilingual Pravda (Portal Kombat) network misrepresented a statement by Latvia's State Security Service (VDD) about election interference. The FIMI channel Latvian Balm mocked the agency's assessment:

> "There is no Russian interference in the elections, but we will keep scaring people."

Aleksejs Stefanovs, a long-time Sputnik contributor and pro-Kremlin activist who received funding from the Russian foundation Pravfond, published allegations against For Stability! (Stabilitātei!) leader Aleksejs Rosļikovs, currently based in Belarus and previously warned by the VDD over statements to Russian and Belarusian propaganda outlets. Stefanovs explicitly urged voters to consider the allegations when casting their ballots. The FIMI channels Baltic Antifascists, Shadows of the Baltics, Latvian Hillock, and Baltic Bridge redistributed his publication.

> By portraying investigations as persecution, criticism as betrayal, and official assessments as deliberate deception, these publications challenged the sources through which voters could independently evaluate political claims. The resulting narrative presented loyalty to Russian-speaking voters as a criterion of political legitimacy, while casting competing politicians and Latvian institutions as potential adversaries.

Promoting the Alliance, Discrediting Its Rivals

Ahead of Latvia's October 3 parliamentary election, FIMI channels amplified the alliance candidates' campaign messages, favorable commentary by former politicians, and attacks on the alliance's electoral rivals. Their coverage reveals interactions between the Sovereign Power / Alliance of Young Latvians (Suverēnā vara / Apvienība Jaunlatvieši) electoral list and a wider pro-Kremlin media ecosystem.

> The joint electoral list of Sovereign Power and the Alliance of Young Latvians includes candidates from the Latvian Russian Union (Latvijas Krievu savienība).

The party's former leader, Tatjana Ždanoka, was the subject of a 2024 investigation by The Insider[1] and Re:Baltica.[2] Based on leaked correspondence, the investigation reported that Ždanoka had maintained contact with officers of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) from at least 2004 to 2017 and had sought funding for political activities. Ždanoka denied working for Russian intelligence.

> Not all coverage by channels in the monitored ecosystem was favorable to Sovereign Power.

On September 25, European Latvia, a channel connected[3] with the InfoDefense network, part of the international FIMI network run by Russian propagandist Yuri Podolyaka, reported that the governing New Unity (Jaunā Vienotība) party had asked[4] Prosecutor General Armīns Meisters to examine Sovereign Power's activities and to consider dissolution proceedings if violations were established. The request cited the party's program, the Latvian Russian Union candidates on its electoral list, and reported financial transfers from Sergejs Fedotovs, the father

of Sovereign Power leader Jūlija Stepaņenko and a Russia-based businessman whose company produced anti-tank "dragon's teeth" for the Russian military.

> European Latvia reproduced[5] these allegations and Stepaņenko's responses without adding commentary or explicitly defending the alliance.

On September 28 and 30, the Latvian Russian Union publicly promoted two of its board members running on the joint electoral list: Riga City Council member Jūlija Sohina[6] and Anna Bondere,[7] a longtime party activist who previously headed its electoral list in Mārupe. In July, Andrejs Pagors, a Latvian Russian Union board member and Jelgava City Council member who heads the alliance's list in Zemgale, a constituency in southern Latvia, had already identified[8] the Latvian Russian Union, Sovereign Power, the Alliance of Young Latvians, and the Christian Party (Kristīgā partija) as participants in the alliance. His announcement was republished[9] by European Latvia.

The FIMI channel Criminal Latvia published[10] a campaign video for Sohina. The Riga candidate criticized changes to Latvia's school assessment rules and appealed directly to voters:

> "Support our list, No. 1. My number on the list is 6. We advocate reversing poorly conceived education reforms."

As early as September 2, InfoDefense Latvia published[11] an endorsement of the joint list by Latvia-based pro-Kremlin activist Aleksandrs Gaponenko,[12] whose Institute of European Studies received funding from the Kremlin-established Russkiy Mir Foundation. Gaponenko praised the inclusion of Latvian Russian Union candidates and named Pagors, Bondere, Aleksandrs Klapins, Sohina, and Inna Djeri among those he would support:

> "I will campaign for them among prisoners and everyone who reads me."

InfoDefense added its own commentary attacking For Stability! (Stabilitātei!), a rival party competing for Russian-speaking votes. It accused the party of "deliberately pulling the blanket toward itself, taking away part of the Russian vote" to prevent those votes from going to Sovereign Power, while also alleging that Latvian security services protected For Stability! and that its leader, Aleksejs Rosļikovs, had informed on Russian-speaking activists.

In the latest SKDS poll,[13] conducted on September 4–16, Sovereign Power / Alliance of Young Latvians ranked second with 9.4% support, while For Stability! received 2.8%. These figures provide electoral context for attempts to portray For Stability! as a spoiler diverting Russian-speaking votes from the alliance.

On September 26, Andrejs Mamikins, a former Latvian Member of the European Parliament turned Russian propagandist,[14] published a personal attack on former Latvian parliamentarian Boriss Cilevičs on his Mamikins TV[15] Telegram channel after Cilevičs criticized[16] Sovereign Power in The Insider. Mamikins accused Cilevičs of having done "NOTHING for Russians" during his political career, while praising Sovereign Power for defending Russian speakers, traditional families, and good relations with Russia and Belarus. The post also contained antisemitic insinuations: Mamikins introduced Cilevičs by mentioning his sister's Israeli citizenship and ended the post with

> "Borya, why don't you go to Israel? Russians in Latvia will somehow manage without you."

He further alleged, without evidence, that The Insider was funded by "Anglo-Saxon intelligence services" and suggested that COVID-19 vaccinations had damaged Cilevičs's brain.

In a September 28 article published[17] by the Russian-language outlet Revers Press and republished[18] by the Baltic-focused FIMI channel Baltic Bridge, Raivis Siliņš, who ran on a joint Sovereign Power / Alliance of Young Latvians list in the 2025 municipal

elections, described Latvia's political parties as factions of a single "Big Latvian Party," claiming that "the differences between them are insignificant." He alleged that the task assigned to parties appealing to Russian-speaking voters was to

> "collect Russian votes in the elections and then deprive Russians of a voice in real life."

He identified Sovereign Power / Alliance of Young Latvians as "the only exception," arguing that it relied on the "wrong" Russian votes. The article offered no evidence that political competition was managed in this way.

> By portraying rival parties as instruments of the Latvian establishment while treating Sovereign Power as an exception, parts of the FIMI ecosystem narrow political competition to a choice between supposedly authentic representation and betrayal.

This framing allows campaign promotion to operate through ostensibly independent commentary, without requiring evidence of direct coordination between the channels and the party.

Political Controversies as Persecution

On September 30, Russian state-controlled Sputnik Latvia published[19] an interview in which Stepaņenko portrayed the indefinite entry ban imposed on her father, Fedotovs, by Foreign Minister Baiba Braže on September 24 as an electoral attack by New Unity.

> "New Unity is now hovering around the 5% threshold, while we are gaining popularity and support. To attract voters, they need an enemy. They have chosen one of Latvia's strongest parties for that role," Stepaņenko claimed.

She also compared the scrutiny of her family to political repression: "It seems we have reached 1939, when people start asking questions about my parents. I am very proud of my father and will never disown him." Sputnik centered its coverage on Stepaņenko's accusation that New Unity was manufacturing a political enemy, rather than on the reported financial relationship between father and daughter. The Baltic-focused FIMI channel Sprats in Exile reproduced[20] her statements the same day.

On September 30, Sputnik Latvia published[21] commentary by Russian propagandist Ruslans Pankratovs. In 2023, he fled Latvia[22] while facing criminal proceedings on charges of inciting ethnic hatred against Ukrainians on social media and violating EU sanctions.[23] He now heads the Baltic division of Russia's Institute of CIS Countries[24] and works[25] for Russian propaganda outlets. In his commentary, Pankratovs accused Latvian political strategists of introducing a policy of "family archives" and "guilt by association," arguing that

> "family ties are already grounds for accusation, while blood relations are supposed to replace evidence."

Referring to the investigation into Stepaņenko's father, he claimed that "a concrete block is immediately turned into a pre-election cudgel against the owner's daughter." Sputnik presented Fedotovs's production of anti-tank barriers as a "defensive measure for Russia's Belgorod region."

Pagors also backed Stepaņenko's allegations of intimidation by sharing[26] a September 28 post[27] by European Latvia. According to the post,

> "Stepaņenko previously stated that there had been three incidents involving intruders at her home in August and September. She linked these incidents to rival politicians."

The post also reported her allegations of repeated threats from visitors to her party's campaign stand. Latvian police opened two criminal investigations,[28] into deliberate property damage and attempted burglary, but had not publicly identified the perpetrators or established a political motive.

On September 30, Pagors published[29] a video reporting damage to a Soviet military memorial near Čaukstes, in Daugmale, where 73 Red Army soldiers are buried. Before the perpetrators or their motives had been established, Pagors declared:

> "Not all Nazis were killed in the war. Unfortunately, decades later, there are still those who continue to wage war even against the dead."

Sputnik Latvia,[30] Sprats in Exile,[31] Latvian Hillock,[32] Baltnews,[33] and Shadows of the Baltics[34] circulated the story. Shadows of the Baltics went further, alleging that the Latvian government tolerated such acts:

> "Since those responsible for this act of vandalism will almost certainly not be found or punished [...] the conclusion is obvious. Nazism has not only been revived in Latvia but is also tacitly, and sometimes quite openly, supported by the ruling elite."

On September 28–29, Aleksejs Stefanovs,[35] a long-time Sputnik contributor and pro-Kremlin activist, and InfoDefense Latvia[36] published similar accounts of a commemoration attended by National Alliance politicians near former Latvian Legion positions in Sigulda Municipality. InfoDefense declared:

> "This weekend, Latvian politicians once again showed that Nazis are their heroes," describing the commemoration as "another election campaign event at the mass graves of Latvian SS soldiers."

In a separate September 30 publication, InfoDefense characterized[37] Latvia's National Guard as "Azov with a Latvian accent," alleging that its enemy was "the Russian residents of their own country."

On September 28, Pravda LV, part of the multilingual Pravda FIMI network, reported[38] that Latvian intelligence services had "acknowledged the absence of Russian influence on the Saeima elections."

In fact, the statement[39] by Latvia's State Security Service (VDD) had found no significant systematic attempts by Russia or other states hostile to Latvia to influence the election in favor of particular parties or candidates, but it had identified individual attempts to disseminate election-related disinformation. On September 29, Latvian Balm, a FIMI Telegram channel, mocked[40] the assessment:

> "State Security Service: 'There is no Russian interference in the elections, but we will keep scaring people.'"

On September 29, Pravda LV also attacked[41] reporting on election-related FIMI and the appearance of FIMI narratives in AI-generated answers.

> "Ahead of the parliamentary elections, Latvian officials decided to find out what people were writing about them online – and were apparently very annoyed," the publication claimed. "They started calling everything that didn't fit their agenda 'pro-Kremlin' media."

Pravda LV alleged that the reporting had been commissioned and paid for, and presented the AI-generated repetition of these narratives as confirmation of their credibility.

> By presenting political scrutiny as persecution and allegations against Latvian institutions as established facts, these channels seek to undermine trust in independent investigations and election oversight. This allows them to promote favored candidates while discrediting the institutions and reporting that challenge their narratives.

The Battle for the Russian-Speaking Vote

On September 30, Stefanovs published[42] an interview with Aleksandrs Žguns, a defendant in the Baltic Antifascists criminal case, who alleged that Rosļikovs had secretly provided information about Russian-speaking blogger Romāns Samuļs to the VDD in June 2023. Stefanovs presented the alleged document as evidence that Rosļikovs had informed on Russian activists and contributed to criminal proceedings against members of the Baltic Antifascists group. He explicitly linked the allegation to the October 3 election:

> "Watch this interview with Aleksandrs Žguns, draw your own conclusions and decide for yourselves whom to vote for in Latvia's parliamentary elections."

The same day, the FIMI channel Baltic Antifascists reposted[43] Stefanovs's allegations. This was particularly significant because the information Rosļikovs allegedly provided to the VDD was said to be linked to criminal proceedings against members of the group itself. Shadows of the Baltics,[44] Latvian Hillock,[45] and Baltic Bridge[46] also circulated Stefanovs's post.

> The publications portrayed Rosļikovs, who campaigns on defending Russian-speaking residents, as having cooperated with the Latvian security establishment against Russian activists.

Solomons Bernšteins, a Latvian blogger based in Belarus, also amplified[47] Stefanovs's allegations. Stefanovs had previously interviewed[48] Bernšteins, who also shared[49] his reporting on Russian city names painted over on road signs near Rēzekne. Bernšteins has also collaborated[50] with Shadows of the Baltics.

On September 28, Sprats in Exile published[51] an overview of candidates facing criminal proceedings across several parties,

including both Sovereign Power / Alliance of Young Latvians and For Stability! The struggle for Russian-speaking votes was central to this messaging. By portraying Sovereign Power as an authentic representative of Russian-speaking residents while questioning the loyalty of its competitors, the monitored publications sought to influence not only electoral preferences but also perceptions of which politicians could credibly claim to defend the community.

> Allegations of persecution and attacks on Latvian institutions reinforced this framing by casting scrutiny of favored candidates as further evidence of hostility toward Russian speakers.

Sources

1. https://theins.org/en/politics/268694
2. https://en.rebaltica.lv/2024/05/dangerous-liaisons-how-zdanoka-served-the-kremlin-in-latvia-ukraine-and-brussels/
3. https://t.me/Eiropas_Latvija/3087
4. https://bnn.lv/politika/jv-aicina-generalprokuroru-vertet-suverenas-varas-iespejamu-likvidaciju-9zby5cq
5. https://t.me/Eiropas_Latvija/6738
6. https://t.me/rusojuz/2146
7. https://t.me/rusojuz/2155
8. https://t.me/andrejspagorslive/8417
9. https://t.me/Eiropas_Latvija/6613
10. https://t.me/krimlatlv/177398
11. https://t.me/InfodefenseLVA/10292
12. https://en.rebaltica.lv/2012/03/spreading-democracy-in-latvia-kremlin-style/
13. https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/politika/25.09.2026-reitingi-partii-v-sentyabre-padaet-podderzka-progressivnyx-i-suverennoi-vlastimladolatysei-rastet-populyarnost-szk-utocneno.a664845/
14. https://rus.delfi.lv/57860/latvia/120103624/ih-ne-zhalko-byvshiy-evrodeputat-ot-latvii-mamykin-prizval-udarit-po-stranam-baltii-oreshnikom
15. https://t.me/AMamikins/706
16. https://theins.ru/news/297440
17. https://revers.press/ru/bol-shaia-latyshskaia-partiia-uderzhit-vlast
18. https://t.me/BalticBridge/16886
19. https://t.me/sputnik_lv/12685
20. https://t.me/news_lv/72149
21. https://t.me/sputnik_lv/12651
22. https://en.rebaltica.lv/2023/02/a-year-of-war-the-deniers-the-agitators-the-glorifiers-who-are-they/amp/
23. https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/obschestvo/10.11.2023-bezavsii-ot-suda-eks-deputat-rizskoi-dumy-pankratov-naselsya-veroyatno-on-vrf.a531205/
24. https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/analitika/17.11.2025-rf-usilivaet-operacii-vliyaniya-v-stranax-baltii-verbuyut-i-molodyx-lyudei-izlatvii.a622759/
25. https://www.mk.ru/authors/ruslan-pankratov/
26. https://t.me/andrejspagorslive/8935
27. https://t.me/Eiropas_Latvija/6740
28. https://diena.lv/raksts/latvija/zinas-71/sak-kriminalprocesu-par-zadzibas-meginajumu-stepanenko-majokli
29. https://t.me/andrejspagorslive/8953
30. https://t.me/sputnik_lv/12664?single
31. https://t.me/news_lv/72142?single
32. https://t.me/kochka_lv/182594?single
33. https://t.me/baltnews/74805
34. https://t.me/tenipribaltiki/12633?single
35. https://t.me/alekseystefanov/14330
36. https://t.me/InfodefenseLVA/10565
37. https://t.me/InfodefenseLVA/10575?single
38. https://t.me/pravdalvcom/34157
39. https://vdd.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/vdd-implements-enhanced-measures-to-ensure-free-and-fair-saeima-elections

40. https://t.me/latvijasbalzams/21688
41. https://t.me/pravdalvcom/34188
42. https://t.me/alekseystefanov/14336
43. https://t.me/antifalivland/20371
44. https://t.me/tenipribaltiki/12632
45. https://t.me/kochka_lv/182573
46. https://t.me/BalticBridge/16928
47. https://t.me/SolomonBernshtein/35557
48. https://baltija.eu/2024/05/14/bloger-solomon-bernshtejn-latviya-absolyutno-policzejskoe-gosudarstvo/
49. https://t.me/SolomonBernshtein/35600
50. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2OJnC5SQ7I
51. https://t.me/news_lv/72064

More from EK Stratcom

Explore more insights and analysis

Analytical reports on disinformation trends in Russia and Kremlin FIMI campaigns across Europe

ekstrategies.org/insights-and-analysis

Explore our projects

We create strategies to address geopolitical challenges, reach wide audiences, and support resilient communities

ekstrategies.org/projects

Contact us to explore collaboration

We support international organizations and national governments in navigating complex geopolitical realities, analyzing disinformation, developing and implementing communication strategies

partners@ekstrategies.org

Media enquiries

One address for all press requests: comment, interviews, background briefings and data questions

press@ekstrategies.org

Get our analysis by email

A weekly digest of EK Stratcom research: in-depth reports, Kremlin FIMI Weekly, Russia Watch, Kremlin Ratings Tracker, and more

ekstrategies.org/subscribe

Follow us on social media

x.com/EKStratcom
linkedin.com/company/ek-strategic-communications-center

EK Strategic Communications Center

ekstrategies.org