

# DIS!NFO

BRIEF



October 2022

## MONITORING OF SERBIAN MEDIA 2021/22 ON THE TOPIC OF MONTENEGRO

### DFC ANALYSIS

The [Analysis](#) of the one-year monitoring conducted by the Digital Forensic Center from October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022, reveals an effort to combine facts with false information, exaggerations, or presenting facts out of context to shape public opinion. The Analysis showed that during the 12 previous months, the news portals *Alo*, *Espresso*, *Srbija danas*, *Kurir*, and *Informer* had been the most-read Serbian media in Montenegro, and at the same time, the media that most often were spreading the content of debatable quality. The narratives dominating the Serbian media outlets encourage feelings of unease, insecurity, and worry. If we look back, the image of Montenegro as a criminal state, a mafia organization where human rights are violated and elections are held under numerous irregularities, has been continuously created during the

past few years. The trend of publication by month shows that tabloids reported the most up-to-date information on Montenegro in January, April, and August, which coincides with the period of the fall of the 42nd Government, the formation of a new minority Government, the signing of the Basic Agreement and the vote of no confidence in the Government of Dritan Abazović. Such reporting has led to dangerous prejudices against Montenegro, its citizens, and institutions among many people in Serbia but also in Montenegro, keeping in mind the reach and the readership of these portals in our country as well. It is evident from the previous that the Serbian media have been paying great attention to Montenegro, but in a highly sensationalist and inciting way, often taking information out of context, violating journalism ethics and the human moral code of conduct.

## MONTENEGRO IN THE GRU ACTIVITY NETWORK

### DFC ANALYSIS

Current security events have again shed light on hybrid Russian activities in Montenegro, this time through a well-organized intelligence network, with the aim to collect confidential data of a NATO member. The epilogue of the activities carried out on September 29 by partner intelligence agencies and competent Montenegrin authorities, primarily the Ministry of Interior and the National Security Agency, was the denial of residence for 6 Russian diplomats and the ban on entry to Montenegro for 28 foreign citizens who, as stated, worked for the interests of foreign services. A former spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Radomir Sekulović, is among those suspected of working for the Russian intelligence service. According to publicly available sources, the National Security Agency (ANB) owns information that Sekulović was part of a spy network formed by an intelligence officer of the Russian Military Intelligence Service GRU, Igor Zaytsev. Igor Zaytsev led the GRU intelligence network that operated in several European countries and included members of the administration of those countries since 1990. It is indicative that Sekulović worked for a long time in consular affairs in African countries at a time when Igor Zaytsev, as a member of the Fourth Department of the GRU, was in charge of Africa. The new DFC analysis of [Montenegro in the GRU activity network](#) offers more detailed insights and a broader picture of the activities of the Russian intelligence agency, whose members are part of a network that has been coordinated from the same center of activity for years.

## WHO GOVERNS OUR EXTREME RIGHT-WING?

### DFC ANALYSIS

The Digital Forensic Center conducted an [Analysis](#) that treats the activities of the extreme right in Montenegro, actualized in parallel with the deep political, social, cultural, and identity crisis that characterized the last two years. The emergence of the extreme right-wing and right-wing ideology in Montenegro is a direct reflection of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the changes that followed the dismantling of the joint socialist state and has been connected with the process of radicalization of the environment in Serbia from the beginning. The increased intensity of Russian soft power in Montenegro came to the fore, especially after the NATO membership invitation in 2015, and was noticeable through the actions of certain political subjects, non-government organizations, media, civil activists, and individuals whose political and ideological concept is based on advocating the change of the strategic course of the country and its displacement from the western to the eastern track. Even

then, the Serbian Orthodox Church is asserted as a key proxy of Russian activities, which, with the appearance of grassroots conservative groups, opened the door to the abuse of religion and the formation, under the auspices of the SOC and with the active participation of certain priests of this religious organization, of new patriotic and humanitarian organizations and associations with strong national -Serbian and religious identity. The members of those associations present a similar narrative, glorify war criminals and advocate for the revision of history, which in their interpretation, is based on confabulations or falsifications. A significant number of these organizations in Montenegro and the region are hiding behind humanitarian work, trying to soften their image through social networks in order to be socially accepted. However, when their attitudes and activities are viewed and contextualized, their agenda based on right-wing ideology, militaristic spirit, and loyalty to Russia is revealed.

## OVER 15,000 EUR OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN FOR THE PROMOTION OF GP URA ON FACEBOOK

### DFC ANALYSIS

[Analysis and data](#) of spending on political advertisements via Facebook for the campaign for the recently held local elections in 14 Montenegrin municipalities show that 75,211 euros were spent for these purposes, of which the 10 pages with the highest spending spent was almost 70% of the total amount. The page Naglasi, created on October 4, 2022, spent over EUR 15,000 on political advertising - exclusively for one party - the URA Civic Movement, its mayoral candidate Luka Rakčević and their views. When it comes specifically to the official pages of the parties on Facebook, the Civic Movement URA spent 3,834 euros for promotion. In comparison, 4,106 euros were used for sponsoring posts via the official page of candidate Luka Rakčević. The money spent by Naglasi, the Civic Movement URA, and Luka Rakčević (22,991 EUR) enabled political messages favorable to the current prime minister's party to be viewed about 11 million times. During the month-long pre-election campaign, the Evropa sad movement, which achieved significant results in the local elections in Podgorica, paid slightly more than 3,500 euros for political Facebook promotion. When you add to that particular advertisement on the pages of the leaders of that Movement, Jakov Milatović and Miloško Spajić, they spent 13,647 euros. For that money, Facebook made it possible for the political messages of the Movement Evropa sad to be viewed about 10 million times on this platform. In third place in terms of the most significant amount of money spent in the pre-election campaign is the page of Aleksa Becic - Demokrate - Demokratska Crna Gora, with 5,143 euros for 108 advertisements that were viewed 5 million times.



## LESS DISINFORMATION THAN DURING PREVIOUS ELECTIONS

### DFC INFO

In the [new episode](#) of the educational podcast series, launched in cooperation with the MINA Agency, the DFC's analyst Marko Banović announced that during the past local elections, less disinformation was recorded compared to the previous local and parliamentary elections. He said that several disinformation and fake news were recorded in Montenegro but that it was at a low level. This could be because political parties, actors and subjects, and everyone who participated in political propaganda understood that it creates negative effects among citizens. Banović pointed out that political parties use networks to promote and target dissidents, adding that this communication channel is constantly used for political purposes and in the pre-election campaign. Of particular concern is the lack of regulation on social networks, which opens up space for certain abuses.

## ELECTIONS UNDER THE LOUPE

### DISINFORMATIONS

In anticipation of the local elections, the Digital Forensic Center launched the [Elections Under the Loupe](#) blog, intending to inform the public about all disinformation and manipulation during the electoral process. Amid the political campaign, and in anticipation of the series of local elections in Montenegro, on the website of the SNP of Montenegro - Socialist People's Party of Montenegro on October 16, 2022. In 2008, an article was published - *According to the latest surveys conducted by the public opinion research agencies*

*Datapraxis and Ipsos, the list Temeljno za Budva will win 5 seats!* As Ipsos Montenegro told us, that agency did not survey electoral preferences at the local level in Budva, and the data mentioned above cannot come from them. In addition to Ipsos, the fake survey was also attributed to the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT). On the Evropska Crna Gora Facebook page, an alleged survey on the results of the elections in Podgorica attributed to the CDT, was published. It is a lie because CDT did not do that research.

Disinfo Brief provides a monthly overview of the key disinformation, narratives, and propaganda developments that the DFC team researched and debunked to raise awareness of the issue and its extent.



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