



An accompanying event of the
Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU

INVITATION

CALL FOR DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE

The 3rd E-Democracy / E-Governance Conference of the Eastern Partnership

**‘Disinformation in the digital age -
Effects on democracy, state and society’**

Tartu (Estonia), November 26th, 2021

Already for the third time, an international conference on e-democracy / e-governance will be held within the framework of the EU Eastern Partnership (EaP). This year’s topic is ***‘Disinformation in the digital age - Effects on democracy, state and society’***. The conference will be held in Tartu (Estonia) on Friday, 26th November 2021, and conducted in-person. It will be organised by the *Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu*, and held in an open format enabling exchanges between representative of governments, academia and civil society.

The first EaP e-democracy conference was held at *Danube University Krems*, Austria, on 23 October 2018, the second at the *Ukrainian Catholic University* in L’viv, Ukraine, on 22 November 2019. Both universities will act as co-organisers of the Tartu Conference.

E-democracy / e-governance is situated at the crossroads of good governance and digitalisation, and thus at the core of the current EaP goals and programmes. E-governance significantly differs from e-government, which is, simply, electronic provision of government services, while e-governance concerns, *inter alia*, e-elections (in particular Internet voting), e-consultations, e-initiatives, e-justice, e-Parliament, e-transparency of public office holders, participatory e-budgeting, and citizens’ e-journalism.



School of
Public Management

Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
European and International
Affairs

The scope of the conference

The spread of disinformation is not a new phenomenon, but has been exacerbated by its circulation through social media platforms, and powered by AI. Disinformation by digital means can by its size and sophistication threaten the bases and essential elements of democracy, the institutions and processes of the state, and the cohesion and proper functioning of society.

Disinformation has today become a global topic of concern and a critical challenge. It casts a shadow over the integrity of public debate and elections, undermining citizens' trust in democratic institutions. It also negatively impacts upon the accuracy and reliability of the information that feeds public opinion.

Digital disinformation is more threatening and illegitimate when originating abroad. No country or society is immune from such influence.

This conference shall discuss the possibilities on how we can mitigate the problems of disinformation in the digital age, the divide in public opinion, filter bubbles, and how AI can be used to overcome shortcomings and provide solutions for this eminent issue endangering democracy itself.

The tentative Programme

All times are in Eastern European Time / EET (= UTC +2).

Thursday, 25 November 2021:

arrival at Tartu (Estonia)

evening: welcome get-together, in the city centre

Friday, 26 November 2021:

the conference at the *University of Tartu Delta Centre* (details on venue see below)

9.00-9.30: opening

9.30-10.30: keynote speech(es)

10.30-11.00: break

11.00-12.30: panel 1 on 'Challenges by disinformation in the digital age'

12.30-13.30: lunch

13.30-15.00: panel 2 on 'Foreign factors in digital disinformation'

15.00-15.30: break

15.30-17.00: panel 3 on 'Challenges and opportunities of Internet voting'

17.00-17.30: closing

evening: closing reception/conference dinner, in the city centre

Saturday, 27 November 2021: departure from Tartu

The Conference will be conducted **in English and Russian**, with simultaneous translation.

The conference is **an accompanying event of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**. It does not reflect the views of the Slovenian Presidency on content-related materials. - The conference will be supported by the **European Commission**.

Venue

The conference will be held at the *University of Tartu Delta Centre* in the heart of Tartu, one of the most modern centres of digital technology, analytical and economic thought in the Nordic region. Built in 2020, the *Delta Centre* is a modern academic and research centre of the University of Tartu, focusing on cooperation between the university, society and business.

The *Delta Centre* is located in the city centre of Tartu, by the river, within a short walking distance from the Old Town (5 minutes) and city centre hotels (8-12 minutes). The building can easily be reached by foot, car and bus. It is accessible for people with disabilities. All conference related events will take place on the same floor.

Participants

Participation is free of charge. As the number of participants is limited, only confirmed participants can attend. They will also be invited to the conference lunch and dinner.

A limited number of speakers/participants from the EU Eastern partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) will be funded by the European Commission – requests to be made to the organiser when declaring interest to participate (see immediately below).

Declaration of interest to participate

Governmental, academic and civil society experts on the topic of the conference are invited to declare their interest to participate in the conference by e-mail – including reasons and proof of expertise - to Ms. Elis Vollmer, University of Tartu: eap-edem@ut.ee.

In case that the above-mentioned funding option applies to them, interest in funding should be clearly mentioned in the declaration of interest to participate.

Website

The Conference website is accessible at <https://eceps.ut.ee/research/eap-conference>.

Russian language invitation

An invitation in Russian language is available – and accessible at the conference website.

Access to Tartu

Tartu is Estonia's second largest city with a population of 100,000. It is a green compact university town with a calm living and study environment, youthful people and a vibrant cultural life (www.tartu.ee). Tartu City government has gained attention with its interest in implementing innovative technologies and investing in energy efficiency and climate change mitigation measures. The City of Tartu has also been effective in implementing the Smart City concept. It is closely collaborating with e-governance and Govtech entrepreneurs in building local public services.

Tartu can best accessed by air via Tallinn, capital of Estonia. Tallinn airport has good connections to major European cities. From Tallinn, Tartu is easily accessible by public transportation. The express bus to and from Tartu Bus Station stops at the Tallinn airport and departs every hour. The Tallinn train station 'Ülemiste' is easily reachable by tram from the airport, and trains to Tartu run every few hours. - In addition, an express bus between Riga and Tartu runs several times a day.

Accommodation

A number of hotels at different price ranges will hold block-bookings for participants at preferential rates.

Covid

All participants are required to inquire about and respect, Covid-related travel conditions / restrictions in their home countries and Estonia – as well as in the means of transport they are taking.

In Estonia, at present, "**Public meetings and events are allowed, but participants must prove their safety against infection. This means that before participating in the event, participants must prove their infection safety by submitting a COVID-19 certificate of vaccination, passage or a previous negative test result. ... Indoor events and activities with more participants can only be organised if the infection safety and monitoring thereof is ensured. In such cases, there may be up to 6,000 attendees indoors and up to 12,000 outdoors.**" The local organisers will check the necessary certification on-site. More details at www.kriis.ee/en/restrictions-force-estonia-starting-march-11 .

On (incoming) foreign passengers, "*Starting from June 21, 2021 entry into Estonia for travelling is allowed for persons who are asymptomatic, who are arriving from all third countries and have finished the course of vaccination against COVID-19, achieved the maximum protection after the last dose of the vaccine, and no more than one year has passed from it.*" (more at www.kriis.ee/en/crossing-estonian-border and <https://vm.ee/en/information-countries-and-self-isolation-requirements-passengers>). As to vaccines, any EU-approved vaccine, as well as Sputnik are accepted.