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HOW TO DEBUNK RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA?

THE WORK OF STOPFAKE.ORG

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How to Debunk Russian Propaganda?

The Work of StopFake.org

An Interview with

YEVHEN FEDCHENKO

*STOPFAKE.ORG HAS BECOME A WELL-RESPECTED AND RECOGNIZED HUB FOR
THE EXPOSURE OF THE KREMLIN'S PROPAGANDA*

CICERO: Could you tell something about the initiative StopFake.org? How did it develop? Why? How is it organized - also internationally?

The StopFake project was started by a group of journalists, journalism students and alumni of the Mohyla School of Journalism in Kiyv to debunk the Kremlin's propaganda through fact-checking. It started after the annexation of the Crimea and since that moment we have debunked hundreds of stories published by Russian mainstream media and social media. We have opened 8 language services: Russian, English, Dutch, Spanish, French, Italian, Romanian and Bulgarian. We have hundreds of thousands of followers on the social media, we produce text, as well as video and audio content. So far, we have built the biggest archive of modern Russian propaganda. At this moment we do research on how this propaganda machine was built, how its messages correspond with the Kremlin's talking points, etcetera. We may say that in the last two years we have created a project that has become a well-respected and recognized hub for the exposure of the Kremlin's propaganda.

OBAMA BANNED PLAYING THE BALALAIKA

CICERO: Could you give some of the most striking examples of fake info debunked by StopFake.org?

As I mentioned, we have hundreds if not thousand examples of fakes we have debunked. We categorized them into 18 main categories of fake themes that completely coincide with the official Russian narrative of the events in Ukraine: from Euromaidan to the annexation of the Crimea, from the war in Donbas to the downing of the MH17. These fake stories were spread by both Russian state-owned and so-called 'private' media. We also compiled a list of those 'media' organizations that are most frequently involved in the manufacturing of fakes. Among them are our most 'favorite stories' that already became instant hits – from the boy crucified by the Ukrainian army in Eastern Ukraine, to the story about two slaves and a plot of land in Donbas that are given to Ukrainian soldiers. My personal hit is 'news' about President Obama banning to play the balalaika (a Russian folk string instrument) in the US.

MEDIA LITERACY IN UKRAINE HAS DRAMATICALLY INCREASED

CICERO: How does Russian propaganda and fake news affect Ukrainian society?

I think the most severe damage to the Ukrainian society was already done even before the actual war started: because Russian propaganda is not something new. It was already around for at least the last 10 years. We had a very influential and omnipresent Russian television, as well as newspapers and a shared Russian-speaking (and Russian-controlled) internet. These were tools to influence Ukrainian public opinion on crucial issues. So when the war started it was important to minimize this propaganda influence, especially in those territories where the war unfolded. When Russia occupied the Crimea and Donbas, the first

thing it did was to cut off Ukrainian television and switch to Russian television. They understand how important and weaponized this instrument is. But now I would say that the Ukrainian society has become more immune to the influence of propaganda. The level of media literacy has dramatically increased - also because of projects like StopFake.

You can follow StopFake on its website [StopFake.org](https://stopfake.org)