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Vice President Jānis Vucāns: Baltic-Benelux interparliamentary cooperation needs to be enhanced for combating disinformation and fake news

On 15 October, the delegation of the Baltic Assembly participated in the Conference of the Benelux Parliament that focused on disinformation and fake news. Vice President of the Baltic Assembly Jānis Vucāns during the Conference said that the Baltic-Benelux interparliamentary cooperation needs to be enhanced for combating disinformation and fake news.

Vice President said that fake news and the strategic use of disinformation for political influence is a familiar issue in the Baltic states. “We constantly face concerns about the influence of Russian media, especially on the Russian-speaking part of society. The main techniques we have used to counter disinformation from these media sources involves fining or suspending channels that intentionally spread disinformation and violate the law,” said Jānis Vucāns.

He also noted that one of the best tools to defend against the spread of fake news is using good governance to sustain democratic political structures and well-functioning public administrations. “While doing this, it is necessary to respect the values of transparency, media freedom, human rights, and the rule of law”, said Vice President.

Postdoctoral Research Associate Alexandre Bovet said that there nowadays there is serious competition between journalists, politicians and independent people in social media. He explained that the society is polarized and it is becoming more and more difficult to understand what is real and what is not. Expert highlighted that there are

factors limiting the resilience to online disinformation – low trust in news, weak public service and more fragmented, fewer overlapping audiences. He said that looking at the role of media, historically speaking, journalists were the guardians of information; however, now the situation has changed and everyone can spread information.

During the Conference of the Benelux Parliament such topics as the responsibility of platforms, the role of classical media and disinformation will be discussed.

Photos during the Conference