Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova PhD



Health-related information manipulation, influence operations and public resilience

Main supervisor | Global Studies Centre
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Current position	Assistant Professor and Director
Organisational unit	Global Studies Centre, Faculty of Social Sciences
KEY-RSU role	Main supervisor
Thematic area	SSRC-2 Health-Related Information Manipulation, Disinformation and Influence Operations

Host environment The Faculty of Social Sciences brings together social-science teaching and research at RSU. Its Global Studies Centre provides a transdisciplinary setting for research, education and international cooperation on regional and global processes, with links to academic and policy communities. View faculty profile | View centre profile

Supervisor Overview

Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova is Assistant Professor and Director of the Global Studies Centre at Rīga Stradiņš University. As a KEY-RSU main supervisor, she will support one postdoctoral researcher working on information manipulation at the intersection of biomedical and social sciences.

Research Expertise

Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova works at the intersection of global studies, security studies, political communication and health communication. Her expertise includes foreign information manipulation and interference, health disinformation, influence operations, strategic narratives, institutional trust and societal resilience.

Her methodological strengths include qualitative discourse and content analysis, multi-source synthesis and transnational comparison of official communication, state-media narratives and policy documents. The work connects global studies, security studies, political communication, public health and health communication, creating an interdisciplinary setting for research on the societal dimensions of health-related information manipulation.

Research Opportunities

The approved KEY-RSU scope is research on information manipulation at the intersection of biomedical and social sciences. Within it, an incoming postdoctoral researcher can examine how health-related narratives and foreign information manipulation affect health communication, institutional trust and public-health resilience. Relevant directions include information suppression and amplification, state-media narratives, strategic communication, influence operations and the cross-border circulation of health-related discourse.

The opportunity is intended to support an original, independently driven project rather than a predefined assignment. The applicant can bring new theoretical, comparative or methodological perspectives while maintaining a clear connection to health or biomedical contexts. The exact questions and methods will be refined with the supervisor to ensure originality, feasibility, ethical integrity and alignment with the committed thematic area. Projects may also investigate institutional, societal and policy responses that strengthen resilience while respecting rights and avoiding disproportionate interventions.

Research Environment and Collaboration

The postdoctoral researcher will join the Global Studies Centre and RSU's wider community working across foreign information manipulation, political communication and health research. The environment supports thematic seminars, international workshops, joint publications and collaboration across social, political and health sciences. Relevant international project settings include Horizon Europe DE-CONSPIRATOR and the DG CONNECT-supported SHIFT project, while policy-facing links include the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

These connections can provide methodological exchange, international visibility and experience in translating research for policy audiences. They can also help the postdoctoral researcher build a professional network extending beyond the host centre and identify collaborations aligned with an emerging independent profile. Specific opportunities for project participation, briefings, networking and travel will be tailored to the postdoctoral researcher's project, development goals and the activities available during the fellowship.

Supervision and Researcher Development

Supervision is planned around bi-weekly progress meetings, with continuity maintained online when travel makes an in-person meeting impractical. The postdoctoral researcher will lead the project's creative vision, while the supervisor supports methodological choices, milestones, ethics and data-management planning through peer discussion and detailed feedback on drafts. Una's supervision experience includes two current doctoral researchers and two doctoral candidates whose theses have been submitted. Her mentoring is grounded particularly in global studies and discourse analysis and is complemented by international experience as a feedback provider and panel member in doctoral seminars at the University of Oxford China Centre and King's College London. Integration may include team check-ins, seminars, co-organisation of workshops and opportunities to contribute to master's-level supervision. The aim is to combine accessible guidance with increasing research autonomy.

Career Development Support

Career development will be integrated into the research programme. The postdoctoral researcher will be supported in shaping an independent agenda, developing grant and fellowship proposals, planning publications, managing research activities and building visibility through international conferences and networks such as ECPR, UACES, ISA and IPSA. Where appropriate, involvement in relevant master's-level supervision can add practical teaching and mentoring experience.

Policy engagement and science communication can strengthen the ability to translate research for Baltic and European stakeholders without reducing the project to consultancy. The wider KEY-RSU programme will also support relevant competencies in Open Science, research data management and responsible research practice. The intended outcome is a postdoctoral researcher equipped to lead projects across academic and policy-facing environments.

Who May Particularly Thrive in This Environment

This environment may particularly suit a postdoctoral researcher interested in the politics of health and health communication who wants to bridge social-science and health research. A strong fit would combine intellectual independence with readiness to collaborate across disciplines, engage constructively with academic and policy communities, and work critically with politically or socially sensitive material. The environment is especially relevant to postdoctoral researchers who want both scholarly depth and experience in communicating evidence beyond academia.

Selected Contributions

Perfect Imbalance China and Russia

Single-authored monograph published by World Scientific (2022). Contribution: sole author, responsible for conceptualisation, discourse-analysis methodology, empirical analysis and the complete text. KEY-RSU relevance: demonstrates independent research on state narratives and information manipulation.

Health Road and Russia

Bērziņa-Čerenkova UA. In The Palgrave Handbook of Globalization with Chinese Characteristics (2023). DOI 10.1007/978-981-19-6700-9_26. Contribution: sole author of the qualitative analysis of Chinese and Russian communication on the Health Silk Road. KEY-RSU relevance: directly connects health, diplomacy and strategic narratives.

Inevitability Capturing Strategic Ambiguity in Xi Jinping's China

Bērziņa-Čerenkova UA. World Affairs 188 (2025). DOI 10.1002/waf2.12076. Contribution: lead author responsible for the research framework, discourse and content analysis, and manuscript development. KEY-RSU relevance: provides a methodological example for studying strategic communication and state-driven narratives.

Supervisory Availability

Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova expects to provide regular supervision, including online meetings where necessary to preserve the planned bi-weekly rhythm during research and outreach travel. Opportunities for joint conference participation may arise when funding and programme conditions permit.