

The background features a dense pattern of sharpened colored pencils, with their hexagonal ends facing the viewer. The pencils are in various colors, including red, blue, green, yellow, purple, and orange. Overlaid on this pattern are several semi-transparent circles in various colors, including orange, purple, pink, and light blue, scattered across the slide.

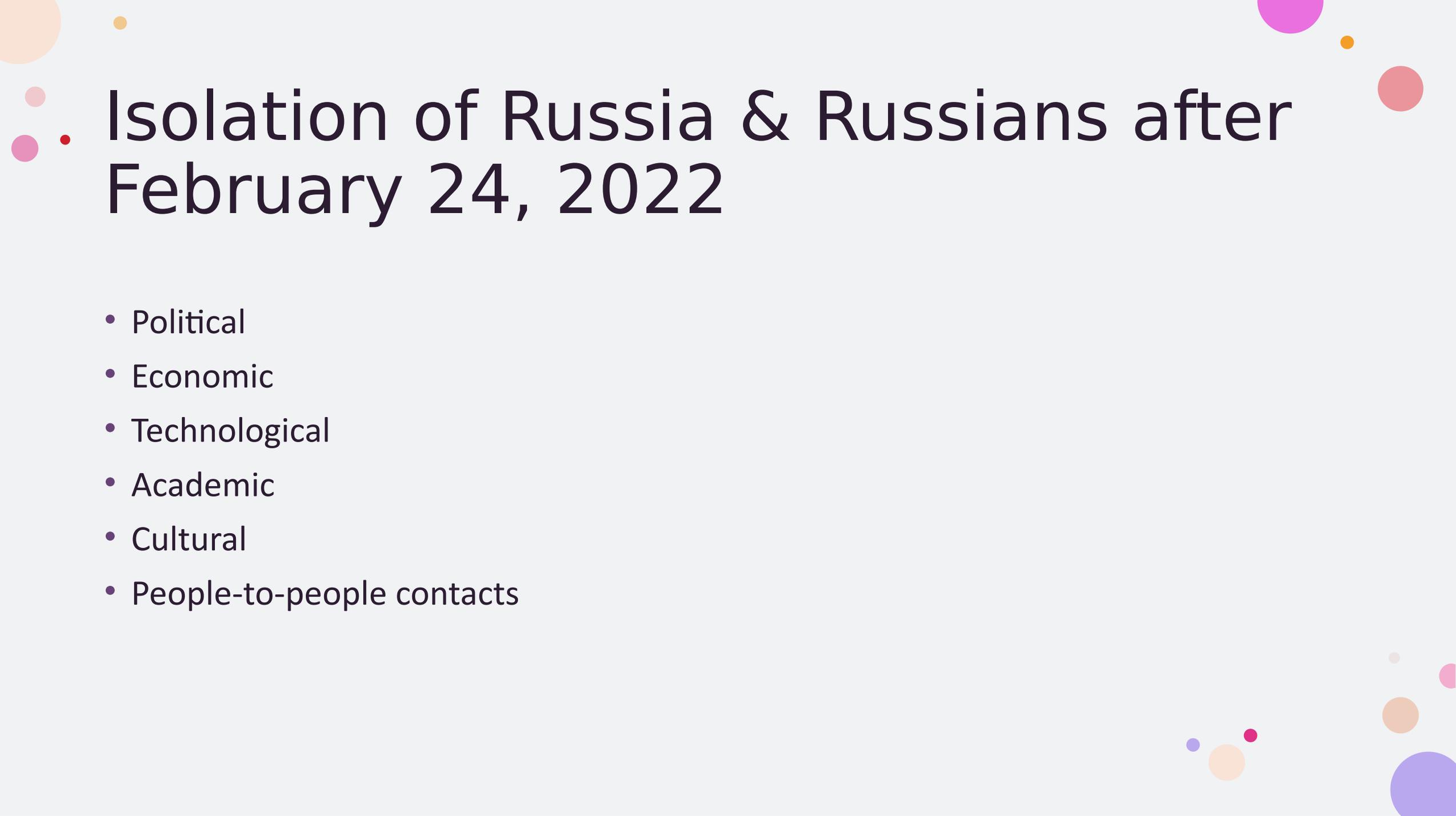
Russian invasion of Ukraine & inclusive youth cooperation around the Baltic Sea

Milosz J. Cordes, PhD

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Russia's social reality since 2010s

- Imperialist & belligerent narrative of Russia's history across centuries, affecting school curriculum
- 'Besieged fortress' syndrome
- Shrinking space for civic activities
- Subjugation of NGOs (replaced by GONGOs), e.g. through the 'foreign agents' law
- Limited access to independent media outlets
- Pacification of opposition
- De facto dismantling of local self-government
- Growing centralisation of decision-making process in regional cooperation



Isolation of Russia & Russians after February 24, 2022

- Political
- Economic
- Technological
- Academic
- Cultural
- People-to-people contacts

Consequences for the Baltic Sea Region

- Greater integration of Western democracies:
 - NATO enlargement by Finland and Sweden
 - Denmark possibly dropping its EU defence cooperation opt-out
 - Norway increasingly interested in advantages of EU membership
- 9+1 matrix: 9 tightly integrating Baltic Sea states vs. isolated Russia
- Chance of pushing integration forward in new areas vs. Russia's Baltic provinces left out and lagging behind → green transition
- Volatile international security environment → mini Cold War between regions, cities and people?
- Political confrontation likely to be followed by provocations in other areas:
 - environment protection
 - civilian aviation
 - maritime transportation

Education & youth cooperation

- Impaired already since 2014:
 - Putin's new conservative project
 - new official narrative on history
 - aggressive promotion of Russo- and Soviet-centrism
 - mounting pressure on civil society & growing control of educational institutions
 - decreasing participation in international initiatives
- State-sponsored hatred for Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russian schools and media
- The West openly declared an enemy conspiring against Russia (the 'besieged fortress' syndrome)
- Intimidation & persecution of pluralism & freedom of speech

What does it mean for initiatives such as MEP?

- Small-scale 9+1 matrix: Russian students excluded from interacting with their BSR peers
- Especially Kaliningrad Oblast youth intellectually & culturally isolated
- Devastating for promoting dialogue and shaping new civil activists, decision-makers & educators
- Severe damage or destruction of 30 years of intellectual capital & people-to-people ties between the youth
- Ex definitione incomplete discussions about the future of the Baltic Sea

What can we do?

- **Why not inviting representatives of Ukrainian youth to participate in MEP BSR?**
- Inclusion of Russia-related topics in the debates
- Not demonising the Russian youth → it's the Russian state, political culture and older generations that are to blame
- Creating & pursuing ideas on how to facilitate bottom-up change in Russia
- Showing positive examples through respect, inclusiveness & pluralism
- Activity in social media that would catch young Russians' attention



Thank you

milosz@milosz.dk

