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DRAFT REPORT

on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties
(2016/2030(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

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The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0000/2016),
- A. whereas the EU is under growing, systematic pressure to tackle the information, disinformation and misinformation campaigns from the east and from the south;
- B. whereas the information warfare targeting the West was first introduced by the Soviet Union, and has since been an integral part of modern warfare, targeting not only partners of the EU, but also all Member States and citizens irrespective of their nationality or religion;
- C. whereas Russian strategic communication accompanied numerous incidents, including cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007, the war in Georgia in 2008, disinformation following the Smolensk crash in 2010 and the downing of MH-17 in 2014 and also, on an unprecedented scale, during the annexation of Crimea, aggression against Ukraine and more recently the migration crisis;
- D. whereas Da'esh and many other Islamic terrorist groups have often used communication strategies as part of their actions against the West and to boost recruitment of European youth;

EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties

1. Underlines that strategic propaganda against the EU comes in many different forms and uses various tools, often tailored to match Member States' profiles, with the goal of provoking doubt, paralysing the decision-making process, discrediting the EU institutions in the eyes and minds of its citizens and eroding western values and transatlantic ties;
2. Calls on the EU institutions to recognise that information warfare is not only an external EU issue but also an internal one;
3. Notes the multi-layered character of current EU strategic communications at various levels, including NATO, the EU, the Member States, and NGOs as well as civic organisations; calls for the best possible coordination and exchange of information between the different actors involved;

Recognising the Russian information warfare strategy

4. Recognises that Russia has been aggressively employing a wide range of tools and instruments, such as special foundations (Russkiy Mir,) multilingual TV stations

(Russia Today, RIA Novosti), news agencies (Sputnik), social and religious groups (including the Orthodox church), social media and internet trolls to challenge Western values, divide Europe, gather domestic support and create the perception of failing states in the EU's eastern neighbourhood;

5. Is seriously concerned by the rapidly growing Russian activity in Europe seeking to increase Russian influence and hegemony; stresses that a large part of Russian strategic communication is aimed at describing countries in central and eastern Europe as belonging to its traditional sphere of influence, thereby undermining their sovereignty; notes that falsifying history is one of its main strategies;
6. Stresses that Russia is exploiting the absence of a legal international framework in areas such as cybersecurity, and is turning any ambiguity in these matters in its favour;

Understanding and tackling Da'esh's information warfare and radicalisation methods

7. Is aware of the range of strategies employed by Da'esh both regionally and globally to promote its political, religious and social narratives; calls on the EU and its Member States to develop a counter-narrative to Da'esh, including through the empowerment and increased visibility of mainstream Muslim scholars who have the credibility to delegitimise Da'esh's propaganda;
8. Emphasises that the EU is a targeted audience for Da'esh and calls for the EU and its Member States to work more closely to protect society, in particular young people, from recruitment and radicalisation; calls on each Member State to investigate the socio-demographic reasons that are at the root cause of vulnerability to radicalisation;
9. Calls on the Member States to work on cutting Daesh's access to financing and funding and to promote this principle in the EU's external action and stresses the need to expose Da'esh's true nature and ideological legitimisation;

EU strategy to counteract propaganda

10. Welcomes the communication on the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats and calls for the implementation of its recommendations without delay; calls on countries holding the rotating presidency of the EU to always include strategic communications as part of their programme in order to ensure continuity of work on this topic; welcomes the initiatives and achievements of the Latvian Presidency in this regard;
11. Recognises the possible impact of hostile propaganda on decision-making processes in the EU; calls therefore for the EU Strategic Communication Task Force to be reinforced by turning it into a fully-fledged unit within the EEAS, responsible for the east and for the south, with proper staffing and adequate budgetary resources;
12. Calls on the Commission to conduct a thorough review of the efficiency of the existing EU financial instruments and to come forward with a proposal for a flexible solution which can provide direct support to independent media outlets and enable the channelling of additional resources to organisations that have the ability to do so, such as the European Endowment for Democracy;

13. Stresses its support for initiatives such as the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence in Tallinn or the Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence; underlines the need for strengthening analytical capabilities at all levels; calls for the Commission and the Member States to initiate similar projects, engage in the training of journalists, create independent media hubs, support media diversity and exchange best practices and information in these areas;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the EEAS.