



Plenary sitting

B9-0130/2024

5.2.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on Russiagate: allegations of Russian interference in the democratic processes
of the European Union
(2024/2548(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

European Parliament resolution on Russiagate: allegations of Russian interference in the democratic processes of the European Union (2024/2548(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the three reports by the Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation, and the strengthening of integrity, transparency, and accountability in the European Parliament (INGE and ING2),
- having regard to its resolution of 23 November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda by third countries¹,
- having regard to its recommendation of 13 March 2019 to the Council and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning taking stock of the follow-up taken by the EEAS two years after the EP report on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties²,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 September 2019 on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe³,
- having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on recent actions by the Russian Federation against Lithuanian judges, prosecutors and investigators involved in investigating the tragic events of 13 January 1991 in Vilnius⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 November 2022 on recognising the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2024 on European historical consciousness⁶,
- having regard to the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence – For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security, approved by the Council on 21 March 2022 and endorsed by the European Council on 24 March 2022,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 December 2020 on the European democracy action plan (COM(2020)0790),

¹ OJ C 224, 27.6.2018, p. 58.

² OJ C 23, 21.1.2021, p. 152.

³ OJ C 171, 6.5.2021, p. 25.

⁴ OJ C 232, 16.6.2021, p. 54.

⁵ OJ C 167, 11.5.2023, p. 18.

⁶ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2024)0030).

- having regard to the Commission communication of 12 December 2023 on Defence of Democracy (COM(2023)0630), and the proposals for the Defence of Democracy package therein,
 - having regard to the 2nd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats of 23 January 2024,
 - having regard to the ongoing legislative work on the transparency and targeting of political advertising,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Russia under President Putin, has become a totalitarian state without any opposition or a functional justice system; whereas Putin is trying to spread this system throughout the world, as democracy and free and open societies are a threat to his rule and the corrupt system he has installed in Russia;
 - B. whereas Russia is using every available means of hybrid warfare in order to achieve its goals; whereas the intensity of foreign information manipulation, as a means to justify the war and divide democratic societies, accelerated after Russia launched its unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine;
 - C. whereas the systematic falsification of history has been part of Russia's information warfare for decades;
 - D. whereas citizens, non-governmental organisations and other civil society organisations throughout Europe have expressed their serious concern about cases of Russian-sponsored foreign interference in the EU's democratic processes;
 - E. whereas an international team of investigative journalists has reported that long-standing Latvian MEP Tatjana Ždanoka has for more than a decade served as an agent of influence of the Russian intelligence services; whereas in response to these reports, Parliament has opened an internal investigation into Ms Ždanoka;
 - F. whereas Ms Ždanoka has been well known for her pro-Russia stance and consistent spread of anti-Latvian and anti-EU narratives throughout her time as an MEP, including during her membership of the Green Group, which only ended in early 2022;
 - G. whereas Ms Ždanoka has visited Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and prior to 2022 repeatedly visited Moscow and participated in TV shows spreading pro-Kremlin propaganda; whereas she, together with, among others, Irish MEPs Clare Daly and Mick Wallace from The Left Group, organised public events in support of Algirdas Paleckis, a Lithuanian citizen who was convicted of espionage for Russia;
 - H. whereas Ms Ždanoka has invited representatives of the administration from the illegally annexed Donetsk and Luhanska regions to the European Parliament;
 - I. whereas Ms Ždanoka's activities have been consistently sponsored by Kremlin-funded front groups, such as the Russkiy Mir Foundation;

- J. whereas despite the credible doubts concerning Ms Ždanoka, the current rules in Parliament have not been able to prevent this extraordinary case of foreign interference;
- K. whereas credible newspaper reports have for a long time highlighted contacts between secessionists in Catalonia and the Kremlin; whereas articles showed that the former Russian diplomat Nikolai Sadovnikov met with former separatist leader and now MEP Carles Puigdemont in Barcelona on the eve of Catalonia's illegal referendum in October 2017;
- L. whereas the journalists involved have revealed that the authorities of the government of the autonomous community of Catalonia maintained contacts with high-ranking officials of Putin's entourage with the aim of promoting a strategic alliance within the European Union; whereas the objective of such communications would have been to establish relations of political and economic influence if Catalonia had managed to unilaterally become independent from Spain;
- M. whereas Court of Instruction Number 1 in Barcelona, which is in charge of the investigation into the Voloh case, which links, among others, the former president of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, and his entourage with Russia, recently extended the investigation for six months;
- N. whereas the Kremlin has also sponsored and supported a number of far-right parties in Europe and, among others, provided the party of Marine Le Pen with a loan of EUR 9.4 million in 2013; whereas since then Le Pen and her party members have further bolstered their pro-Kremlin stance;
- O. whereas further Members from the Identity and Democracy (ID) and The Left Groups, as well as non-attached Members, have been known for expressing pro-Kremlin propaganda in Parliament, including extreme public calls in January 2024 for the destruction of Europe by MEP Miroslav Radačovský who was also paid by Russian sources to observe the parliamentary elections in Russia in 2021;
- P. whereas all these examples of MEPs and European parties working for Putin and spreading pro-Kremlin propaganda are blatant cases of foreign interference, and in the context of the upcoming European elections in particular, are to be treated with the utmost seriousness by national and EU authorities;
- Q. whereas the Kremlin has been operating an extensive network of agents of influence across the EU, who have affected electoral processes and policies on key strategic issues such as energy infrastructure; whereas these agents of influence actively target all areas of public life, particularly culture, historical remembrance, the media and religious communities, as well as politicians and their families; whereas dozens of investigations have proven links between prominent active or retired European political and public actors and the Kremlin;
- R. whereas the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs has uncovered a large-scale disinformation campaign, allegedly orchestrated by Russia, on the X platform, aimed at manipulating public opinion;
- S. whereas reputable German media outlets have exposed the fact that an employee of a

member of the German Bundestag belonging to the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party was identified as a contact person for the Russian Federal Security Service;

- T. whereas there have been reported cases of MEPs using Parliament's resources to advocate and promote activities which are directly or indirectly linked to cases of foreign interference, for example in December 2022 when the Belarusian state propaganda channel STV gained access to Parliament's premises and the VoxBox video recording facility inside Parliament and, as a result, Parliament's premises were used by several MEPs to create pro-Kremlin and anti-EU disinformation content;
1. Expresses its complete outrage and grave concern about the continuous efforts by Russia to undermine European democracy; is appalled by credible reports which cast light on Russia's efforts to foment divisions between European citizens by recruiting MEPs as agents of influence, as well as its efforts to systematically create a system of dependencies through European political parties which then act as amplifiers of the Kremlin's propaganda;
 2. Unequivocally condemns the ongoing Russian efforts to abuse and falsify the historical recollection of Europe's most tragic periods, such as the terror of the Nazi regime, in order to try to justify its current brutal, illegal and inhumane aggression and its expansionist policy, as well as its attempts to systematically spread false historical narratives with the goal of casting doubt on the sovereignty of other nations by systematically undermining their domestic democratic processes, among other methods;
 3. Strongly condemns and expresses its outrage about the recent revelations that MEP Tatjana Ždanoka has been working as an agent of influence for the Russian intelligence services, and urgently calls on the relevant national and EU authorities to immediately investigate this case with a sense of urgency to limit any further damage;
 4. Points to other credible cases of Members, particularly Members belonging to the ID and The Left Group, as well as non-attached Members, who are knowingly serving Russia's interests, as reflected by their public interventions, voting record and organised events, as well as pursuing covert activities; underlines that the activities of these MEPs are undermining the security, credibility and democratic resilience of the EU;
 5. Is extremely concerned about the relations between Catalan secessionists and the Russian administration; notes that Russian interference in Catalonia is part of a broader Russian strategy to promote internal destabilisation and EU disunity;
 6. Expresses deep concern about the massive disinformation campaigns that Russia has pursued in Catalonia, as well as the intense contacts and number of meetings between the agents responsible for Russian interference with the pro-independence movement and the regional government of the autonomous community of Catalonia;
 7. Calls on the competent Spanish authorities to continue, further intensify and swiftly conclude their investigations into the reported cases of interference by Russia, particularly those linked to Catalan secessionist groups; deplores the attacks on judges investigating these interference activities;
 8. Strongly condemns the recent incident in Slovakia, whereby the Russian Foreign

Intelligence Service, in a provocative move, released a statement during the pre-election moratorium questioning the integrity of the Slovak Republic's electoral process; expresses its concern about the visible and direct role played by Russian diplomacy in Slovak public and political life since the parliamentary elections in September 2023;

9. Strongly condemns the large-scale disinformation campaign exposed by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, purportedly orchestrated by Russia on the X platform, with the intention of manipulating public opinion in Germany;
10. Strongly condemns the alarming revelation brought to light by reputable German media outlets exposing the fact that an employee affiliated with the AfD party and associated with a member of the German Bundestag was identified as a contact person for the Russian Federal Security Service, raising serious concerns about potential foreign influence within the German political landscape;
11. Recalls that by pursuing a long-term strategy of foreign interference, Russia is trying to undermine and ultimately destroy democracy in Europe; points to Putin's efforts to completely dismantle any form of democracy inside Russia and underlines that this must be a warning sign not to be naive about Putin's long-term goals and hence to tackle these Russian interference attempts as a matter of extreme gravity;
12. Stresses that Russia's interference in the democratic processes of the EU Member States and institutions is exceptional in terms of the threat and danger it poses to the fundamental principles of democracy in Europe; underlines, therefore, that, Russian foreign interference is unique and differs from any other non-EU country's attempts at foreign interference in Europe's democratic processes; reiterates its previous position that the exceptional character of Russian foreign interference requires special efforts by national and EU institutions, including the European Parliament, to identify, address and overcome this specific threat;
13. Underlines that Russia is trying to exert influence in European societies and erode democratic discourse by, among other methods, advancing disinformation campaigns with the ultimate goal of inflicting damage on European democracies and destroying the European way of life;
14. Points out that Russia's efforts to undermine democratic processes in Europe are closely linked to Russia's objectives in Putin's illegal and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine;
15. Points out that Russia has assumed that fostering regional secessionism and interference through national diasporas is a useful instrument in its strategy to promote internal destabilisation and disunity in the European Union, with the aim of intensifying polarisation in our society, undermining trust between citizens and the public authorities by weakening the democratic processes of target countries, among other tactics;
16. Underlines that in the context of the upcoming European elections, all national and EU authorities must intensify their efforts to combat and uncover cases of foreign interference in order to ensure the full integrity of these important elections;
17. Expresses its concern about reports that not only French and Irish MEPs, but also

members of staff from Ireland and France have similarly been spreading pro-Kremlin propaganda inside Parliament for years; insists that these reports are followed up by immediate action by the appropriate authorities and that urgent measures are taken immediately to put a stop to these dangerous activities;

18. Notes that laws are essential to fight against corruption and criminal behaviour but cannot in themselves prevent criminal and unethical actions by individual Members; underlines that all political groups in the European Parliament bear a certain responsibility to monitor the actions of their Members, and therefore reminds all groups to quickly act in the event that they are made aware of any behaviour raising doubts about the integrity of any of their Members; calls on all MEPs and groups to fully cooperate with the relevant national and EU authorities in this context;
19. Reiterates its outrage about the regular revelations of large-scale Russian funding of political parties, politicians and officials in several democratic countries in an attempt to interfere with and gain leverage in their domestic processes;
20. Condemns all types of elite capture and the technique of co-opting top-level civil servants and former EU politicians, among others, by providing them with lucrative jobs in companies linked to governments actively engaged in interference actions against the EU; regrets the lack of tools available to prevent these practices;
21. Stresses that it should be made illegal in all Member States to engage in any open or covert activity financed by foreign authoritarian states or state-linked actors which aims to influence the process of European or national politics; underlines that non-profit organisations and third parties, coordinated by foreign authoritarian state actors and created with a view to influencing electoral processes, are tools for foreign interference and therefore represent a threat to democracy;
22. Underlines that Russia has pursued similar efforts to undermine democracies outside the EU, namely in the UK, the US and in numerous African countries; recalls that countries around the world have been severely affected by these malign and dangerous efforts;
23. Underlines that democratic processes and free and fair elections are at the heart of the European identity and that any attack against these principles is therefore a matter of extreme gravity and should be addressed as such by the respective authorities;
24. Is of the firm opinion that Parliament cannot tolerate a delayed response in light of the recent revelations; welcomes, therefore, the opening of an initial investigation into the case of MEP Tatjana Ždanoka and insists on strong and swift action;
25. Calls for stricter scrutiny of the organisation of events, of the invitation of external guests to Parliament and of access to Parliament's communication platforms;
26. Calls for a review of the screening procedures for all Parliament staff, including the staff of MEPs' offices, with a view to preventing infiltration by foreign authoritarian states' agents of influence;
27. Is of the firm opinion that Parliament resources such as sponsoring events and trips, granting access to video recording studios and other communication platforms and the

financing of political groups' or Members' communication projects, must not be used to undermine the values of the EU or for the purposes of disseminating hostile information by authoritarian regimes;

28. Calls for the use of all available instruments to restrict the activities of the MEPs linked to interference by Russia and other authoritarian regimes, for example by suspending Members who carry out subversive actions in the guise of parliamentary activities;
29. Believes that national authorities should intensify their efforts to prevent foreign interference and should therefore improve their mutual cooperation; acknowledges the critical significance of the Strategic Communication Centres specifically designed to investigate and unveil agents involved in activities that pose threats to democratic processes;
30. Underlines the key role of investigative journalism in revealing the attempts at foreign interference and covert activities, such as in the case of MEP Tatjana Ždanoka, whose cooperation with Russian intelligence was exposed by an international team of investigative journalists; reiterates its call for the EU institutions and the Member States to ensure sufficient and sustainable funding for investigative journalism;
31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the parliaments of the Member States.