



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2022)0070

Setting up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation

European Parliament decision of 10 March 2022 on setting up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2), and defining its responsibilities, numerical strength and term of office (2022/2585(RSO))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Conference of Presidents,
- having regard to the Commission communication on the European democracy action plan (COM(2020)0790),
- having regard to the Digital Services Act package, including the proposal for a regulation on a Single Market For Digital Services (Digital Services Act) and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (COM(2020)0825), and the proposal for a regulation on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector (Digital Markets Act) (COM(2020)0842),
- having regard to its resolution of 20 October 2021 on Europe’s Media in the Digital Decade: an Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation¹,
- having regard to the 2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation and the 2021 Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation (COM(2021)0262), and to the Recommendations for the New Code of Practice on Disinformation issued by the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services in October 2021,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 16 December 2020 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the resilience of critical entities (COM(2020)0829),
- having regard to the March 2021 EU toolbox of risk mitigating measures on the cybersecurity of 5G networks,

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0428.

- having regard to the European Court of Auditors’ Special Report 09/2021 on ‘Disinformation affecting the EU: tackled but not tamed’,
 - having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy of 10 June 2020 entitled ‘Tackling COVID-19 disinformation – Getting the facts right’ (JOIN(2020)0008),
 - having regard to the report of the Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation (A9-0022/2022),
 - having regard to Rule 207 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas foreign interference constitutes a serious violation of the universal values and principles on which the EU is founded, such as human dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law; whereas evidence shows that malicious and authoritarian foreign state and non-state actors are using information manipulation and other tactics to interfere in democratic processes in the EU; whereas such attacks mislead and deceive citizens and affect their voting behaviour, amplify divisive debates, divide, polarise, and exploit the vulnerabilities of, societies, promote hate speech, worsen the situation of vulnerable groups which are more likely to become victims of disinformation, distort the integrity of democratic elections and referendums, sow distrust in national governments, public authorities and the liberal democratic order and have the goal of destabilising European democracy;
 - B. whereas a campaign of disinformation of an unparalleled malice and magnitude with the purpose of deceiving both domestic citizens and the international community of States as a whole has been carried out by Russia since the eve of and during its war of aggression against Ukraine started on 24 February 2022;
 - C. whereas attempts by state actors from third countries and non-state actors to interfere in the functioning of democracy in the EU and its Member States, and put pressure on the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union by means of malicious interference, are part of a wider disruptive trend experienced by democracies worldwide;
 - D. whereas malicious actors continue to seek to interfere in electoral processes and take advantage of the openness and pluralism of our societies, and to attack democratic processes and the resilience of the EU and its Member States;
 - E. whereas the EU and its Member States do not currently have a specific regime of sanctions related to foreign interference and disinformation campaigns orchestrated by foreign state actors, meaning that such actors are in a position to safely assume that their destabilisation campaigns against the EU will meet with no consequences;
 - F. whereas there is a lack of a common definition and understanding of this phenomenon and many gaps and loopholes remain in current legislation and policies at EU and national level intended to detect, prevent and counter foreign interference;
 - G. whereas foreign interference, disinformation, and numerous attacks on and threats against democracy are expected to continue in ever-greater numbers and more

sophisticated ways in the run-up to local, regional, national elections and the European Parliament elections in 2024;

- H. whereas Parliament's previous recommendations to counter malign foreign interference operations in the democratic processes of the EU have contributed to an overall EU understanding and to a greater awareness of the issue;
- I. whereas the hearings and work of the INGE Special Committee have contributed to public recognition and the contextualisation of these issues, and have successfully framed the European debate on foreign interference in democratic processes and disinformation;
- J. whereas there is a need to further monitor these recommendations;
- K. whereas there is a need for global, multilateral cooperation and support among like-minded partners, including between parliamentarians, in dealing with foreign malicious interference and disinformation; whereas democracies have developed advanced skills and counter-strategies in dealing with those threats;
- 1. Decides to set up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2), vested with the following responsibilities:
 - (a) to scrutinise, in cooperation and consultation with standing committees where their powers and responsibilities under Annex VI of the Rules of Procedure are concerned, existing and planned legislation and policies to detect possible loopholes, gaps and overlaps that could be exploited for malicious interference in democratic processes, including as regards the following matters:
 - (i) policies contributing to EU democratic processes, resilience through situational awareness, media and information literacy, media pluralism, independent journalism and education;
 - (ii) interference using online platforms, in particular by evaluating, in-depth, the responsibility and effects the very large online platforms have on democracy and democratic processes in the EU;
 - (iii) critical infrastructure and strategic sectors;
 - (iv) interference during electoral processes;
 - (v) covert funding of political activities by foreign actors and donors;
 - (vi) cybersecurity and resilience in respect of cyberattacks, where related to democratic processes;
 - (vii) the role of non-state actors;
 - (viii) the impact of interference on the rights of minorities and other discriminated groups;

- (ix) interference through global actors via elite capture, national diasporas, universities and cultural events;
 - (x) deterrence, attribution and collective countermeasures, including sanctions;
 - (xi) neighbourhood and global cooperation, and multilateralism;
 - (xii) interference by EU-based actors in EU and third countries;
- (b) to develop, in close cooperation with the standing committees following the working practices of the INGE 1 special committee, suggestions on how to remedy these gaps in order to foster the EU's legal resilience and on how to improve the EU's institutional framework;
 - (c) to work closely with other EU institutions, Member States' authorities, international organisations, civil society, as well as state and non-state partners in third countries in order to reinforce EU action against hybrid threats and disinformation while all public activities of the INGE 2 special committee will respect the priorities set out in this decision;
 - (d) to follow up in detail and in a rigorous manner on the implementation of the report of the INGE 1 special committee with an evaluation of steps taken by the EU institutions;
 - (e) to contribute to overall institutional resilience against foreign interference, hybrid threats and disinformation in the run-up to European elections in 2024;
2. Decides that, whenever the special committee work includes the hearing of evidence of a confidential nature, testimonies involving personal data, or exchanges of views or hearings with authorities and bodies on confidential information, including scientific studies or parts thereof granted confidentiality status under Article 63 of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹, the meetings shall be held *in camera*; decides further that witnesses and experts shall have the right to make a statement or provide testimony *in camera*;
 3. Decides that the list of people invited to public meetings, the list of those who attend them and the minutes of such meetings shall be made public;
 4. Decides that confidential documents that have been received by the special committee shall be assessed in accordance with the procedure set out in Rule 221 of its Rules of Procedure; decides further that such information shall be used exclusively for the purposes of drawing up the final report of the special committee;
 5. Decides that the special committee shall have 33 members;

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC (OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 1).

6. Decides that the term of office of the special committee shall be 12 months and that this term shall start running from the date of its constituent meeting;
7. Decides that the special committee shall, after having scrutinised the implementation of the report of the INGE 1 special committee and existing legislation and after having identified loopholes, gaps and overlaps, identify the appropriate legal basis for any necessary legal acts and prepare grounds for permanent EU institutional solutions to address foreign malicious interference and disinformation and, if necessary, request specific institutional steps be taken by the Commission, by drafting, under Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure, an own-initiative report requesting the Commission to submit an appropriate proposal in this respect.