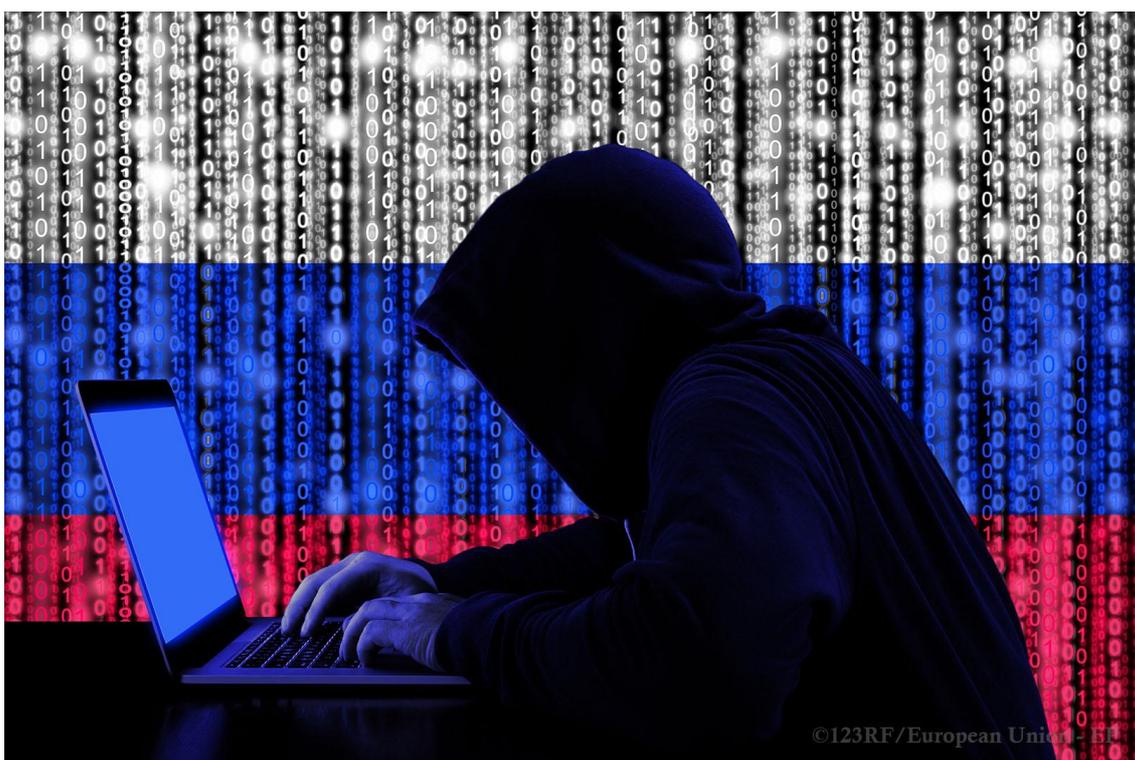


EU prepares itself to fight back against hostile propaganda

- New laws needed to enable robust response
- Protect elections from Russian interference
- Support EU-associated countries and Western Balkans



EU prepares itself to fight back against hostile propaganda- ©Michael Borgers/123RF/European Union – EP

MEPs warn that Russia's disinformation campaigns are the main source of disinformation in Europe, along with China, Iran and North Korea.

The European Parliament strongly condemned Russia, China, Iran and North Korea's increasingly aggressive actions, "which seek to undermine the foundations and principles of European democracies as well as the sovereignty of all Eastern Partnership countries."

Taking stock of the EU's latest efforts to counteract hostile propaganda by third parties, MEPs call upon member states to consider developing a robust legal framework at both EU and international level to tackle hybrid threats.

Dealing with Russia

In the resolution, adopted by 489 to 148 and 30 abstentions, MEPs want "to raise awareness about Russia's disinformation campaigns, as this constitutes the main source of disinformation in Europe". MEPs urge the EU to expand its [East StratCom Task Force](#), set up in 2015, into a fully-fledged structure within the European External Action Service, to address Russia's hostile propaganda.

Holding providers to account, identifying ownership

MEPs call for social media companies, messenger services and search engine providers to be regulated by law. Companies failing to speedily remove systemic fake news should be held to account. Furthermore, authorities should be able to identify and locate authors and sponsors of submitted political content.

Safeguarding elections

MEPs strongly condemn third parties interfering in elections and referenda. Member states are invited to amend electoral laws that would enable them to proactively counteract threats stemming from disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, cybercrimes and violation of freedom of expression when voting.

Member states should support EU-associated countries and the Western Balkans to ensure a robust defence of their electoral processes from malicious propaganda activities.

In a vote on Tuesday, Parliament also adopted legislation to protect the May 2019 European elections from data misuse, following the findings on the UK Brexit referendum and the Facebook / Cambridge Analytica scandal. The new rules introduce [financial sanctions against European political parties and foundations](#) that may deliberately misuse personal data in their European election campaigns.

Quote

Anna Elzbieta FOTYGA (ECR, PO), rapporteur, said: "Disinformation poisons hearts and minds. We can no longer deny the fact that our institutions and societies are targeted by the Kremlin's

hostile propaganda, which is part of a broader strategy. Fortunately, we are more experienced, determined and united to counter such activities. Our answer depends on resilient societies, transparent media and encouraging pluralism while avoiding censorship.”

Background

The resolution takes stock of the follow-up by the European External Action Service on the last [EP resolution on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda](#), which was adopted on 23 November 2016.

Further information

[Adopted text will be available here \(12.03.2019\)](#)

[Watch a video recording of the debate](#)

[Rapporteur Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA \(ECR, PO\)](#)

[Interview with the rapporteur](#)

[EU vs Disinfo](#)

[Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force](#)

[Protection of personal data in the context of elections to the European Parliament](#)

[EP resolution on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda \(23.11.2016\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material](#)

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