
Foreign Interference: MEPs call for urgent protection of 2024 European elections

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Parliament expects increased interference and information manipulation

- “Disinformation-for-hire” services have been used to attack electoral processes
- Concerns about Russian and Chinese interference
- MEPs recommend banning TikTok at all levels of national government and in the EU institutions

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MEPs warn meddling in democratic processes will increase in the run-up to the 2024 European Parliament elections ©Roibu/Adobe Stock

Parliament calls for a coordinated strategy to increase the EU's resilience to foreign interference and information manipulation and protect the 2024 European elections .

Foreign interference, disinformation, and attacks on democracy are likely to continue in ever-greater numbers and to become more sophisticated in the run-up to the European Parliament elections in June 2024, say MEPs. The warning comes in a report by the Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation, adopted by plenary by 469 votes for, 71 against and 75 abstentions.

In the text, MEPs highlight interference on online platforms, protection of critical infrastructure and strategic sectors, interference during electoral processes, covert funding of political activities by foreign actors and resilience to cyberattacks. The report focuses particularly on Russian and Chinese interference in the EU, in countries applying to join the EU, including the Western Balkans, and countries in the Global South.

Meddling in electoral processes

Parliament condemns the dangerous phenomenon of disinformation-for-hire, whereby providers offer disinformation services to government and non-government actors, for example over the dark web, to attack electoral processes. To counter prohibited financial transactions from non-EU countries entering the EU's political system, MEPs urge the Commission to facilitate the tracking of donations and call on the member states to urgently address the issue of donations

from third countries to national political parties.

Critical infrastructure

MEPs also highlight the risks of economic dependence, espionage and sabotage, when foreign companies acquire influence over EU critical infrastructure. Chinese shipping companies have acquired majority or sizeable interests in over 20 European ports, they add . MEPs also recommend banning TikTok at all levels of national government and in the EU institutions and call on the Council and the Commission to exclude the use of equipment and software from manufacturers from high-risk countries, particularly China and Russia, such as ByteDance Huawei, ZTE, Kaspersky, NtechLab or Nuctech.

Coordinated EU strategy

Parliament wants a coordinated EU strategy to include new initiatives alongside improved enforcement of existing provisions, and calls for adequate funding to tackle disinformation and uphold democratic processes. MEPs are requesting the Commission to develop an effective [Defence of Democracy Package](#) together with legislation to counter hybrid threats in the EU, taking into account proposals from the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) They also want a permanent European Parliament body to monitor and fight foreign interference.

In adopting this report, Parliament is responding to the expectations of EU citizens to step up the fight against foreign interferences and counter disinformation, online threats and propaganda in an objective and factual way –as expressed in Proposals 23(5), 27(all), 28(2), 33(4), 37(4), 46(2) of the [conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe](#).

For main takeaways from the report, click [here](#).

Quote

Rapporteur [Sandra Kalniete](#) (EPP, LV) said: “Foreign interference in democratic processes represents a growing threat to the security of EU member states and the EU, particularly against the backdrop of rapid technological development and Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine. We must act urgently and implement our recommendations quickly. Significant and lasting investment must be made in our democratic resilience, drawing on the experience of our partners like Ukraine and Taiwan.”

Background

The report follows up on the implementation of the [Resolution on foreign interference adopted in March 2022](#). While preparing the new report, MEPs met with national, European and international policy makers, with intelligence services of EU member states as well as with [NATO StratCom](#) in Riga, the [Hybrid CoE](#) in Helsinki, with the Australian government and authorities and respective bodies at the UN in New York, and as well with relevant counterparts and authorities in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Further information

[Adopted text will be available here](#)

[Video recording of the press conference, 1 June 2023](#)

[Video recording of the plenary debate, 1 June 2023](#)
[Steps of the procedure](#)

[EP Think-Tank: Foreign interference in EU democratic processes: Second report](#)


[Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation \(INGE 2\)](#)


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