

[Press release – EU to take action against fake news and foreign electoral interference](#)

Attempts to influence decision-making in the EU put at risk European democratic societies, warn MEPs in the resolution adopted on Thursday with 469 votes for, 143 against and 47 abstentions.

Obscure party funding

Parliament points out that foreign interference has a systematic pattern, be it through campaigns on social media, cyber-attacks on infrastructure related to elections or financial support to political parties in the run-up to all major national and European elections. Much of this interference benefits anti-EU, extremist and populist candidates.

Despite member states fully or partially banning foreign donations to political parties or candidates, foreign actors find ways to circumvent those rules, say MEPs, singling out cases of the Front National in France, and allegations reported by media on the Freedom Party in Austria, Lega in Italy and Leave.eu in the UK.

Steep increase in Russian propaganda

They are deeply concerned about the “highly dangerous nature of Russian propaganda”, which is the main source of disinformation in Europe and which has doubled since January 2019 (998 cases) as compared to 2018 (434 cases).

MEPs also strongly condemn “aggressive actions” from non-European countries seeking to undermine the sovereignty of EU accession countries in the Western Balkans and Eastern partnership countries.

How to respond

MEPs call for an upgrade of the EU [East StratCom Task Force](#) to a permanent structure with significantly higher financing. They call on internet and social media companies to cooperate in countering disinformation, without undermining freedom of speech and on the EU to create a legal framework to counter hybrid threats

Background

The European Union has been actively tackling disinformation since 2015, when the East StratCom Task Force was set up in the European External Action Service (EEAS) to effectively communicate the EU’s policies towards its eastern neighbourhood. In October 2018, ahead of the European elections, the [Code of Practice](#) was signed by Facebook, Google, Twitter and Mozilla, and by Microsoft in 2019, in which they agreed on a voluntary basis to self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation. In December 2018, the European

Commission published an [Action Plan against Disinformation](#).

Before the end of 2020, more than 50 presidential, national, local or regional elections are due to be held in member states.