Foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation

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The Special Committee on foreign interference in all EU democratic processes, including disinformation adopted the report by Sandra KALNIETE (EPP, LV) on foreign interference in all EU democratic processes, including disinformation.

Need for an EU coordinated strategy against foreign interference

Members are deeply concerned about the growing incidence and increasingly sophisticated nature of foreign interference and information manipulation attempts, conducted overwhelmingly by Russia and China and targeting all parts of the democratic functioning of the European Union and its Member States.

The report called on the Commission to propose a multi-layer, **coordinated and cross-sector strategy**, as well as adequate financial resources, aimed at equipping the EU and its Member States with appropriate foresight and resilience policies and deterrence tools.

This strategy should be built on:

(a) **common terminologies and definitions**, a single methodology, evaluations and ex post impact assessments of the legislation adopted so far, a shared intelligence system, and understanding, monitoring, including early warnings, and situational awareness of the issues at stake;

(b) **concrete policies** enabling resilience-building among EU citizens in line with democratic values, including through support to civil society;

(c) **appropriate disruption and defence capabilities**;

(d) **diplomatic and deterrence responses**, including an EU toolbox for countering foreign interference and influence operations, including hybrid operations, through adequate measures, e.g. attribution and naming of perpetrators, sanctions and countermeasures, and global partnerships to exchange practices and promote international norms of responsible state behaviour.

Strategy sectors

The strategy should also be based on a risk-based, whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, covering the following areas in particular:

- building resilience through situational awareness, media and information literacy, media pluralism, independent journalism and education;

- foreign interference using online platforms;

- strengthening critical infrastructure and strategic sectors;

- combating foreign interference during electoral processes;

- covert funding of political activities from foreign actors and donors;

- cyber security and resilience against cyber-attacks;

- protection of EU Member States, institutions, agencies, delegations and missions;

- interference by foreign actors through recruitment of senior officials, national diasporas, universities and cultural events;

- deterrence, attribution of responsibility and collective countermeasures, including sanctions;

- global cooperation and multilateralism.

In particular, Members called on the EU and its Member States to boost the resources and means allocated to bodies and associations in Europe and worldwide, such as think tanks and fact-checkers, responsible for monitoring threats, including disinformation, and raising awareness of their gravity.

Stressing the crucial role of the EU in a broad strategic sense, Members called on the EU and its Member States to **strengthen their foresight capacity and the interoperability of their actions**, in order to be sure that they will be ready to: (i) anticipate, prevent and mitigate foreign interference and manipulation of information; (ii) enhance the protection of their strategic interests and infrastructure; and (iii) engage in multilateral cooperation and coordination in order to achieve a common understanding of the issue in relevant international fora.

Members are concerned about the **many gaps and shortcomings** in current legislation and policies at EU and national level aimed at detecting, preventing and combating foreign interference. They are concerned about the lack of awareness of the seriousness of the current threats posed by foreign authoritarian regimes and other malicious actors, as well as the lack of appropriate and sufficient standards and measures to identify and respond to acts of foreign interference.

The Commission is called on to:

- include, where appropriate, the dimension of information manipulation and foreign interference in the **ex-ante impact assessment** carried out before presenting new proposals, with a view to integrating the fight against these phenomena into the Union's policy-making process;

- establish a Values and Transparency **Task Force** within the EU to review existing legislation and policies to identify gaps that could be exploited by malicious actors;

- consider, together with the EEAS, the establishment of an independent and well-resourced European Centre for Interference Treats and Information Integrity to identify, analyse and document information manipulation operations and threats of interference against the Union as a whole.