Resolution on new allegations of Russian interference in the European Parliament, in the upcoming EU elections and the impact on the European Union

2024/2696(RSP) - 25/04/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 429 votes to 27, with 48 abstentions, a resolution on new allegations of Russian interference in the European Parliament, in the upcoming EU elections and the impact on the European Union.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and the ECR groups.

Context

Increasing attempts by state and non-state actors from third countries to directly or indirectly interfere with democratic decision-making and electoral processes in the Union and its Member States are being reported. There is clear evidence of such attempts by Russia to interfere in electoral processes and policymaking worldwide and especially against the EU and its Member States. These methods include but are not limited to cyberattacks, including on the European Parliament, elite capture of European decision-makers, election meddling, as well as by funding movements and lobbies. While Russia remains the main origin of foreign interference and disinformation in the European Union, other countries have also conducted such campaigns. The EU's response to these threats can only be effective if it is based on a **transversal, holistic and long-term policy approach** jointly carried out by both the EU and its Member States.

Parliament is appalled by the credible allegations that MEPs were paid to disseminate Russian propaganda as well as to support Russian efforts to systematically create a network of dependencies through European political parties that then act as amplifiers of the Kremlin's propaganda. It expressed its outrage at the participation of Members in a pro-Russian media outlet, 'Voice of Europe', while Russia is waging its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. It deplored Voice of Europe's ability to restart its operations from Kazakhstan and called on EU Member States to ensure it cannot be accessed in the EU.

The resolution called on the political leadership of the EU and its Member States to finally address these Russian efforts with the necessary sense of **urgency and resolve**. Sanction packages should be fine-tuned to this effect.

Parliament is also appalled by recent credible reports that Petr Bystron, a leading member of AfD (ID Group) and member in the German Bundestag, has accepted payments of up to EUR 25 000 to spread pro-Russian propaganda. Furthermore, it expresses its concern about the recent FBI questioning of AfD MEP Maximilian Krah and called upon the AfD to publicly declare its financial relations with the Kremlin without delay and to publicly disclose the purpose and exact amount of all payments originating from Kremlin-linked sources. Utmost concern was also expressed regarding the arrest of MEP Krah's assistant on 23 April 2024 following serious charges of espionage for China.

Moreover, Parliament condemned Russia's participation in disinformation campaigns, as well as the alleged intense contacts and number of meetings between the agents responsible for Russian interference with a **Catalan secessionist group**.

Enhanced security culture in the European Parliament

Parliament is called on to:

- introduce mandatory, effective and regular training on security, interference, ethical standards, compliance and integrity for all MEPs and their offices and for all Parliament staff, raising awareness that they are potential targets of foreign state and non-state actors;

- put in place effective monitoring and surveillance systems to detect foreign interference while respecting MEPs' freedom of mandate.

Parliament welcomed the adoption of the legislative package on anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism, which includes new EU-level rules aimed at addressing money laundering risks related to **politically exposed persons**.

The resolution insisted on the need to do more to protect the European information environment and EU citizens' right to access reliable information. It recalled the need to establish '**mirror clauses**' whereby the openness of the European information space to third countries would be proportionate to the access European media outlets have in these countries.

The EU is called on to be vigilant with regard to attempts by any third country, including Russia, to unduly influence its democratic processes. Russian is warned that hybrid disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks and influence operations already constitute serious attacks on European democracy and any physical action on European soil would constitute a **dramatic escalation**.

Member States should expose and investigate Russian attempts to sabotage critical infrastructure and Parliament stressed the need to **strengthen safeguards to protect election infrastructure**, which is particularly vulnerable to physical attacks and cyberattacks before and during elections.