Decision on setting up a special committee on the European Democracy Shield, and defining its responsibilities, numerical strength and term of office

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The European Parliament adopted by 441 votes to 178, with 34 abstentions, a decision on setting up a special committee on the European Democracy Shield, and defining its responsibilities, numerical strength and term of office.

Member recalled that **foreign interference** constitutes a serious violation of the universal values and principles on which the Union is founded, such as human dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. Evidence shows that malicious and authoritarian foreign state actors and malicious non-state actors are using information manipulation and other tactics to interfere in democratic processes in the Union.

A campaign of disinformation of an unparalleled malice and magnitude with the purpose of deceiving both domestic citizens and the international community of States as a whole has continuously been carried out by Russia for many years, with particular intensity since the eve of and during its war of aggression against Ukraine.

Parliament underlined the attempts by state actors from third countries and malicious non-state actors to interfere in the functioning of democracy in the Union and its Member States, and put pressure on the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union by means of malicious interference, are part of a wider disruptive trend experienced by democracies worldwide.

Malicious actors continue to seek to interfere in electoral processes and take advantage of the openness and pluralism of our societies, and to attack democratic processes and the resilience of the Union and its Member States.

The hearings and work of the INGE 1 and INGE 2 special committees have contributed to public recognition and the contextualisation of these issues, and have successfully framed the Union debate on foreign interference in democratic processes and disinformation.

Against this background, Parliament decided to set up a special committee named '**special committee on the European Democracy Shield**'. It will carry out, in cooperation and consultation with the competent standing committees where their powers and responsibilities under Annex VI of the Rules of Procedure are concerned, the following responsibilities:

- assess relevant existing and planned legislation and policies to further detect possible loopholes, gaps and overlaps that could be exploited for malicious interference in democratic processes;

- develop, in close cooperation with the competent standing committees, suggestions and proposals on how to further remedy these gaps in order to foster the Union's resilience towards hybrid threats and attacks, including foreign information manipulation and interference, and on how to improve the Union's legal and institutional framework;

- assess the activities of the Commission and the European External Action Service regarding the fight against foreign information manipulation and interference and hybrid threats and attacks;

- counter information campaigns and strategic communication of malign third countries, including those through domestic Union actors and organisations, that harm the goals of the Union and that are created to influence Union public opinion;

- contribute to overall institutional resilience against foreign interference, hybrid threats, attacks and disinformation;

- maintain relations with other Union institutions and bodies, Member States authorities, other international organisations and interparliamentary assemblies, civil society as well as state and non-state partners in relevant third countries for matters falling under its responsibility, in order to reinforce Union action against hybrid threats and attacks and internal and foreign information manipulation and interference;

- engage particularly with state and non-state partners in Ukraine and Moldova and the pro-European partners in Georgia as well as the countries from the Western Balkans;

- counter manipulated narratives coming from Russia, given the critical and continuous danger Russia poses to the stability and security in the whole of the Union.

The list of people invited to public meetings, the list of those who attend them and the minutes of such meetings, will be made public.

The special committee will have **33 members**. The term of office of the special committee will be **12 months**. That term of office will start running from the date of its constituent meeting.