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*Session document*

22/04/2024

**MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

pursuant to Rule 132(2) and (4) of the Rules of Procedure

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

tabled by **Nathalie Loiseau, Petras Auštrevičius, José Ramon Bauzá Díaz, Jordi Cañas, Olivier Chastel, Bernard Guetta, Michael Kauch, Karen Melchior, Javier Nart, Jan-Christoph Oetjen, Urmas Paet, Nicolae Dragoş Pîslaru, Frédérique Ries, Hilde Vautmans**

on behalf of the Renew Europe Group

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

The European Parliament,

* having regard to its resolution of 8 February 2024 on allegations of Russian interference in the democratic processes of the European Union 2024/2548(RSP)
* having regard to its resolution of 13 July 2023 on recommendations for reform of European Parliament’s rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption (2023/2034(INI))
* having regard to its resolution of 1 June 2023 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2022/2075(INI))
* having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2020/2268(INI))
* having regard to its previous resolutions on EU - Russia relations, in particular its resolution of 23 November 2022 on recognising the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism
* having regard to its resolution of 1 March 2022 on the Russian aggression against Ukraine (2022/2564(RSP))
* having regard to its Rules of Procedure and the Code of Conduct for Members of the Parliament
* having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
1. Whereas the Russian Federation has long been engaged in a hybrid war against the EU and its Member States, deploying a wide array of different methods of interference, embedded within a larger strategy to undermine the proper functioning of European democratic processes; whereas these methods include but are not limited to cyber-attacks, including on the European Parliament, elite capture of European decision-makers, election meddling including through the use of foreign information manipulation and interference; whereas this hybrid war has been the precursor for and continues to support Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine;
2. Whereas there is evidence of Russian interference and manipulation in many Western liberal democracies, as well as of its practical support for extremist forces and radical-minded entities to promote the destabilisation of the Union;
3. whereas Russia has established contacts with parties, personalities and movements in order to rely on actors within the Union's institutions to legitimise Russian positions, support independence movements and proxy governments and to press for the easing of sanctions and mitigate the consequences of international isolation;
4. Whereas according to media reports confirmed by Polish, Czech, and Belgian security services, as well as by the Prime Ministers of Belgium and the Czech Republic, Members of the European Parliament and candidates in the upcoming European elections have received payment from the Russian Government or its proxies to spread propaganda and influence the elections to the European Parliament in various European countries;
5. Whereas on 27 March 2024 the Czech foreign ministry announced that it had sanctioned Ukrainian oligarch Viktor Medvedchuk, an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, for running a Russian influence operation from Czech territory using a news site called "Voice of Europe," and a middleman called Artem Marchevskyi for his activities, with the aim of undermining the European support for Ukraine and influencing the 2024 European Parliament elections;
6. Whereas on 28 March 2024 Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo stated, during a debate in the Belgian Parliament, that based on investigations conducted by Belgian intelligence services in collaboration with their Czech counterparts, it is evident that Russia has approached European parliamentarians and paid some of them for the promotion of Russian propaganda; Whereas, on 12 April 2024, Prime Minister De Croo further announced the opening of criminal prosecution and requested an urgent meeting of European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) and called for the broadening of the mandate for the European Anti-Fraud Office and the European Public Prosecutor Office;
7. Whereas on 28 March 2024 Poland's Internal Security Agency announced that it had conducted searches as part of a collaborative investigation with other European security services into alleged Russian espionage linked to "Voice of Europe" leading to charges against a Polish citizen suspected of Russian espionage; Whereas according to the Internal Security Agency, this individual is believed to have been embedded within Polish and EU parliamentary circles, carrying out tasks commissioned and financed by counterparts from Russian intelligence;
8. Whereas on 29 March 2024, Austrian authorities arrested a former Austrian intelligence officer on multiple charges, including allegedly providing cellphone data of former high-ranking Austrian officials to Russian intelligence, involvement in planning a burglary at a prominent journalist’s apartment, and drafting "suggestions for improvement" following a Russian-ordered killing in Germany; Whereas the arrested former Austrian intelligence officer was in close contact with far-right politicians from the FPÖ party  in the Austrian parliament and government;
9. Whereas on 18 April, German authorities arrested two suspected saboteurs in the German state of Bavaria who were allegedly spying on military installations for possible bomb or arson attacks on behalf of a Russian intelligence service to allegedly sabotage German support for Ukraine in the war against Russia; whereas the arrests indicate that Russia's secret services are evidently entering new dimensions, which include attacks on military facilities in addition to disinformation campaigns and cyber attacks;
10. Whereas, on February 12, 2024, VIGINUM, the French government agency responsible for identifying foreign digital interference, published a report detailing a vast Russian disinformation campaign dubbed "Portal Kombat” which consists of 193 websites targeting tasked with disseminating pro-Russian narratives among Russian-speaking and European populations across Europe and the USA; whereas, already in the end of 2023, French authorities indicated that the Stars of David found painted in several locations in Paris were part of a destabilisation operation tied to a pro-Russian businessman from Moldova;
11. Whereas, according to media analyses, since August 2023, sixteen far-right Members of the European Parliament from Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Slovakia, Estonia, Spain, Croatia, Denmark and Belgium participated in debates and interviews organised by Voice of Europe;
12. whereas through its cultivation of contacts and relationships, Russia aims to build political and economic influence to destabilise democracy in the European Union; whereas newspaper reports have highlighted contacts and close personal relationships between secessionists in Catalonia, including authorities of the government of the autonomous community of Catalonia, and the Kremlin**,** going so far as to holding a meeting between the former Russian diplomat Nikolai Sadovnikov and the then-separatist leader and former President of Catalonia, now sitting MEP Carles Puigdemont, in Barcelona, on the eve of Catalonia’s illegal referendum in October 2017;
13. Whereas some of the Members in question have consistently voiced sentiments that can be considered as pro-Russian, for example by attributing the start of the conflict to Ukraine, participating in unofficial election observation in Crimea, and expressing desires for its defeat in the war, downplaying the possibility of Ukraine's accession to the EU, opposing further weapon shipments to Ukraine, and advocating for territorial concessions from the government in Kiev;
14. Whereas there are credible evidence that, in 2020, Peter Pelligrini, then-Prime Minister of Slovakia, had requested the help of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban to obtain help from the Kremlin ahead of Slovakia’s 2020 parliamentary election; whereas this resulted in a visit by Prime Minister Pelligrini to Russia in February 2020, three days before the elections were held; Whereas the 2023 parliamentary elections have been targeted by further Russian interference and disinformation campaigns; Whereas the pro-Russian Peter Pelligrini is now President-elect of Slovakia and due to take office in June 2024;
15. Whereas following reports of a Latvian MEP providing extensive assistance to Russian intelligence services, the Parliament launched its own administrative probe, resulting in President Metsola imposing sanctions on the Member, including a five-day fine of her daily allowance amounting to €1,750 and a ban from certain roles representing the European Parliament until the end of this mandate in July;
16. Whereas the European Parliament Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation, has exposed in detail the efforts and operations led by Russia in order to infiltrate, influence and interfere with European democracies and the European institutions;
17. Whereas some political groups unsuccessfully tried to deny the last extension of the ING2 special committee mandate to cope with all forms of corruption and foreign interferences in the European Parliament, advocating instead for an investigation committee focusing only on the Qatargate;
18. Whereas, while Members have been regularly targeted by spyware, as shown by the recent revelations on the past targeting of two members and one staffer of the Parliament’s Security and Defense Subcommittee, there has been a surge in cyberattacks and foreign interference targeting the work of the European Parliament in the lead-up to the European Parliament election;
19. Whereas the European Parliament, following the Qatargate revelations, in September 2023 updated and significantly strengthened its internal integrity framework, among others through an in-depth revision of its Rules of Procedures, the Code of Conduct for MEPs and the relevant Bureau Decisions;
20. Whereas it is critically important to combat the proliferation of disinformation and foreign interference in European democracy, and to take further measures to safeguard the right of European citizens to accurate and trustworthy news sources as well as to shield the European information landscape from manipulation by authoritarian regimes; Whereas Reporters Without Borders have recently put forth twelve proposals for a New Deal for the Right to Information;
21. Whereas MEPs have called President Metsola to ask for an urgent investigation into Russian interference attempts ahead of the next European elections; whereas there has been no reply so far;
22. Is extremely concerned by the allegations that Members of the European Parliament were paid to disseminate Russian propaganda; Denounces, in the strongest terms, Russia's alleged attempts to influence Members which constitute serious foreign interference in the EU’s democratic processes;
23. Expresses its outrage at the participation of Members of the European Parliament in a pro-Russian media outlet, Voice of Europe, while Russia is leading its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine; Emphasises that the views propagated by Members of the European Parliament on "Voice of Europe" do not reflect the stance of the vast majority of MEPs, who overwhelmingly denounce Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine, its employment of hybrid warfare tactics against European democracy, and its other aggressive and anti-democratic policy decisions in recent years;
24. Calls for the EU and the Member States to mirror the sanctions adopted by the Czech Government against "Voice of Europe" as well as Viktor Medvedchuk and Artem Marchevskyi; deplores the fact that Voice of Europe has been able to restart its operations from Kazakhstan; calls on the Member States to ensure that Voice of Europe cannot be accessed across the European Union; furthermore, urges the EP Presidency to take all necessary steps to remove any access that “Voice of Europe” has to the European Parliament’s premises and protect the democratic integrity of this house;
25. Commits to provide its full support and collaboration to national authorities investigating the actions of the implicated MEPs and other individuals involved in Russian intelligence activities to uncover the scale of the influence operation within the European Parliament and allegations of potential corruption; Welcomes the opening of an investigation into the suspected cases of Russian interference in EU elections by the Belgian authorities, calls upon relevant Member States to determine whether the involved MEPs are liable for prosecution under their respective criminal law; Commits to provide its full support and cooperation therefor; calls upon the relevant EP bodies to do everything possible to ensure a timely lifting of MEPs’ immunity in case such a request is received by the relevant authorities; calls upon these bodies to convene as soon as possible after their constitutive meetings following the next European elections in order to immediately start their proceedings if such requests have been received;
26. Welcomes the call for an urgent meeting of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) requested by Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo; Welcomes further the request to examine, and when necessary broaden, the mandate for the European Anti-Fraud Office and the European Public Prosecutor Office (EPPO) to be able to prosecute such cases; Calls on the Member States to consider amending article 85 and 86 TFEU and the relevant statutory directives and regulations to cover such crimes;
27. Welcomes the referral of the Members concerned to the Advisory Committee on the Code of Conduct; commits to enforce its applicable internal sanction framework in full and calls for exposing any sitting MEPs or candidates in the upcoming European elections that have taken money from or been corrupted by the Russian Government or their proxies; notes that the alleged facts pre-date the recent adoption of the reform of Parliament’s integrity framework; considers that rules by themselves would not have prevented the alleged reprehensible conduct of the MEPs; remains nevertheless ready to further evaluate and fine-tune the functioning and sanctioning of Parliament’s integrity framework, which was reinforced in the wake of the Qatargate;
28. Expresses deep concerns about the large-scale disinformation campaigns that Russia has pursued in Catalonia, as well as the alleged intense contacts and number of meetings between the agents responsible for Russian interference with the Catalan secessionist movement and administration; calls on the European Centre of Excellence for Combating Hybrid Threats in Helsinki to carry out a study; calls on the competent judicial authorities to effectively investigate the connections of the MEPs allegedly associated with the Kremlin and Russia’s attempts at destabilisation and interference in the EU and its Member States; deplores all attacks on judges investigating any interference activities;
29. Considers that the allegations regarding the MEP concerned underline the need for an enhanced security culture within the European Parliament; reiterates, therefore, its call for the full implementation of the recommendations contained in its resolution of 13 July 2023 on recommendations for reform of European Parliament’s rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption, including mandatory security training for MEPs and staffers, appropriate security clearance and reinforced screening of staffers, in particular those attending in camera meetings;
30. Recalls that foreign interference is a systemic threat that must be countered vigorously; recalls further that, while Russia remains the main origin of foreign interference and disinformation in the European Union, other countries have also conducted such campaigns; underlines that 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 by both the EU and its Member States; remains determined to follow through in its efforts to combat foreign interference in the EU in the years to come, among others through a dedicated Parliamentary body; stresses that vigilance and protection against foreign interferences are particularly needed in the run-up to European elections this year;
31. Firmly denounces the Russian Federation’s continued attempts to undermine the functioning of European democratic processes and stresses that these tactics must be met with consequences; reiterates its call on the Member States to further develop and fine-tune the sanction packages adopted against the Russian Federation and to close loopholes in the enforcement in the restrictive measures currently in force;
32. Highlights the important legislation on media freedom and digital rights adopted by the European Union in recent years, such as the European Media Freedom Act, the Artificial Intelligence Act or the Digital Services Act; Highlights, nevertheless, that further action is needed to stop the spread of malign disinformation online and to protect the right of European citizens to reliable news information;
33. Insists on the need to do more to protect European information environment and EU citizens right to access reliable information; recalls the need to establish, as stated in the European Parliament’s previous reports, ‘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; Insist on the fact that labelling on platforms should go beyond identifying deep fakes but also establish positive labelling using tools created by the media sector, such as the Journalism Trust Initiative; Express, in this context, its general support for the so-called New Deal for the Right to Information proposed by Reporters Without Borders;
34. Stresses that the Russian Federation’s hybrid tactics not in the least advance Russia’s political agenda within the EU, but in contrast generate further momentum for the EU’s unwavering support to Ukraine it is defence against the illegal occupier;
35. Warns the Russian Federation that hybrid disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks and influence operations already constitute serious attacks against European democracy and any physical action on European soil would constitute a dramatic escalation;"
36. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.