

## Tackling propaganda and false news from Russia

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party convening in Amsterdam, the Netherlands on 1 to 3 December 2017:

### Having regard to:

- the ALDE Party resolution ‘Support Civil Society and Genuine Democracy in Russia’, adopted at the ALDE Congress in Warsaw, Poland in December 2016;
- the European agenda for culture in a globalising world (COM(2007)0242); [1]
- the Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship (8496/15); [2]
- the European Parliament resolution on the role of intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and education in promoting EU fundamental values (2015/2139(INI)). [3]

### Notes that:

- support for populist and extremist political movements since the start of the financial crisis has dramatically increased;
- political institutions and economic actors in Europe have suffered an increase in cyber attacks;
- propaganda is manipulative information designed to persuade its intended audience to think and behave in a certain manner;
- countering propaganda is necessary to uphold fundamental EU values and to ensure human rights, democratic values and functions of civil society;
- despite the levels of concern in European institutions, citizens of EU member nations experience a lack of transparency with regards to the usability of and access to information channels, tools, measures and documentation concerning propaganda within the European Union. Citizens of the European Union are not currently involved in the process of identifying and combating propaganda.
- Russia’s propaganda is characterised by anti-European sentiment, hate speech, homophobia and xenophobia. It encourages aggression against neighbouring countries and impedes integration of national minorities, and undermines confidence in Western democracies;
- propaganda is fuelled and financed at least partially by foreign governments with the specific aim of creating dissent in Europe, break down its institutions, spread extremist political ideas (both of Far Left, Far Right and religion-based).

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- combating propaganda is necessary to uphold fundamental EU values and to ensure human rights, democratic values and functions of civil society;
- despite the levels of concern in European institutions, citizens of EU member nations experience a lack of transparency with regards to the usability of and access to information channels, tools, measures and documentation concerning propaganda within the European Union.

#### **Considers that:**

- there has been an alarming increase of propaganda and disinformation aimed at European states through media outlets;
- technology plays a key role. Technical means of manipulation in general but algorithms known as bots influence and manipulate social networks in the run up to elections in EU Member States;
- that Russia has launched Sputnik, a so-called news agency, and the semi-secret Baltnews site, which publishes anonymously produced "news" in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian;
- Russia's state funded RT TV is a powerful disinformation outlet that broadcasts in multiple languages;
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's budget today, stretched to support television, radio, web and social media in 28 languages is roughly \$100 million, while East StratCom, the new EU unit which has identified and publicised 2,500 Russia-planted fake stories over the past year, may soon be upgraded to a paltry budget of €1 million out of a total budget of 142 billion euros;
- pro-Russian broadcasters' influence is reflected in consistently stronger backing for the Kremlin among ethnic Russians than in the general population;
- pro-Russian broadcasters and Russian-funded media has strongly supported xenophobic, anti-European and nationalistic parties around Europe in order to erode the European integration process, liberal and democratic values and territorial integrity in the Member States;

#### **Calls for:**

- stronger cooperation and information exchange between various organisations that have voiced concern at Russian propaganda efforts, such as but not limited to, European Advanced Cyber Defence Centre, European Council of Foreign Relations, EUvsDisinformation;
- a working group to be set up within a strengthened task force under the auspices of East StratCom, charged with identifying the best methods to counter any disinformation tactics by foreign actors seeking to undermine the democracy, unity and diversity of the EU;

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- the appropriate attention to the defence of our democracies against foreign political powers' propaganda and that the implementation should start at the earliest date possible;
- increased efforts in helping and building communications with Russian liberal political parties, NGOs, independent journalists and civil society leaders that pursue the same political goals and ambitions as those of the EU to be reinforced;
- media literacy and critical evaluation studies of sources and their reliability, to be encouraged as part of secondary education curricula across EU Member States;
- increase the level of resources allocated to ENISA, the European Network and Information Security Agency;
- appropriate EU funding to be allocated to independent think-tanks as well as to research for countering and understanding the false news-phenomenon through existing or to-be-created structures.
- EU-wide common definitions of disinformation, propaganda and false news so as to better coordinate joint action against these phenomena;
- consistent application of the actions mentioned above for all future potential cases of false news and/or disinformation tactics, in light of other non-EU countries that are also on a slippery slope to authoritarian rule and willing to harm European unity by using propaganda tools;
- the ALDE Groups in the European Parliament and in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to ensure that Members appointed to higher positions, for instance in joint delegations, always act to safeguard European values and remain critical to Russian propaganda.

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**Sources:**

[1] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0242:FIN:EN:HTML>

[2] [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/eycs/2015/05/st08965\\_en15.pdf/](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/eycs/2015/05/st08965_en15.pdf/)

[3] <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A8-2015-0373+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>