

Procedure file

Basic information	
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2016/2030(INI)
EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties	
See also 2018/2115(INI)	
Subject	
3.30.08 Press, media freedom and pluralism	
3.30.16 Ethical information policy	
3.30.25 International information networks and society, internet	
6.40 Relations with third countries	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Foreign Affairs	 FOTYGA Anna	07/12/2015
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 UNGUREANU Traian	
		 FREUND Eugen	
		 AUŠTREVČIUS Petras	
		 HARMS Rebecca	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Culture and Education	 ZDROJEWSKI Bogdan Andrzej	10/03/2016

Key events			
10/03/2016	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
10/10/2016	Vote in committee		
14/10/2016	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0290/2016	Summary
22/11/2016	Debate in Parliament		

23/11/2016	Results of vote in Parliament		
23/11/2016	Decision by Parliament	T8-0441/2016	Summary
23/11/2016	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2030(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
	See also 2018/2115(INI)
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/8/05921

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE582.060	02/05/2016	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE583.932	30/05/2016	EP	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE580.505	23/06/2016	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0290/2016	14/10/2016	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0441/2016	23/11/2016	EP	Summary

EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA (ECR, PL) on the EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties.

Members considered that the EU, its Member States and citizens are under growing, systematic pressure to tackle information, disinformation and misinformation campaigns and propaganda from countries and non-state actors, such as transnational terrorist and criminal organisations in its neighbourhood.

Hostile propaganda against the EU comes in many different forms and uses various tools, often tailored to match EU Member States profiles, with the goal of distorting truths, provoking doubt, dividing Member States, engineering a strategic split between the European Union and its North American partners and paralysing the decision-making process, discrediting the EU institutions and undermining the European narrative based on democratic values.

EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties: Members called on the EU institutions to recognise that strategic communication and information warfare is not only an external EU issue but also an internal one, and voiced their concern at the number of hostile propaganda multipliers existing within the Union.

The report called on the EU actors to address the current lack of clarity and agreement on what is to be considered propaganda and disinformation, to develop in cooperation with media representatives and experts from the EU Member States a shared set of definitions and to compile data and facts about the consumption of propaganda.

Members therefore stressed the need to raise awareness and demonstrate assertiveness through institutional / political communication, think tank / academia research, social media campaigns, civil society initiatives, media literacy and other useful actions.

Recognising and exposing Russian disinformation and propaganda warfare: targeted information warfare against the West was extensively used by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and has since been an integral part of modern hybrid warfare.

Members argued that Russian strategic communication is part of a larger subversive campaign to weaken EU cooperation and the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of the Union and its Member States. They urged Member State governments to be vigilant towards Russian information operations on European soil and to increase capacity sharing and counter intelligence efforts aimed at countering such operations.

The report criticised Russian efforts to disrupt the EU integration process and deplored, in this respect, Russian backing of anti-EU forces in the EU with regard, in particular, to extreme-right parties, populist forces and movements that deny the basic values of liberal democracies.

Understanding and tackling ISIL/Daeshs information warfare: ISIS/Daesh, Al-Qaeda and many other violent jihadi terrorist groups systematically use communication strategies and direct propaganda both offline and online as part of the justification of their actions against the EU.

Members called on the EU and its Member States to develop a counter-narrative to ISIL/Daesh involving the education system and including through the empowerment and increased visibility of mainstream Muslim scholars who have the credibility to delegitimise ISIL/Daesh propaganda and to develop and disseminate a counter-narrative to jihadist propaganda.

The report underlined the importance of:

- including the counterpropaganda strategy against ISIL/Daesh in a broader, comprehensive regional strategy that combines diplomatic, socio-economic, development and conflict-prevention tools;
- focusing more on improving EU tools and methods, mostly in the cyber area;
- put in place institutional multi-dimensional arrangements (linking university research, prison administrations, the police, the courts, social services and education systems) to combat radicalisation;
- cutting ISIL/Daeshs access to financing and funding;
- the EU and Member States cooperating with social media service providers to counter ISIL/Daesh propaganda being spread through social media channels.

EU strategy to counteract propaganda: welcoming the [joint communication on the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats](#), Members called for the endorsement and implementation of its recommendations without delay and called on the HR/VP to ensure frequent communication at political level with the Member States in order to better coordinate EU actions.

The report underlined the importance:

- enhancing cooperation among the Member States intelligence services with a view to assessing the influence exerted by third countries seeking to undermine the democratic foundation and values of the EU;
- reinforcing the Strategic Communication Task Force, thus reinforced as proposed and under the Twitter username @EUvsDisInfo, to establish an online space where the public at large can find a range of tools for identifying disinformation, with an explanation of how they work, and which can act as a relay for the many civil society initiatives focused on this issue;
- of communicating EU policies coherently and effectively, internally as well as externally, and of providing tailored communications to specific regions, including access to information in local languages;
- of awareness raising, education, online media and information literacy in the EU and in the Neighbourhood.

The report called on the Commission to advance certain legal initiatives in order to be more effective and accountable in dealing with disinformation and propaganda and to use the midterm review of the European Neighbourhood Instrument to promote the strengthening of the resilience of the media as a strategic priority.

Lastly, Members stated that an efficient strategy to counteract anti-EU propaganda could be the adoption of measures to provide a target audience with adequate and interesting information about EU activities, European values and other issues of public interest, and underlines that modern technologies and social networks could be used for these purposes.

EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties

The European Parliament adopted by 304 votes to 179, with 208 abstentions, a resolution on the EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties.

The resolution stressed that the EU, its Member States and citizens are under growing, systematic pressure to tackle information, disinformation and misinformation campaigns and propaganda from countries and non-state actors, such as transnational terrorist and criminal organisations in its neighbourhood.

Hostile propaganda against the EU comes in many different forms and uses various tools, often tailored to match EU Member States profiles, with the goal of distorting truths, provoking doubt, dividing Member States, engineering a strategic split between the European Union and its North American partners and paralysing the decision-making process, discrediting the EU institutions and undermining the European narrative based on democratic values.

EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties: Members called on the EU institutions to recognise that strategic communication and information warfare is not only an external EU issue but also an internal one, and voiced their concern at the number of hostile propaganda multipliers existing within the Union.

Noting that disinformation and propaganda are part of hybrid warfare, Parliament stressed the need to raise awareness and demonstrate assertiveness through institutional / political communication, think tank / academia research, social media campaigns, civil society initiatives, media literacy and other useful actions.

Members called for more cooperation and exchange of information between the EU institutions, the Member States, various NATO and UN bodies, NGOs and civic organisations.

Exposing Russian disinformation and propaganda warfare: with Russias annexation of Crimea and the Russian-led hybrid war in the Donbass, the Kremlin has escalated the confrontation with the EU.

Parliament recognised that the Russian Government is employing a wide range of tools and instruments, such as think tanks and special foundations (e.g. Russkiy Mir), special authorities (Rossotrudnichestvo), multilingual TV stations (e.g. RT), pseudo news agencies and multimedia services (e.g. Sputnik), social media and internet trolls to challenge democratic values, divide Europe.

Members argued that Russian strategic communication is part of a larger subversive campaign to weaken EU cooperation and the sovereignty. A large part of the Kremlins propaganda is aimed at describing some European countries as belonging to Russias traditional sphere of influence.

Members also expressed strong criticism of Russian efforts to disrupt the EU integration process and deplores, in this respect, Russian

backing of anti-EU forces in the EU with regard, in particular, to extreme-right parties, populist forces and movements that deny the basic values of liberal democracies.

Understanding and tackling ISIL/Daeshs information warfare: ISIL/Daesh, Al-Qaeda and many other violent jihadi terrorist groups systematically use communication strategies and direct propaganda both offline and online as part of the justification of their actions against the EU and also with the aim of boosting recruitment of young Europeans.

Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to develop a counter-narrative to ISIL/Daesh involving the education system and including through the empowerment and increased visibility of mainstream Muslim scholars who have the credibility to delegitimise ISIL/Daesh propaganda and to develop and disseminate a counter-narrative to jihadist propaganda.

The resolution underlined the importance of:

- including the counterpropaganda strategy against ISIL/Daesh in a broader, comprehensive regional strategy that combines diplomatic, socio-economic, development and conflict-prevention tools;
- focusing more on improving EU tools and methods, mostly in the cyber area;
- put in place institutional multi-dimensional arrangements (linking university research, prison administrations, the police, the courts, social services and education systems) to combat radicalisation;
- cutting ISIL/Daeshs access to financing and funding;
- the EU and Member States cooperating with social media service providers to counter ISIL/Daesh propaganda being spread through social media channels.

EU strategy to counteract propaganda: welcoming the [joint communication on the Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats](#), Parliament called for the endorsement and implementation of its recommendations without delay and called on the HR/VP to ensure frequent communication at political level with the Member States in order to better coordinate EU actions. It called for strategic communication to be strengthened.

The resolution underlined the importance of:

- strengthening media plurality and the objectivity, impartiality and independence of the media within the EU and its neighbourhood, including non-state actors, inter alia through support for journalists and the development of capacity-building programmes for media actors;
- enhancing cooperation among the Member States intelligence services with a view to assessing the influence exerted by third countries seeking to undermine the democratic foundation and values of the EU;
- reinforcing the Strategic Communication Task Force, thus reinforced as proposed and under the Twitter username @EUvsDisInfo, to establish an online space where the public at large can find a range of tools for identifying disinformation, with an explanation of how they work, and which can act as a relay for the many civil society initiatives focused on this issue;
- of communicating EU policies coherently and effectively, internally as well as externally, and of providing tailored communications to specific regions, including access to information in local languages;
- of awareness raising, education, online media and information literacy in the EU and in the Neighbourhood.

Parliament called on the Commission to advance certain legal initiatives in order to be more effective and accountable in dealing with disinformation and propaganda and to use the midterm review of the European Neighbourhood Instrument to promote the strengthening of the resilience of the media as a strategic priority.

Lastly, Parliament stated that an efficient strategy to counteract anti-EU propaganda could be the adoption of measures to provide a target audience with adequate and interesting information about EU activities, European values and other issues of public interest, and underlines that modern technologies and social networks could be used for these purposes.