

EU must beef up its capacity to fight disinformation, MEPs say to Borrell

MEPs pressed for more funding to fight hybrid warfare, better coordination and solidarity among member states and sanctions on interference in a debate with the EU's foreign policy chief.

At the plenary debate on Tuesday, most speakers said the EU needs to devote more financial and human resources to counter disinformation campaigns by foreign powers that seek to undermine European democracy.

“To my concern, the European External Action Service has not asked for any extra resources” for Stratcom, said [Sandra Kalniete](#) (EPP, LV), the rapporteur of the [Special Committee on Foreign Interference](#), referring to the EU task forces set up to address disinformation campaigns in the [Eastern Partnership countries](#) plus Russia, in the Western Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa. These services are instrumental in the EU's fight against disinformation, several speakers noted.

Sanctions and coordination

The majority of MEPs argued for collective EU countermeasures including sanctions against the masterminds and hackers responsible for disinformation campaigns, to make interference costly. Other speakers pressed for better coordination among member states, and appropriate structures within the EU to help that coordination.

“The EU has been naïve for a long time,” noted [Raphaël Glucksmann](#) (S&D, FR), the chair of the special committee. He asked for ways to plug the holes in the EU response, including by reconsidering the feasibility of decisions taken by unanimity.

In his response, High Representative Josep Borrell acknowledged the importance to punish those who supply destabilizing disinformation but warned: under current rules it was not illegal to manipulate information.

Watch the [entire debate here](#).

Background

At a meeting of the special committee in March 2021, Josep Borrell said his services did not have enough resources to counter disinformation attacks from China. MEPs emphasized: the Chinese government was one of the main actors in foreign interference, yet there was still no China task force and too few Chinese speakers in the EU's External Action Service.

The special committee will start the debate on the rapporteur's draft report on how to tackle foreign interference in the EU democratic processes in the autumn.

Further information

[Question to the High Representative](#)

[Press release: MEPs quiz EU foreign policy chief on EU capacity to respond to hybrid attacks \(01.03.2021\)](#)

[EUvsDisinfo: full record of the work by East Stratcom Task Force](#)


[Special report by the European Court of Auditors: Disinformation affecting the EU: tackled but not tamed \(03.06.2021\)](#)


[Press statement: EU response to foreign disinformation must improve: Committee on Disinformation Chair on Court of Auditors report \(04.06.2021\)](#)

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