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(Final version)

Foreign interference: a threat to democratic security in Europe

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A. Draft Resolution

1. Intentional, covert and manipulative interference by foreign powers, their proxies or private actors jeopardises security, democratic values, and governance across Europe. This foreign interference aims to undermine sovereignty, destabilise political systems, weaken public trust, and distort democratic processes. These orchestrated efforts continue to increase in volume and velocity, targeting the foundations of European societies and attempting to exploit democratic principles as systemic vulnerabilities.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly recognises foreign interference, in its many forms, as a substantial and persistent threat to democratic security. It condemns deliberate and systematic efforts by foreign actors to undermine electoral and democratic processes and institutions.
3. The Assembly notes the escalation in hostile interference originating from the Russian Federation following the beginning of its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. This has been underlined by the extensive efforts to spread disinformation, covertly fund political campaigns, and buy votes in the Republic of Moldova's presidential election and constitutional referendum of 20 October 2024. Furthermore, the disruption of Romania's presidential election of 24 November 2024 due to the manipulation of digital technology and artificial intelligence conducted from abroad highlights the urgent need to fortify democratic processes against hostile threats and co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour online.
4. This activity forms part of a wider pattern that has included attempts by the Russian Federation to interfere in electoral processes and referenda across the continent over the past decade, with evidence of covert interference during the 2016 Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, the 2016 United States presidential election, the 2017 coup d'état from Catalanian regional government leaders against the Spanish constitutional order, the 2017 French presidential election, the 2024 Romanian and Moldovan presidential elections, and in German politics.

Amendment 9

Tabled by Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO, Mr Christophe LACROIX, Mr Christophe BRICO, Ms Christine PASQUIER-CIULLA, Ms Marijana PULJAK, Mr Régis BERGONZI

In the draft resolution, paragraph 1, at the end of the second sentence, insert the following words:

"by attacking democratic institutions and equal rights for vulnerable people, including women, LGBTI persons, migrants and ethnic and racial minorities"

Amendment 10

Tabled by Mr Paweł JABŁOŃSKI, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Kacper Maciej PŁAŻYŃSKI, Ms Victoria TIBLOM, Mr Daniel MILEWSKI, Mr Jan KANTHAK, Ms Dumitrina MITREA

In the draft resolution, paragraph 3, second sentence, after the words "covertly fund political campaigns", insert the following words:

", interfere in Poland's 2023 parliamentary elections,"

Amendment 1

Tabled by Ms Laura CASTEL, Ms Alessandra MAIORINO, Mr Emmanuel FERNANDES, Mr Andrej HUNKO, Mr Ettore Antonio LICHERI

In the draft resolution, paragraph 4, delete the following words:

"the 2017 coup d'état from Catalanian regional government leaders against the Spanish constitutional order,"

Amendment 2

Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Serhii SOBOLEEV, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, Mr Oleksandr MERZHKO, Ms Olena MOSHENETS, Ms Lesia ZABURANNA, Ms Larysa BILOZIR, Mr Rostyslav TISTYK, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 4, insert the following paragraph:

"Social media serves as a key instrument for authoritarian regimes to disseminate false and misleading information as part of State policy."

Among those engaged in such activities are so-called "journalists", "bloggers", and "influencers" who spread covert propaganda while being financed by Russian authorities. Notable examples include Anatolii and Olga Sharii, Diana Panchenko, Kseniia Sobchak. Presented as "independent journalists", and having a large audience, they systematically promote Russian propaganda to divide European society and destabilise European countries from the inside, to justify the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, and to manipulate public opinion in favor of the Russian Federation."

Sub-amendment 1 to amendment 2
Tabled by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

In amendment 2, delete the third sentence:

"Notable examples include Anatolii and Olga Sharii, Diana Panchenko, Kseniia Sobchak."

Amendment 3

Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, Ms Olena KHOMENKO, Mr Oleksandr MEREZHKO, Ms Olena MOSHENETS, Ms Lesia ZABURANNA, Ms Larysa BILOZIR, Mr Rostyslav TISTYK, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 4, insert the following paragraph:

"In addition to interfering in electoral processes and referenda, the Russian Federation actively intervenes in the political and social life of Europe through hybrid methods, including the systematic dissemination of disinformation and propaganda. This is carried out via Russian State-funded media such as RT and Sputnik, as well as media outlets affiliated with or financed by the Russian Federation, alongside co-ordinated efforts on social media platforms."

Amendment 4

Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, Ms Olena KHOMENKO, Mr Oleksandr MEREZHKO, Ms Olena MOSHENETS, Ms Lesia ZABURANNA, Ms Larysa BILOZIR, Mr Rostyslav TISTYK, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 4, insert the following paragraph:

"Another form of foreign interference involves Russian oligarchs and influential figures who reside in Europe and use their assets to exert political and financial pressure on member States. For example, Russian oligarch Vladimir Lisin, a key figure in the Russian Federation's defence industry, has repeatedly pressured the

Belgian government by threatening to shut down NLMK Clabecq PLC, a factory employing approximately 1 200 workers, to avoid sanctions against himself and his business."

Sub-amendment 1 to amendment 4
Tabled by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

In amendment 4, delete the second sentence:

"For example, Russian oligarch Vladimir Lisin, a key figure in the Russian Federation's defence industry, has repeatedly pressured the Belgian government by threatening to shut down NLMK Clabecq PLC, a factory employing approximately 1 200 workers, to avoid sanctions against himself and his business."

Amendment 13

Tabled by Ms Olena KHOMENKO, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO, Mr Paweł JABŁOŃSKI, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Pavlo BAKUNETS, Ms Larysa BILOZIR

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 4, insert the following paragraph:

"The Assembly recognises that the Russian Federation is using all the tools available to it to influence the foreign and domestic policies of European countries, including through the development of new technologies and new methods of deception, and it can use representatives of so-called anti-war movements in information and other special operations."

5. Democracies must defend themselves against the threat posed by foreign interference as part of an adaptation to this increasingly hostile international environment where the principles of sovereignty, self-determination and democracy are under attack. The resilience of democratic institutions is crucial in countering these dangers and ensuring that the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law prevail.
6. At the same time, addressing foreign interference requires a delicate balance. Measures to counter undue influence or to enhance transparency must align with human rights standards, particularly those safeguarding freedom of expression, association, assembly, and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Overly restrictive laws designed without adequate attention to this balance risk stifling legitimate democratic activity and freedom of expression, chilling civil society engagement, or being misused for political purposes.
7. The Assembly underscores that building resilient societies with strong democratic institutions, an active and informed civil society, and transparent governance is the most effective way to counter foreign interference and ensure democratic security.

8. Measures to enhance the transparency in public life to combat foreign interference must be implemented in a manner that respects and upholds the freedoms and autonomy of civil society organisations. While safeguarding national interests is crucial, transparency measures should not be used as a pretext for imposing undue restrictions on civil society actors, who play a fundamental role in fostering democratic values, public accountability, and social cohesion.
9. The Assembly notes that the Council of Europe has a wide range of international standards and guidelines aimed at strengthening democratic resilience that are relevant for combating foreign interference. These include measures to ensure transparency and accountability in public life, international standards and guidelines for political party funding and elections, and strategies to combat disinformation. These tools are further strengthened by the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225, "the Vilnius Convention") which aims to fill legal gaps that may result from rapid technological advances.
10. The Assembly recalls that, at their 4th Summit in Reykjavik in 2023, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe reiterated their commitment to countering disinformation that poses a threat to democracy and peace, in a manner compatible with international law and the right to freedom of expression and freedom of opinion, as well as their commitment to take appropriate measures against interference in electoral systems and processes.
11. The Assembly stresses the need for comprehensive and holistic strategies to combat the use of multiform foreign interference tactics. A whole-of-society approach that includes parliaments, governments, government agencies, local authorities, private enterprises, journalists, civil society and citizens is encouraged to foster societal resilience and counter foreign interference operations.
12. In light of the threat to democratic security posed by foreign interference, the Assembly calls on the member States of the Council of Europe to:
- 12.1. integrate foreign interference threats into national security frameworks that recognise the interconnected nature of hostile cyber, economic, political and information activities;
- 12.2. secure democratic institutions, critical infrastructure, and electoral systems against cyber threats;
- 12.3. enhance co-ordination between security agencies both nationally and internationally to detect and counter foreign interference activities;

Amendment 8

Tabled by Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO, Mr Christophe LACROIX, Mr Christophe BRICO, Ms Christine PASQUIER-CIULLA, Ms Marijana PULJAK, Mr Mehmet AKALIN, Mr Régis BERGONZI

In the draft resolution, at the end of paragraph 8, insert the following words:

", or even for discriminating on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, sex or gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics."

- 12.4. consider updating laws and regulations to incorporate foreign interference offences for covert conduct on behalf of foreign actors aimed at having a manipulative effect.
13. As part of a whole-of-society approach to enhance resilience, reinforce public trust, and safeguard institutional integrity, the Assembly calls on member States to:
 - 13.1. promote digital and media literacy initiatives aimed at countering disinformation and building resilience among citizens to empower them against manipulation;
 - 13.2. introduce media literacy into national curricula from an early age to develop essential critical thinking skills for exercising judgment, evaluating the credibility of information sources, identifying biased or misleading content, and for critically and effectively engaging with information online;
 - 13.3. in line with its Resolution 2192 (2017) "Youth against corruption", devise appropriate empowerment strategies to raise young people's awareness and understanding of corruption and the ways it undermines democratic societies;
 - 13.4. encourage and support pre-bunking and fact-checking systems, and partnerships with independent media organisations and civil society to counteract false narratives without undermining freedom of expression;
 - 13.5. intensify actions to better protect journalists, safeguard press freedom, and to fund and promote media pluralism and independence;
- 13.6. in line with its Resolution 2552 (2024) "Strengthening democracy through participatory and deliberative processes", foster more robust civic engagement with deliberative technologies and participatory processes.
14. In light of the risks presented by disinformation as a strategic foreign interference tool to distort realities, divide societies, and weaken democracies, the Assembly:

Amendment 15

Tabled by Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS, Mr Christophe BRICO, Mr Edmunds CEPURĪTIS, Ms Christine PASQUIER-CIULLA, Mr Gonzalo ROBLES, Mr Knut ABRAHAM, Ms Octavie MODERT, Mr Andreas MINNICH

In the draft resolution, at the end of paragraph 13.5, insert the following words:

", including by working with the European Union and other international stakeholders to ensure the continued funding of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty and other independent media facing the withdrawal of current support from the United States of America"

Sub-amendment 1 to amendment 15

Tabled by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

In amendment 15, delete the following words:

"facing the withdrawal of current support from the United States of America"

- 14.1. welcomes the United Nations Global Principles for Information Integrity as a global initiative to foster healthier and safer information spaces, and calls for consultations with the public and with private industry on steps that may be taken to implement them;
- 14.2. calls on Council of Europe member and observer States who have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225, "the Vilnius Convention") and ensure its implementation with due regard to the impact of artificial intelligence technologies on the production and dissemination of disinformation and illegal propaganda;
- 14.3. calls on member States to increase expertise and technical capabilities for combating disinformation online and to address emerging threats posed by artificial intelligence;
- 14.4. calls on member States to explore the development of information verification systems to safeguard online communities against deceptive artificial intelligence election content;
- 14.5. calls on online platforms to provide clear policies on political advertising, algorithmic amplification, and the removal of harmful content or disinformation, while safeguarding the freedom of expression.

Amendment 7

Tabled by Ms Marijana PULJAK, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, Mr Marko PAVIĆ, Mr Ivan RAČAN, Ms Elena-Simona SPĂTARU, Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 14.2, insert the following paragraph:

"encourages the use of artificial intelligence as a tool for democratic innovation, including for strengthening public participation, improving transparency and accountability in governance, supporting fact-checking and electoral integrity, and fostering inclusive, efficient, and resilient public services;"

Amendment 11

Tabled by Mr Paweł JABŁOŃSKI, Mr Zsolt NÉMETH, Mr Norbert KLEINWÄCHTER, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Bob De BRABANDERE, Mr Kacper Maciej PŁAŻYŃSKI, Mr Daniel MILEWSKI, Mr Jan KANTHAK, Ms Dumitrina MITREA, Ms Iwona ARENT

In the draft resolution, at the end of paragraph 14.5, insert the following words:

"and refraining from censorship."

Amendment 14

Tabled by Ms Olena KHOMENKO, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO, Mr Paweł JABŁOŃSKI, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Pavlo BAKUNET, Ms Larysa BILOZIR

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 14.5, insert the following paragraph:

"considers that any measures in support of "anti-war movements" should be applied only in exceptional cases and to persons who have genuine and substantiated evidence of persecution and pressure from the Russian authorities for their true and sincere anti-war beliefs."

15. In light of hostile actor attempts to interfere improperly or illicitly in democratic decision-making processes, the Assembly:
- 15.1. reiterates its condemnation of massive covert Russian funding of political parties and politicians in democratic countries that attempts to interfere in their democratic processes;

Sub-amendment 1 to amendment 14
Tabled by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

In amendment 14, before the words "anti-war movements", insert the following word:

"so-called"

Amendment 5

Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, Mr Oleksandr MEREZHKO, Ms Olena MOSHENETS, Ms Lesia ZABURANNA, Ms Larysa BILOZIR, Mr Rostyslav TISTYK, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 15.1, insert the following paragraph:

"calls on member States to establish a sanction mechanism against individuals such as Anatolii Sharii, Olga Sharii, Diana Panchenko, Ksenia Sobchak, and others, who present themselves as "independent journalists", "bloggers", or "social media influencers" while actively disseminating false information and propaganda through platforms such as YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and Telegram, and are backed by the Russian authorities;"

Amendment 6

Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV, Ms Olena KHOMENKO, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, Mr Oleksandr MEREZHKO, Ms Olena MOSHENETS, Ms Lesia ZABURANNA, Ms Larysa BILOZIR, Mr Rostyslav TISTYK, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 15.1, insert the following paragraph:

"calls on member States to strengthen and strictly enforce sanctions against Russian State-funded media, such as RT and Sputnik, which remain widely accessible despite existing restrictions;"

Amendment 12

Tabled by Mr Paweł JABŁOŃSKI, Mr Norbert KLEINWÄCHTER, Mr Bob De BRABANDERE, Mr Zsolt NÉMETH, Mr Kacper Maciej PŁAŻYŃSKI, Mr Daniel MILEWSKI, Mr Jan

KANTHAK, Ms Dumitrina MITREA, Ms Iwona ARENT

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 15.1, insert the following paragraph:

"expresses its concern with the increasing role of State-funded entities disguised as civil society organisations in disseminating false narratives and influencing voters in other countries, especially using social media platforms and other forms of mass communication;"

- 15.2. calls on member States to ensure legislative and policy frameworks that protect against interference in electoral systems, and to carry out comprehensive investigations into allegations of interference in elections and referenda;
- 15.3. calls on member States to review and enhance national frameworks governing financial contributions to political parties, advertising and electoral campaigns to mitigate the risk of inappropriate or illicit foreign financial interference;
- 15.4. in line with its Resolution 2406 (2021) "Fighting corruption – General principles of political responsibility", calls on national governments to enhance measures for preventing corruption and, in line with recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), adopt and update codes of conduct for all holders of public office;
- 15.5. encourages member States to explore measures that increase the transparency and integrity of legitimate foreign influence activities;
- 15.6. encourages member States to consult at an early stage with the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) when developing public governance tools to strengthen the transparency and integrity of foreign influence activities.
16. In light of the need for collective action to respond to the global challenge posed by foreign interference, the Assembly:
 - 16.1. stresses the importance of co-operation among Council of Europe member States to address foreign interference as a shared threat. In this regard, it advocates for closer collaboration with the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), relevant expertise of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other international organisations in developing co-ordinated responses;
 - 16.2. encourages support to multi-partner rapid response initiatives to identify and respond to diverse and evolving threats to democracies, including through sharing information and analysis, and identifying opportunities for co-ordinated responses;
 - 16.3. supports the use of targeted and co-ordinated sanctions against individuals, entities and State actors engaged in foreign interference including election meddling, media manipulation, illicit funding and cyberattacks;

- 16.4. calls for strengthened legal avenues to hold foreign and domestic actors accountable for facilitating interference in democratic processes;
- 16.5. encourages member States to assess the feasibility of developing a broad-based, operational, non-binding definition of foreign interference to enhance co-ordination in countering related threats and to strengthen clarity on legitimate influence activities of member States;
- 16.6. welcomes the establishment, on its initiative, of the Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections as an important step for addressing emerging challenges that threaten electoral integrity, enhancing co-operation with national and international partners on electoral matters, and promoting Council of Europe reference standards in this field.

B. Draft Recommendation

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its Resolution ... (2025) "Foreign interference: a threat to democratic security in Europe" underscores that intentional, covert and manipulative interference from foreign powers or their proxies is a continued threat to the core pillars of democratic security shared by the member States of the Council of Europe.
2. Such interference seeks to undermine electoral processes, erode public trust in democratic institutions, national unity, and distort political decision making. The most glaring example of this threat is the escalation in hostile interference originating from the Russian Federation following the beginning of its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, which the Assembly firmly condemns.
3. The Assembly stresses that a co-ordinated and comprehensive response is required to counter the threat of foreign interference effectively, and advocates for closer collaboration with the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and other international organisations.
4. In addition, the Assembly emphasises that free and fair elections are the cornerstone of democratic societies. Independent and transparent electoral processes are necessary for both citizen's trust in public institutions, and for the competitiveness of the electoral environment. The Assembly expresses its serious concern that foreign interference operations, through the manipulation of information and voter sentiment, pose a continuing threat in electoral matters to the freedom of voters to form an opinion and to equality of opportunity of candidates and parties.
5. The Assembly, recalling the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, acknowledges the Committee of Ministers' ongoing efforts to strengthen democratic resilience and to address democratic backsliding, including its work on countering mis- and disinformation, preventing algorithmic manipulation, and reinforcing electoral integrity. It commends the initiative of the Secretary General to develop a new Democratic Pact to address democratic backsliding, to enhance citizen engagement, and to adapt democratic models to contemporary challenges.
6. In light of the increasing sophistication of multiform foreign interference tactics in the digital sphere, the Assembly welcomes the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225, "the Vilnius Convention") as an essential tool to promote transparency, accountability and safeguards against artificial intelligence-driven manipulation and disinformation.
7. In view of the role played by the Council of Europe in ensuring democratic security, the Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to:

- 7.1. develop and enhance tools for countering foreign interference that promote a whole-of-society approach, enhance resilience, reinforce public trust, and safeguard institutional integrity;
- 7.2. consider the feasibility of developing a broad-based, non-binding operational definition of foreign interference to enhance European co-ordination and policy alignment, as well as strengthening clarity on legitimate influence activities.