



European Parliament

Brussels, 28 February 2022

Dear President von der Leyen,
Dear President Metsola,
Dear President Michel,
Dear Vice-president Jourova,
Dear Commissioner Breton,
Dear Commissioner Gabriel,

In the last few days since Russia started its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the European Union has shown its unity and taken many key decisions at crucial moments. In this context, we appreciate the announcement made by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Sunday regarding banning the Kremlin's disinformation machine in the EU.

However, we believe that we must act not only against the widely known Russian-controlled RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik, but also against other Russian and Belarusian information channels that have been spreading disinformation and warmongering for years — and continue to do so now. Some such disinformation channels have been aimed at our citizens, in official EU languages, in order to sow distrust in public institutions and professional media. In addition, other such information channels are widely available in Russian language throughout Europe. Besides RT (with all its subsidiaries) and Sputnik these include Rossiya RTR, Rossiya 24, TV Centre International, NTV, REN TV, Belarus 24, to name but a few.¹

We would like to further stress that in no way by dismantling Kremlin's disinformation machine the EU is interfering with the freedom of press neither legally or politically. These are not in any regard independent media with editorial independence and professional journalistic standards. They are state controlled PR channels that spread Kremlin-dictated messages and narratives, and accordingly should be treated as part of state administration.

¹ On how the Kremlin propaganda ecosystem works, is structured and what are the key actors, there is an extensive evidence gathered by the regulators of the Member States, NATO StratCom Centre of excellence, U.S. Department of State, researchers and investigative journalists.

In order to ensure effective containment of Kremlin information operations in the EU, an EU wide restriction should be coordinated among the Member States' independent regulators and with likeminded countries. Such restrictions should apply to more traditional channels of dissemination such as linear television, VOD platforms and printed press. Online platforms, too, should be mandated to be in compliance with the relevant restrictions introduced.

Democracies must be able to protect themselves. It is our duty as elected officials and public servants to put in place right mechanisms. For years we have let the Kremlin undermine our freedoms, including freedom of expression by using it as a cover for its information operations. The current situation is the right moment to put an end to that.

In addition to fully banning Putin's propaganda machinery within the EU, the EU must substantially increase financial, legal, humanitarian and other forms of support for independent media, individual journalists and fact-checkers in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. Further, it is of utmost importance to devote significant resources to strategic communication, including that of exposing disinformation and war propaganda, if possible through a preemptive approach.

Yours sincerely,

Dace MELBĀRDE (ECR)

Roberts ZĪLE (ECR)

Rasa JUKNEVIČIENĒ (EPP)

Miriam LEXMANN (EPP)

Assita KANKO (ECR)

Juozas OLEKAS (S&D)

Riho TERRAS (EPP)

Irena JOVEVA (Renew Europe)

Liudas MAŽYLIS (EPP)

Vlad GHEORGHE (Renew Europe)

Sandra KALNIETE (EPP)

Sabine VERHEYEN (EPP)
Andrius KUBILIUS (EPP)
Eugen JURZYCA (ECR)
Morten LØKKEGAARD (Renew Europe)
Veronika VRECIKOVÁ (ECR)
Monica SEMEDO (Renew Europe)
Krzysztof HETMAN (EPP)
Inese VAIDERE (EPP)
Tomasz FRANKOWSKI (EPP)
Alexis GEORGOULIS (GUE/NGL)
Beata KEMPA (ECR)
David CASA (EPP)
Lucia ĎURIŠ NICHOLSONOVÁ (Renew Europe)
Anna ZALEWSKA (ECR)
Patryk JAKI (ECR)
Anna FOTYGA (ECR)