
'DIVIDE EUROPE': EUROPEAN LAWMAKERS WARN OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA

12.10.2016

11.10.2016

DW.de

The Russian government channels propaganda aimed at disrupting democratic values across Europe, targeting "specific journalists, politicians and individuals in the bloc," lawmakers of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee said in a resolution passed on Monday.

"The Russian government is aggressively employing a wide-range of tools and instruments, such as think tanks [*] multilingual TV stations (i.e. Russia Today), pseudo-news agencies [*] social media and internet trolls, to challenge democratic values, divide Europe, gather domestic support and create the perception of failed states in the EU's eastern neighborhood," the resolution said.

European lawmakers called on media representatives in the EU to compile facts on the "consumption of propaganda," worrying that "with the limited awareness amongst some of its member states, that they are audiences and arenas of propaganda and disinformation."

The resolution urged European authorities to turn the EU's Strategic Communication Task Force, an initiative mandated by the European Council aimed at dispelling propaganda, into a "fully-fledged unit" within the bloc's diplomatic office, "with proper staffing and adequate budgetary resources."

MEP Anna Fotyga, the chief rapporteur for the resolution, told DW that more needs to be done to expose the "mechanism of propaganda" directed at the bloc's member states, and more broadly the EU and the West.

However, Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of RT (formerly Russia Today), told DW that the resolution, in effect, targets free speech in the 28-nation bloc.

"This a rather interesting interpretation of the much-touted western values, particularly that of the freedom of speech - which in action apparently means attacking a rare voice of dissent amongst literally thousands of European media outlets," Simonyan said in an emailed statement.

"If anything is eroding public confidence in European institutions, it's that," she added.