RUSSIA USING 'FAKE NEWS TO INFLUENCE KEY ELECTIONS' IN FRANCE, GERMANY AND THE NETHERLANDS

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The EU is reportedly allocating more funds to East StratCom to counter the disinformation, amid fears Russia will target elections in France, Germany and the Netherlands

Russia is using fake news to try and influence several key elections in Europe this year, according to a special EU task force.

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Angela Merkel has already been subjected to a bombardment of fake news over her refugee policy and support for economic sanctions against Russia.

There is an enormous, far-reaching, at least partly organized, disinformation campaign against the EU, its politicians and its principles, a source close to the task force told Germanys Der Spiegel magazine.

It is highly likely Russia will try to influence European elections as it did in the US, the source said.

Angela Merkel has already been subjected to a "bombardment" of fake news (Photo: Getty)
A report by US intelligence agencies earlier this month found that Vladimir Putin personally ordered an influence campaign aimed at the presidential election.

The task force said it had uncovered over the past 15 months more than 2,500 examples in 18 languages of stories contradicting publicly available facts.

There is no doubt that the pro-Kremlin disinformation campaign is an orchestrated strategy, the task force said, adding that it acted as a non-military measure for achieving political goals.

German intelligence warned last year that Russian hackers may seek to influence the countrys elections in September.

Fears are growing over the effect of fake news, after a completely false story spread claiming that Germanys oldest church had been burnt down by 1,000 Muslims chanting Allahu Akbar.

East StratCom, set up by the EU in 2015 to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation, says

it has already found evidence of a massive fake news campaign targetting European countries.

Kaynak/Source: