

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002032/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Pina Picierno (S&D)
(21 May 2025)

Subject: The dissemination by Pro-Russian organisations in Italy of propaganda produced by entities on EU sanctions lists

Given the current geopolitical context and the restrictive measures adopted by the European Union against the Russian Federation, I would like to bring to your attention that a number of pro-Russian organisations are currently active in Italy, where they are registered as associations, bilateral friendship groups, economic/commercial entities and Italo-Russian culture and language institutions.

These entities have worked assiduously to organise conferences and public events and to disseminate propaganda that is clearly sanctioned by Vladimir Putin's regime and which is predominantly produced by outlets that are on EU sanctions lists, an example being *Russia Today*.

In my capacity as Vice-Chair of the Bureau's Working Group on Communication, Awareness and Research, I have initiated monitoring activities against these organisations.

Given the clear evidence pointing to the existence of coordinated disinformation and interference campaigns, which by their very nature violate both the EU's sanctions and the principles of democracy:

1. Is the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy aware of these ubiquitous propaganda and disinformation networks?
2. What steps will she take to prevent and tackle the dissemination of Russian propaganda in Italy and to ensure the effective implementation of sanctions against those entities in the Putin regime's influence network that are masquerading as associations and cultural organisations?

Submitted: 21.5.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(18 July 2025)

Russian malign influence, interference and attempts to manipulate the public opinion in Member States take many forms. The Russian state operates outlets in more than 32 languages including in Italian, meaning all of the EU and the Member States are targeted.

The EU has imposed restrictive measures, including a broadcasting ban, on outlets spreading disinformation about Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Certain EU entities, including non-governmental organisations and media service providers, are also barred from accepting Russian financing, in order to counter Russia's interference with EU democratic processes ⁽¹⁾.

The EU has led the development of policies and tools for countering foreign information manipulation and interference ⁽²⁾ (FIMI). Within the mandate of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Russian FIMI campaigns are monitored, analysed and publicly exposed, including on EUvsDisinfo ⁽³⁾.

The High Representative/Vice-President reiterates the EU's position of strong condemnation of Russia's malign disinformation campaigns which should be seen together with espionage and hybrid threats. The Commission is preparing a European Democracy Shield to help to counter foreign information manipulation and interference online.

Actions or investigations of activities of alleged FIMI actors inside Member States are within the competence of the Member States. Restrictive measures against identified FIMI outlets and actors are implemented and enforced by Member States' competent authorities.

The Commission closely monitors compliance but neither the Commission nor EEAS comments on national investigations nor the administration of justice in the Member States.

⁽¹⁾ Council Regulation (EU) 833/2014, Article 2(f), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/833/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/information-integrity-and-countering-foreign-information-manipulation-interference-fimi_en.

⁽³⁾ <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>.