**Wednesday 23 November 2016**

P8_TA(2016)0441

# EU strategic communication to counteract anti-EU propaganda by third parties

**European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties (2016/2030(INI))**

(2018/C 224/08)

*The European Parliament,*

— having regard to its resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism ([1]),

— having regard to the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration of 4 April 2009 adopted on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of NATO,

— having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2012 on a Digital Freedom Strategy in EU Foreign Policy ([2]),

— having regard to the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on counter-terrorism of 9 February 2015,

— having regard to the European Council conclusions of 19 and 20 March 2015,

— having regard to the Council conclusions on the EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the ISIL/Daesh threat of 16 March 2015, which were reconfirmed by the Foreign Affairs Council on 23 May 2016,

— having regard to the report of 18 May 2015 of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) entitled 'The European Union in a changing global environment — A more connected, contested and complex world', and to the ongoing work on a new EU Global Security Strategy,

— having regard to its resolution of 10 June 2015 on the state of EU-Russia relations ([3]),

— having regard to the EU Action Plan on Strategic Communication (Ref. Ares(2015)2608242 — 22.6.2015),

— having regard to its resolution of 9 July 2015 on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy ([4]),

— having regard to the NATO Wales Summit Declaration of 5 September 2014,

— having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2015 on the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations ([5]),

— having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 28 April 2015 on the European Agenda on Security (COM(2015)0185),

([1]) OJ C 137 E, 27.5.2010, p. 25.
([2]) OJ C 434, 23.12.2015, p. 24.
([3]) OJ C 407, 4.11.2016, p. 35.
([4]) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0272.
([5]) Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0410.

**Wednesday 23 November 2016**

— having regard to the Joint Communication of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament and the Council of 6 April 2016 entitled 'Joint framework on countering hybrid threats: a European Union response' (JOIN(2016)0018),

— having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council of 20 April 2016 on delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union (COM(2016)0230),

— having regard to the European Endowment for Democracy feasibility study on Russian Language Media Initiatives in the Eastern Partnership and Beyond, entitled 'Bringing Plurality and Balance to the Russian Language Media Space',

— having regard to the Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (A/HRC/31/65),

— having regard to General Comment No 34 of the UN Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/GC/34),

— having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0290/2016),

A. whereas the EU has committed to guiding its actions on the international scene in compliance with principles such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as media freedom, access to information, freedom of expression and media pluralism, the last of which can, nevertheless, be limited to a certain extent as stipulated in international law, including in the European Convention on Human Rights; whereas third-party actors aiming to discredit the Union do not share the same values;

B. whereas the EU, its Member States and citizens are under growing, systematic pressure to tackle information, disinformation and misinformation campaigns and propaganda from countries and non-state actors, such as transnational terrorist and criminal organisations in its neighbourhood, which are intended to undermine the very notion of objective information or ethical journalism, casting all information as biased or as an instrument of political power, and which also target democratic values and interests;

C. whereas media freedom, access to information and freedom of expression are the basic pillars of a democratic system, in which the transparency of media ownership and the sources of financing of media are of the utmost importance; whereas strategies to ensure quality journalism, media pluralism and fact-checking can only be effective as long as information providers enjoy trust and credibility; whereas, at the same time, there should be a critical assessment of how to deal with media sources that have a proven record of having repeatedly engaged in a strategy of deliberate deception and disinformation, especially in the 'new media', social networks and the digital sphere;

D. whereas information warfare is a historical phenomenon as old as warfare itself; whereas targeted information warfare was extensively used during the Cold War, and has since been an integral part of modern hybrid warfare, which is a combination of military and non-military measures of a covert and overt nature, deployed to destabilise the political, economic and social situation of a country under attack, without a formal declaration of war, targeting not only partners of the EU, but also the EU itself, its institutions and all Member States and citizens irrespective of their nationality and religion;

**Wednesday 23 November 2016**

E. whereas with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the Russian-led hybrid war in the Donbass, the Kremlin has escalated the confrontation with the EU; whereas the Kremlin has stepped up its propaganda, with Russia playing an enhanced role in the European media environment aimed at creating political support in European public opinion for Russian action and undermining the coherence of the EU foreign policy;

F. whereas propaganda for war and any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is prohibited by law in accordance with Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

G. whereas the financial crisis and the advance of new forms of digital media have posed serious challenges for quality journalism, leading to a decrease in critical thinking among audiences, thus making them more susceptible to disinformation and manipulation;

H. whereas the propaganda and the intrusion of Russian media is particularly strong and often unmatched in the countries of the Eastern neighbourhood; whereas national media in these countries are often weak and not able to cope with the strength and the power of Russian media;

I. whereas information and communications warfare technologies are being employed in order to legitimise actions threatening EU Member States' sovereignty, political independence, the security of their citizens and their territorial integrity;

J. whereas the EU does not recognise ISIL/Daesh as a state or an organisation similar to a state;

K. whereas ISIL/Daesh, Al-Qaeda and many other violent jihadi terrorist groups systematically use communication strategies and direct propaganda both offline and online as part of the justification of their actions against the EU and the Member States and against European values, and also with the aim of boosting recruitment of young Europeans;

L. whereas following the NATO Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration stressing the increasing importance for NATO to communicate in an appropriate, timely, accurate and responsive manner on its evolving roles, objectives and missions, the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE) was established in Latvia in 2014, which was welcomed in the NATO Wales Summit Declaration;

***EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties***

1. Underlines that hostile propaganda against the EU comes in many different forms and uses various tools, often tailored to match EU Member States' profiles, with the goal of distorting truths, provoking doubt, dividing Member States, engineering a strategic split between the European Union and its North American partners and paralysing the decision-making process, discrediting the EU institutions and transatlantic partnerships, which play a recognised role in the European security and economic architecture, in the eyes and minds of EU citizens and of citizens of neighbouring countries, and undermining and eroding the European narrative based on democratic values, human rights and the rule of law; recalls that one of the most important tools used is incitement of fear and uncertainty in EU citizens, as well as presenting hostile state and non-state actors as much stronger than they are in reality;

2. Calls on the EU institutions to recognise that strategic communication and information warfare is not only an external EU issue but also an internal one, and voices its concern at the number of hostile propaganda multipliers existing within the Union; is concerned about the limited awareness amongst some of its Member States that they are audiences and arenas of propaganda and disinformation; in this regard, calls on the EU actors to address the current lack of clarity and agreement on what is to be considered propaganda and disinformation, to develop in cooperation with media representatives and experts from the EU Member States a shared set of definitions and to compile data and facts about the consumption of propaganda;

3. Notes that disinformation and propaganda are part of hybrid warfare; highlights, therefore, the need to raise awareness and demonstrate assertiveness through institutional/political communication, think tank/academia research, social media campaigns, civil society initiatives, media literacy and other useful actions;

4. Stresses that the strategy of anti-EU propaganda and disinformation by third countries may take various forms and involve, in particular, traditional media, social networks, school programmes and political parties, both within and beyond the European Union;

5. Notes the multi-layered character of current EU strategic communications at various levels, including the EU institutions, the Member States, various NATO and UN bodies, NGOs and civic organisations, and calls for the best possible coordination and information exchange between these parties; calls for more cooperation and exchange of information between various parties that have voiced concern at these propaganda efforts and wish to draw up strategies for countering disinformation; believes that, in the EU context, Union institutions should be tasked with such coordination;

6. Recognises that the EU must consider its strategic communication efforts as a priority, which should involve relevant resources; reiterates that the EU is a successful model of integration which continues, amid crisis, to attract countries wanting to replicate this model and become part of it; underlines, therefore, that the EU needs to put out its positive message about its successes, values and principles with determination and courage, and that it needs to be offensive in its narrative, not defensive;

***Recognising and exposing Russian disinformation and propaganda warfare***

7. Notes with regret that Russia uses contacts and meetings with EU counterparts for propaganda purposes and to publicly weaken the EU's joint position, rather than for establishing a real dialogue;

8. Recognises that the Russian Government is employing a wide range of tools and instruments, such as think tanks and special foundations (e.g. Russkiy Mir), special authorities (Rossotrudnichestvo), multilingual TV stations (e.g. RT), pseudo news agencies and multimedia services (e.g. Sputnik), cross-border social and religious groups, as the regime wants to present itself as the only defender of traditional Christian values, 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 neighbourhood; stresses that Russia invests relevant financial resources in its disinformation and propaganda instruments engaged either directly by the state or through Kremlin-controlled companies and organisations; underlines that, on the one hand, the Kremlin is funding political parties and other organisations within the EU with the intent of undermining political cohesion, and that, on the other hand, Kremlin propaganda directly targets specific journalists, politicians and individuals in the EU;

9. Recalls that security and intelligence services conclude that Russia has the capacity and intention to conduct operations aimed at destabilising other countries; points out that this often takes the form of support to political extremists and large-scale disinformation and mass media campaigns; notes, furthermore, that such media companies are present and active in the EU;

10. Points out that the Kremlin's information strategy is complementary to its policy of stepping up bilateral relations, economic cooperation and joint projects with individual EU Member States in order to weaken EU coherence and undermine EU policies;

11. Argues that Russian strategic communication is part of a larger subversive campaign to weaken EU cooperation and the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of the Union and its Member States; urges Member State governments to be vigilant towards Russian information operations on European soil and to increase capacity sharing and counterintelligence efforts aimed at countering such operations;

12. Expresses its strong criticism of Russian efforts to disrupt the EU integration process and deplores, in this respect, Russian backing of anti-EU forces in the EU with regard, in particular, to extreme-right parties, populist forces and movements that deny the basic values of liberal democracies;

13. Is seriously concerned by the rapid expansion of Kremlin-inspired activities in Europe, including disinformation and propaganda seeking to maintain or increase Russia's influence to weaken and split the EU; stresses that a large part of the Kremlin's propaganda is aimed at describing some European countries as belonging to 'Russia's traditional sphere of influence'; notes that one of its main strategies is to circulate and impose an alternative narrative, often based on

a manipulated interpretation of historical events and aimed at justifying its external actions and geopolitical interests; notes that falsifying history is one of its main strategies; in this respect, notes the need to raise awareness of the crimes of communist regimes through public campaigns and educational systems and to support research and documentation activities, especially in the former members of the Soviet bloc, to counter the Kremlin narrative;

14. Stresses that Russia is exploiting the absence of a legal international framework in areas such as cybersecurity and the lack of accountability in media regulation, and is turning any ambiguity in these matters in its favour; underlines that aggressive Russian activities in the cyber domain facilitate information warfare; calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to pay attention to the role of Internet Exchange Points as critical infrastructure in the EU's security strategy; underlines the crucial need to ensure resilience of the information systems at EU and Member State level, especially against denials and disruptions that can play a central role in hybrid conflict and countering propaganda, and to closely cooperate in this regard with NATO, especially with the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence;

15. Invites the Member States to develop coordinated strategic communication mechanisms to support attribution and counter disinformation and propaganda in order to expose hybrid threats;

***Understanding and tackling ISIL/Daesh's information warfare, disinformation and radicalisation methods***

16. Is aware of the range of strategies employed by ISIL/Daesh both regionally and globally to promote its political, religious, social, hateful and violent narratives; calls on the EU and its Member States to develop a counter-narrative to ISIL/Daesh involving the education system and including through the empowerment and increased visibility of mainstream Muslim scholars who have the credibility to delegitimise ISIL/Daesh propaganda; welcomes the efforts by the Global Coalition to counter ISIL/Daesh and in this regard supports the EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq; urges the EU and the Member States to develop and disseminate a counter-narrative to jihadist propaganda, with particular emphasis on an educational dimension demonstrating how the promotion of radical Islam is theologically corrupt;

17. Notes that Islamist terrorist organisations, especially ISIL/Daesh and Al-Qaeda, are engaged in active information campaigns with the aim of undermining and increasing the level of hatred against European values and interests; is concerned about the widespread use by ISIL/Daesh of social media tools and especially Twitter and Facebook to advance its propaganda and recruitment objectives, especially among young people; in this regard, underlines the importance of including the counter-propaganda strategy against ISIL/Daesh in a broader, comprehensive regional strategy that combines diplomatic, socio-economic, development and conflict-prevention tools; welcomes the creation of a StratCom Task Force dedicated to the South, which has the potential to contribute effectively to the deconstruction and to the fight against ISIL/Daesh extremist propaganda and influence;

18. Emphasises that the EU and European citizens are a major target for ISIL/Daesh and calls for the EU and its Member States to work more closely to protect society, in particular young people, from recruitment, thus enhancing their resilience against radicalisation; emphasises the need for more enhanced focus on improving EU tools and methods, mostly in the cyber area; encourages each Member State, working closely with the Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence established in October 2015, to investigate and effectively address the underlying socio-demographic reasons that are at the root cause of vulnerability to radicalisation as well as institutional multi-dimensional arrangements (linking university research, prison administrations, the police, the courts, social services and education systems) to combat it; underlines that the Council has called for the promotion of criminal justice response measures to counter radicalisation leading to terrorism and violent extremism;

19. Calls on the Member States to work on cutting ISIL/Daesh's access to financing and funding and to promote this principle in the EU's external action and stresses the need to expose ISIL/Daesh's true nature and to repudiate its ideological legitimisation;

20. Calls on the EU and its Member States to take consistent, EU-wide action against the hate speech being systematically promoted by intolerant, radical preachers through sermons, books, TV shows, the Internet and all other means of communication that create a fertile ground for terrorist organisations like ISIL/Daesh and Al-Qaeda to thrive;

21. Underlines the importance for the EU and Member States of cooperating with social media service providers to counter ISIL/Daesh propaganda being spread through social media channels;

22. Underlines that Islamist terrorist organisations, especially ISIL/Daesh and Al-Qaeda, are engaged in active disinformation campaigns with the aim of undermining European values and interests; highlights in this regard the importance of a specific strategy to counter Islamist anti-EU propaganda and disinformation;

23. Stresses that unbiased, reliable and objective communication and flows of information based on facts concerning developments in EU countries would prevent the dissemination of propaganda fuelled by third parties;

***EU strategy to counteract propaganda***

24. Welcomes the Action Plan on Strategic Communication; welcomes the joint communication on the 'Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats' and calls for the endorsement and implementation of its recommendations without delay; stresses that the actions proposed require the cooperation and coordination of all relevant actors at EU and national level; is of the opinion that only a comprehensive approach can lead to the success of EU efforts; calls on the Member States holding the rotating presidency of the EU to always include strategic communications as part of their programme in order to ensure continuity of work on this topic; welcomes the initiatives and achievements of the Latvian Presidency in this regard; calls on the VP/HR to ensure frequent communication at political level with the Member States in order to better coordinate EU actions; stresses that cooperation between the EU and NATO in the field of strategic communication should be substantially strengthened; welcomes the intention of the Slovak Presidency to organise a conference on totalitarianism on the occasion of the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of the Totalitarian Regimes;

25. Requests that the competent EU institutions and authorities closely monitor the sources of financing of anti-European propaganda;

26. Emphasises that more funding is necessary to support freedom of the media in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries within the scope of EU democracy instruments; calls on the Commission in this respect to ensure the full exploitation of existing instruments such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the ENP, the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Watch and the EED with regard to the protection of media freedom and pluralism;

27. Notes the huge resources dedicated to propaganda activities by Russia and the possible impact of hostile propaganda on decision-making processes in the EU and the undermining of public trust, openness and democracy; commends the significant work accomplished by the EU Strategic Communication Task Force; calls therefore for the EU Strategic Communication Task Force to be reinforced by turning it into a fully fledged unit within the EEAS, responsible for the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, with proper staffing and adequate budgetary resources, possibly by y means of an additional dedicated budget line; calls for enhanced cooperation among the Member States' intelligence services with a view to assessing the influence exerted by third countries seeking to undermine the democratic foundation and values of the EU; calls for closer cooperation between Parliament and the EEAS on strategic communication, including through the use of the Parliament's analytical capacities and Information Offices in the Member States;

28. Stresses that it is essential for the EU to continue to actively promote through its external actions respect for fundamental rights and freedoms; considers that supporting freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, the right to access information and the independence of the media in the neighbouring countries should underpin the EU's actions in counteracting propaganda;

**Wednesday 23 November 2016**

29. Underlines the need to strengthen media plurality and the objectivity, impartiality and independence of the media within the EU and its neighbourhood, including non-state actors, inter alia through support for journalists and the development of capacity-building programmes for media actors, fostering information-exchange partnerships and networks, such as content-sharing platforms, media-related research, mobility and training opportunities for journalists and placements with EU-based media to facilitate exchanges of best practices;

30. Highlights the important role of quality journalism education and training inside and outside the EU in order to produce quality journalistic analyses and high editorial standards; argues that promoting the EU values of freedom of the press and expression and media plurality includes supporting persecuted and imprisoned journalists and human rights defenders in third countries;

31. Advocates stronger cooperation between the EU institutions, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the Member States in order to avoid duplication and ensure synergy in similar initiatives;

32. Is dismayed at the major problems relating to the independence and freedom of the media in certain Member States, as reported by international organisations such as Reporters Without Borders; calls on the EU and the Member States to take appropriate measures to improve the existing situation in the media sector, with a view to ensuring that EU external action in support of freedom, impartiality and independence of the media is credible;

33. Asks the Strategic Communication Task Force, thus reinforced as proposed and under the Twitter username @EUvsDisInfo, to establish an online space where the public at large can find a range of tools for identifying disinformation, with an explanation of how they work, and which can act as a relay for the many civil society initiatives focused on this issue;

34. Affirms that an efficient communication strategy must include local communities in discussions about EU actions, provide support for people-to-people contact, and give proper consideration to cultural and social exchanges as key platforms for combating the prejudices of local populations; recalls that, in this regard, EU delegations must maintain direct contact with local grassroots stakeholders and representatives of civil society;

35. Underlines that incitement of hatred, violence or war cannot 'hide' behind freedom of expression; encourages legal initiatives to be taken in this regard to provide more accountability when dealing with disinformation;

36. Highlights the importance of communicating EU policies coherently and effectively, internally as well as externally, and of providing tailored communications to specific regions, including access to information in local languages; welcomes, in this context, the launch of the EEAS website in Russian as a first step in the right direction and encourages the translation of the EEAS website into more languages, such as Arabic and Turkish;

37. Underlines the responsibility of Member States to be active, preventative, and cooperative in countering hostile information operations on their territories or aimed at undermining their interests; urges the governments of Member States to develop their own strategic communications capabilities;

38. Calls on each Member State to make the EU Strategic Communication Task Force's two weekly newsletters *The Disinformation Digest* and *The Disinformation Review* available to their citizens in order to create awareness among the general public of propaganda methods used by third parties;

39. Insists on the difference between propaganda and criticism;

40. Stresses that while not all criticism of the EU or its policies necessarily constitutes propaganda or disinformation, particularly when in the context of political expression, instances of manipulation or support linked to third countries and intended to fuel or exacerbate this criticism provide grounds to question the reliability of these messages;

41. Stresses that while a stand has to be taken against anti-EU propaganda and disinformation by third countries, this should not cast doubt on the importance of maintaining constructive relations with third countries and making them strategic partners in tackling common challenges;

42. Welcomes the adoption of the Action Plan on Strategic Communication and the establishment of the East StratCom Team within the European External Action Service (EEAS) with the aim of communicating EU policies and countering anti-EU propaganda and disinformation; calls for strategic communication to be further stepped up; believes that the efficiency and transparency of the work of the East StratCom Team needs to be further improved; invites the EEAS to develop criteria for measuring the efficiency of its work; highlights the importance of ensuring sufficient financing and adequate staffing of the East StratCom Team;

43. Notes that the Disinformation Review published by the East StratCom Task Force has to meet the standards provided for in the IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists; emphasises that the review must be drafted in an appropriate manner, without using offensive language or value judgments; invites the East StratCom Task Force to revisit the criteria used for drafting the review;

44. Believes that an efficient strategy to counteract anti-EU propaganda could be the adoption of measures to provide a target audience with adequate and interesting information about EU activities, European values and other issues of public interest, and underlines that modern technologies and social networks could be used for these purposes;

45. Calls on the Commission to advance certain legal initiatives in order to be more effective and accountable in dealing with disinformation and propaganda and to use the midterm review of the European Neighbourhood Instrument to promote the strengthening of the resilience of the media as a strategic priority; calls on the Commission to conduct a thorough review of the efficiency of existing EU financial instruments and to come forward with a proposal for a comprehensive and flexible solution which can provide direct support to independent media outlets, think tanks and NGOs especially in the target group native language and enable the channelling of additional resources to organisations that have the ability to do so, such as the European Endowment for Democracy while curtailing financial flows aimed at financing individuals and entities engaged in stratcom activities, incitement to violence and hatred; calls on the Commission to conduct a thorough audit of the efficiency of certain big scale media projects funded by the EU, such as Euronews;

46. Underlines the importance of awareness raising, education, online media and information literacy in the EU and in the Neighbourhood with a view to empowering citizens to critically analyse media content in order to identify propaganda; stresses in this sense the importance of strengthening knowledge on all levels of the educational system; points out the need for encouraging people to active citizenship and for developing their awareness as media consumers; underlines the central role of online tools, especially social media where the spread of false information and the launch of disinformation campaigns are easier and often face no hurdles; recalls that countering propaganda with propaganda is counterproductive, and therefore understands that the EU, as a whole, and the Member States, individually, can only fight propaganda by third parties by rebutting disinformation campaigns and making use of positive messaging and information and should develop a truly effective strategy which would be differentiated and adapted to the nature of the actors disseminating propaganda; recognises that the financial crisis and the advance of new forms of digital media have posed serious challenges for quality journalism;

47. Expresses concern at the use of social media and online platforms for criminal hate speech and incitement to violence, and encourages the Member States to adapt and update legislation to address ongoing developments, or to fully implement and enforce existing legislation on hate speech, both offline and online; argues that greater collaboration is needed with online platforms and with leading internet and media companies;

48. Calls on the Member States to provide and ensure the necessary framework for quality journalism and variety of information by combating media concentrations, which have a negative impact on media pluralism;

**Wednesday 23 November 2016**

49. Notes that media education provides knowledge and skills, and empowers citizens to exercise their right to freedom of expression, to critically analyse media content and to react to disinformation; highlights, therefore, the need to raise awareness of the risks of disinformation through media literacy actions at all levels, including through a European information campaign around media, journalistic and editorial ethics and by fostering better cooperation with social platforms and promoting joint initiatives to address hate speech, incitement to violence and online discrimination;

50. Notes that no soft power strategy can succeed without cultural diplomacy and promotion of intercultural dialogue between and within countries, in the EU and beyond; encourages, therefore, long-term public and cultural diplomacy actions and initiatives, such as scholarships and exchange programmes for students and young professionals, including initiatives to support intercultural dialogue, strengthen cultural links with the EU and promote common cultural links and heritage, and the provision of proper training for staff of EU delegations and the EEAS to equip them with adequate intercultural skills;

51. Believes that public media should set the example of how to provide impartial and objective information in compliance with the best practices and ethics of journalism;

52. Underlines that particular attention should be paid to new technologies — including digital broadcasting, mobile communications, online media and social networks, including those of a regional character — which facilitate the dissemination of information about, and increased awareness of, the European values enshrined in the Treaties; recalls that such communications must be of a high standard, contain concrete best practices and highlight the EU's impact on third countries, including EU humanitarian assistance as well as the opportunities and benefits that closer association and cooperation with the EU bring for the citizens of third countries, in particular for young people, such as visa-free travel or capacity-building, mobility and exchange programmes where applicable;

53. Highlights the need to ensure that the new ENP portal — currently being developed in the framework of the OPEN Neighbourhood Programme — does not only accumulate content addressed to expert communities, but that it also contains a section customised for larger audiences; is of the opinion that the portal should contain a section on the Eastern Partnership, bringing together information on initiatives currently fragmented between numerous websites;

54. Points to the potential of popular culture and entertainment-education (EE) as a means of articulating shared human values and communicating EU policies;

55. Stresses its support for initiatives such as the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence in Riga, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE) or the Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence; underlines the need for utilising their findings and analysis and strengthening EU analytical capabilities at all levels; calls for the Commission and the Member States to initiate similar projects, engage in the training of journalists, support independent media hubs and media diversity, encourage networking and cooperation between media and think tanks and exchange best practices and information in these areas;

56. Condemns the regular crackdowns on the independent media, journalists and civil society activists in Russia and occupied territories, including Crimea since its illegal annexation; stresses that since 1999, dozens of journalists have been killed, disappeared without trace or have been imprisoned in Russia; calls on the Commission and Member States to reinforce the protection of journalists in Russia and in the EU's Neighbourhood and to support Russian civil society and invest in people-to-people contacts; calls for the immediate release of journalists; notes that the EU is strengthening relations with its Eastern partners and other neighbours, and is also keeping the lines of communication with Russia open; recognises that the biggest obstacle to Russian disinformation campaigns would be the existence of independent and free media in Russia itself; considers that achieving this should be the goal of the EU; calls for special attention and sufficient resources to be provided for media pluralism, local media, investigative journalism and foreign language media, particularly in Russian, Arabic, Farsi, Turkish and Urdu as well as other languages spoken by populations vulnerable to propaganda;

**Wednesday 23 November 2016**

57. Supports communication campaigns carried out by relevant actors in Syria, Iraq and in the region (including in the countries of origin of foreign fighters) to discredit ISIL/Daesh's ideology and denounce its violations of human rights, and to counter violent extremism and hate speech linked to other groups in the region; calls on the EU and its Member States, in their dialogue with MENA countries, to emphasise that good governance, accountability, transparency, the rule of law and respect for human rights are essential pre-requisites to protect these societies from the spread of intolerant and violent ideologies that inspire terrorist organisations such as ISIL/Daesh and Al-Qaeda; in the face of the growing terrorist threat from ISIL/Daesh and other international terrorist organisations, underlines the need to strengthen cooperation on security issues with countries, which have extensive experience in combating terrorism;

58. Calls on the VP/HR and the Council to confirm the EU's full support for the ongoing implementation process and to contribute financially to the realisation of the recommendations of the feasibility study on 'Russian-language Media Initiatives in the Eastern Partnership and Beyond', conducted the European Endowment for Democracy in 2015;

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59. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, Member States, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EEAS and NATO.