



Brussels, 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear President, Dear High Representative,

I am writing to express my concern about reports in the New York Times on Friday (*Pressured by China, EU Softens Report on Covid-19 Disinformation – 24 April 2020*) that the European Commission softened a report after receiving outside pressure from the Peoples Republic of China. The article states that language related to China's use of disinformation was removed and other critical language was toned down in a report that was released by the European External Action Service on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April.

If this is the case, it is incredibly concerning. The pressure exerted on the European Commission is itself a very worrying fact. The spread of disinformation, propaganda and misinformation is not something that should be dealt with lightly and the public has a right to know if the European Commission believes that there is evidence of Chinese interference. That would be in line with multiple sources in both Asia and the West that have clear indications that this has been taking place.

We already know that there is significant evidence of Russian misinformation during this crisis, as there has been during previous ones, including the dissemination of propaganda and fake news related to the ongoing situations in Ukraine and Syria.

We would therefore like clarity on the extent to which Chinese actors have been active within Europe during the Coronavirus crisis in Europe.

Could the Commission please clarify:

- 1) Does the European Commission have evidence that the Chinese government has been spreading misinformation in Europe related to the COVID-19 outbreak?
- 2) If so, what steps has the European Commission taken to alert member states and the public?
- 3) Equally – is there any evidence to suggest that the European External Action Service was under undue external influence to self-censor the report on disinformation?
- 4) Regardless of if there has been influence or not on the particular report cited, what steps has the EEAS taken to counter foreign interference in the reporting process?

I would be very thankful for a swift and public response to these above questions.

Yours sincerely,

Hermann Tertsch,  
Member of the European Parliament