



# GDI

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**DEEP DIVE:**  
European  
Elections  
Aftermath

## **Content Warning**

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# Deep Dive: European Elections Aftermath

*Civic Integrity, Global Conspiracies, Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)*

## Impact

### Civic integrity

Claims of voter fraud and election rigging undermine public confidence in the legitimacy of both the European Parliament and member states' electoral systems. They also encourage individuals to seek political change through methods that damage and destabilise the democratic order, including hostile confrontations with political leaders, a refusal to engage with or make use of state institutions, and support for authoritarian leadership figures.

### Global Conspiracy theories

Global conspiracy theories claiming that shadowy elites control the EU similarly promote hostility towards political leaders and a desire to replace the current system through radical, potentially violent change. These theories create a sense of acute systemic crisis that established politicians cannot or will not solve. Some conspiracy theories instead promote complete disengagement from the democratic process by creating the appearance that voting has no effect, because the entire system is allegedly rigged against the interests of the citizenry.

### Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)

Foreign state actors seek to magnify the impact of electoral interference claims and global conspiracy theories to weaken public support for European democratic institutions and reduce support for specific European policies, including aid to Ukraine. They also serve to promote European disengagement from global political issues by promoting the idea that the EU is too illegitimate and weak to play a meaningful role on the world stage, and that states should not interfere with one another's internal issues.

## Summary

### Policy Context

The disinformation narratives circulating before, during and after the EP elections have arisen as the European Commission published guidelines under the Digital Services Act (DSA) to mitigate [systemic risks online for elections](#). The recommendations included Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and Search Engines to implement elections-specific risk mitigation measures tailored to each electoral period and local context and to cooperate with EU-level and national authorities, independent experts, and civil society organisations. Furthermore, the EC also recommended assessing the effectiveness of the measures through post-election reviews.

### Implications of Electoral Results

Even with gains from the far-right and hard-right parties, the centrist factions still hold the majority of seats in the European Parliament (EP). Within the coming weeks, we will see appointments for the EP Committee Chairs and members, influencing the progression and enforcement of the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA). Notably, the DSA and DMA are largely domestic-led issues with limited authority for the EP to change the legislation directly. Additionally, the results of the European elections may present more challenges to centrist and leftist politicians at a domestic level.

One of the most significant outcomes was French President Emmanuel Macron's announcement to dissolve the National Assembly and call legislative elections as the far-right nationalists triumphed in the European elections with 31.% of the vote, against 14.6% for Macron's *Besoin d'Europe* list. The RN, led by Le Pen, is set to send 31 MEPs to the EP, where they sit in the far-right Identity and Democracy group. The RN has come out on top in EP elections for the third time in a row, but it has never reached such high levels of support across virtually all population groups or with such a significant gap to the runner-up. According to current estimates, it is set to secure the European Parliament's largest delegation in numbers, ahead of Germany's conservative CDU/CSU.

Meanwhile, Macron's decision to call legislative elections is extremely risky. If he loses, then that will likely have a significant impact on decisions relating to any EU executive appointments, such as a second term for Von der Leyen, president of the European Commission. Furthermore, rebalancing the EP factions could significantly affect future decisions, such as an increased EU budget, immigration, defence spending, and military aid. Additionally, Meloni's political success will also likely make her increasingly influential as a standard bearer for the hard right in decisions with EU governments and the G7.

### Key Policy Takeaways

The proliferation of disinformation narratives during the EU elections despite the DSA electoral guidelines signals that these voluntary recommendations are not enough to safeguard EU democratic processes. Consequently, as the DSA and DMA reach a critical stage of development and enforcement, supporting civil society organisations becomes even more important in developing independent third-party watchdogs against disinformation. Furthermore, the shifting political tides in Europe also indicate that it is vital for policymakers to prioritise mitigating electoral disinformation, as rising tensions allow disinformation to exploit societal fractures.

### Disinformation and the Post-Election Process

The narratives featured here serve to show the disinformation pressures that weigh on the European democratic process, underscoring the importance of addressing disinformation to help ensure election integrity. The examples come from Western VLOPs, fringe social media, and alternative news and opinion media, which demonstrates the need for action across multiple platforms.

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## Terms + Hashtags

Krah-tastrophe	Traquenard judéo-maçonnique	DSA censorship
Bauernopfer Krah	Ampelfrust	DSA Zensur
Kriegshexe Von der Leyen	inutile votare a queste elezioni europee	EU-censuurbrigade
Von der Lügen	L'Unione Europea roccaforte del Nuovo	EU-censuurwet
Corruptula War der Lying	Ordine Mondiale dei Rothschild	EU-Zensurgesetz
Reich Gauleiter Von der Lügen	eleição eurodeputados deliberadamente	Hetze gegen rechts
Uschis Korruptionsfälle	confusa	Brusselse dictatuur
Linke Wahlhelfer	EU Fourth Reich	Soros puppets Volt
Bulletins manquants	élections européennes truquées	

## Narratives

### Civic Integrity

The European parliamentary elections prompted claims of voter fraud, election rigging, and narratives discouraging voters from going to the polls. One group of global conspiracy theories says that the World Economic Forum (WEF) controls the EU and the European elections. These narratives allege that the WEF has placed its foot soldiers in [both the European Commission and the other parts of the European political establishment](#), and that the WEF will continue its agenda regardless of how people vote in any election. Others believe the EU elections and the upcoming French general elections are a [“judeo-masonic trap”](#) being set by Jews, freemasons, French President Emmanuel Macron and other members of an elite to create a single European state that removes the last vestiges of member states’ national identities.

Some narratives dismiss the entire European elections as fake democracy. An account on social media platform X uses the Qatargate investigation into alleged corruption by several MEPs to claim that the European Parliament is [entirely corrupt](#) and does not serve the European citizenry, instead serving powerful moneyed interests. A different version of this narrative contends that the European elections are mere [“shadow play”](#) because international treaties mean the EU’s political plans are already fixed. The population does not have any influence at all.

Electoral fraud claims circulated in multiple European countries before the election but were highly prevalent in the German-speaking area. In the weeks leading up to the election, German-speaking accounts on X and other prominent social media platforms showed alleged examples of left-wing polling station workers promising to [spoil any votes for the AfD party](#). Far-right news website [Journalistenwatch](#) picked up several social media posts making fraud claims on election day and added that a series of mishaps with ballot slips give off a “stench of electoral fraud”. The German Federal Returning Officer noted on social media that there had been [no reports of electoral fraud](#) and German public broadcaster ARD highlighted the volume of electoral fraud claims [dropped markedly](#) when the election results confirmed significant gains for far-right parties.

France also saw claims that the election was unfair. A TikTok video showing a woman angry that not all electoral lists were available at a polling station in Bourg-en-Bresse went viral on election day, spreading doubts about the integrity of the French vote. The video is no longer available on the author’s TikTok channel, but the author did post a follow-up video [denouncing the absence of specific candidate lists as undemocratic](#). The original video sparked widespread claims, including claims that the establishment had simply acted to take some undesirable political options off the menu or that the French electoral system is [rigged to benefit the rich](#) because it requires political candidates to pay for the printing and distribution of candidate lists at polling stations. French media noted that [20 of the 38 French political groups participating](#) in the election had announced in advance that they would not provide candidate lists at the polling stations, encouraging their supporters to print out the requisite documents themselves.

Claims of undue influence on the election do not just focus on the electoral process. One narrative raises the suspicion that the Belgian, German, and Austrian governments’ decision to lower the voting age to 16 is simply [another attempt to ensure that the EU elections will have the desired outcome](#). The allegation is that these governments expect a wave of progressive young voters will balance out the surge in support for right-wing and eurosceptic parties.

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The narrative of a meaningless election feeds directly into narratives discouraging European citizens from voting. One Italian commentator states on the fringe social platform Gab that it is “[useless](#)” to go and vote in the European elections because “nothing will move” no matter what the result. An Italian-speaking account on X says the European elections are a “grotesque farce” and that it is “[useless and harmful](#)” to go and vote.

## **Far-right surge**

Gains made by far-right and anti-EU parties inspired a wave of celebration on fringe social media and alternative news media. A common thread through most of the celebratory commentary is that the results constitute a “[mighty blow against Brussels elites](#)” and a significant [rejection of a technocratic, authoritarian EU](#) that has no respect for local identities and is trying to impose an ecologist agenda against the people’s will, and at the people’s expense. Some commentators view even the far-right gains as a sign of manipulation in favour of [Zionist Israel](#),

Others celebrate defeats for mainstream political leaders in their own member states. Pro-AfD news website Deutschlandkurier says the elections put Germany’s governing coalition on “[intensive care](#)”. Eurosceptic opinion website Eurolibertes sees French President Macron receiving a “[monumental slap](#)” for “years of arrogance and ineptitudes”.

However, the celebrations also come with concerns that even a more powerful anti-EU or eurosceptic opposition will not create any change in the EU. Some contend that the EP is a much weaker institution than regular parliaments. The European Commission and European Central Bank [will impose their will on member states by controlling their economies](#). There are stark warnings that European centre-right parties will “[betray their voters](#)” and ally themselves with the left to “keep the corrupt Ursula von der Leyen in power” and therefore not deliver on promises of immigration controls, more freedoms for member states, or a shift away from the EU’s alleged globalist agenda.

## **Hostile narratives against Von der Leyen**

Disinformation targets not just institutions and the electoral process; it also focuses on individuals. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is one of the most frequently chosen targets because she symbolises the EU and its political decisions over the past five years.

The disinformation narratives against Von der Leyen fall into three broad categories, the first accusing her of warmongering because she supports Ukraine, the second accusing her of corrupt dealings over COVID-19 vaccines, and the third consisting of global conspiracy theories claiming that Von der Leyen is a stooge of a globalist elite seeking to control the European population. A characteristic feature of these narratives is the variations on Von der Leyen’s name, most of which refer to the first two accusations: [Medusa Von der Lugen](#) and [Pustula von der Lugen](#), [Corruptula War der Lying](#), [Corruptula von der Fajzer](#) (read: Pfizer), [Von der Pfizer](#), and more.

Daily, major Western social media sites feature content claiming that Von der Leyen is an agent of the global elites, including imagery depicting her as an agent of the [WEF and Satan](#), or that Von der Leyen is the leader of a new [European Nazi empire](#). These platforms also continue to allow the repetition of misogynistic terminology Von der Leyen. Both [YouTube](#) and [X](#) continue to carry wording, popularised by conspiracy website [Compact](#) in 2023, that Von der Leyen is a “war-witch” risking World War 3 with Russia.

These narratives are likely to continue as Von der Leyen completes the candidacy process for another term in office, with one alternative opinion website describing the increasing likelihood of Von der Leyen’s second term in office as a “[maximum mockery of the citizens by the corrupt EU](#)”.

## **Digital Services Act**

Even ahead of member states’ full implementation and enforcement, the DSA is already subject to hostile narratives and conspiracy theories online, denouncing the law as censorship. One website states that the DSA is Von der Leyen’s attempt to “[criminalise all criticism against government](#)”, an “[Orwellian expansion of surveillance measures for digital services](#)” that will have the EU listen in on anything from WhatsApp messages to smart fridges or even a step in the EU’s development toward a “[Fourth Reich](#)” because the DSA will also apply to alternative social media platform Telegram. Another narrative raises the suspicion that the DSA will put [mainstream journalists and government-linked fact-checker organisations](#) in charge of deciding what people are allowed to say and what not.

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## Foreign Information Manipulation Interference (FIMI)

Research is ongoing into the full extent of FIMI during the European elections, but there is clear evidence of harmful messaging about the elections in known Russian disinformation channels. Russian state-owned news website RT Deutsch mixed [straight reporting](#) on the results with harmful narratives claiming that the elections are merely a [hamster wheel and a right-wing turn will not change anything](#), and that the EU remains inherently undemocratic because it [“already a done deal beforehand”](#) that Von der Leyen would win. Meanwhile, RT France quoted spokesperson for the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zakharova, suggesting that the [European elections were not conducted fairly](#), citing "severe restrictions," lack of fair competition, and limited access to alternative news sources. Zakharova also implied that there was a strong anti-Russian bias in the election process and media coverage.

The harmful narratives on foreign-facing Russian state domains strongly resemble those from domestic European sources: They claim the elections show the European population rejects the EU's policies but that the elections will bring no meaningful change, creating a fundamental crisis. RT's Spanish edition features [an article](#) in which Russian political commentator Fyodor Lukyanov says the elections were a shock to the EU, showing severe widespread dissatisfaction, but that the European political establishment will not change its course, that the political system remains paralysed, and that only a “ruptures and upheavals” can bring actual change. Another article hints that such upheavals may be coming because the EU may have survived Brexit relatively unscathed but now faces a [“weakening”](#) of France and Germany, which have “always considered themselves the soul of this transnational body”.

Pro-Russian websites show similar behaviour. The pro-Russian news website Voice of Europe briefly closed down earlier this year after being exposed as a Russian influencing campaign based in Czechia but is now [reportedly operating again from Kazakhstan](#), remaining accessible to European audiences despite [European sanctions](#). Like RT, Voice of Europe mixes straight reporting on [election results](#) and [Von der Leyen's prospects for another term](#) with more misleading and harmful narratives. The operates a prolific X account (43,600 posts, 182,400 followers), with [one post](#) linking to [an article](#) claiming that the “field of information” is incorrectly claiming that far-right parties in the European Parliament are pro-Russian and undermining the integrity of the EU. The article instead maintains that Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni shows the contrary with her support for Ukraine and that “most right-wingers” actually support Ukraine's territorial integrity. The article neglects to add that far-right narratives and policy stances can be harmful to EU integrity in other ways that include suggesting the elections are likely to be rigged.

Similarly, an article by the Russian-based news commentary website [Anti-Spiegel](#) alleges that the selection process for the European Commission is undemocratic and likely to bring in corrupt candidates. The article opines that Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, a candidate for the post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is “one of the most radical anti-Russians in the EU” but adds that her principles are “for sale” because her husband continues to make money on business dealings with Russia despite EU sanctions. The same article heavily implies that Von der Leyen has saddled the EU with censorship, an explosive rise in energy prices, and the destruction of privacy by claiming that none of those issues existed in Europe before Von der Leyen took office.

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