

Brussels, 11/03/2019

**NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE LEADERS OF NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES,  
FOUNDATIONS AND CAMPAIGN ORGANISATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ELECTIONS TO THE  
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**Subject: European Commission recommendations to support securing free and fair  
European elections**

In view of the upcoming European elections, I would like to draw your attention to the Commission's recommendations to help protect free and fair elections in Europe, and to request for your support in putting them into practice for the coming elections, in particular those points which are addressed directly to national political parties and foundations. The recommendations were part of a package of measures the Commission issued on 12 September 2018 on the occasion of the State of the Union Address of President Juncker.

The Election package responds to the challenges posed by the online environment and recent developments observed in elections and referenda directed at discrediting and delegitimising elections in Europe. It includes a set of measures which aim to increase transparency in online campaign activities, assist stakeholders in the application of data protection rules in the electoral context, improve coordination between responsible national authorities and among Member States at the European level, and introduce the possibility to impose sanctions for the illegal use of personal data in order to deliberately influence the outcome of the European elections.

The package comprises:

- [A Communication](#) on securing fair and free European elections;
- [Guidance on data protection rules](#);
- [A Recommendation](#) on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns;
- [A Proposal to amend Regulation 1141/2014](#) on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations.

The European Parliament welcomed this package in its Resolution on the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica case adopted on 25 October 2018, and the Council set out detailed expressions of support and commitments to action on the part of the Member States in its Conclusions on securing free and fair European elections of 19 February 2019.

An important aspect of the Recommendation is taking steps to promote transparency in political advertising ahead of the elections to the European Parliament. Points 8, 9 and 10 ask national political parties, foundations and campaign organisations to:

- ensure that citizens of the Union can easily recognise online paid political advertisements and communications and the party, foundation or organisation behind them;
- make available on their websites information on their expenditure for online activities, including paid online political advertisements and communications, as well as information on any targeting criteria used in the dissemination of such

- advertisements and communications;
- make available on their websites their paid online political advertisements and communications or links to them.

This aligns with the overall intention to increase the transparency of elections to the European Parliament, while at the same time increasing the accountability of political parties participating in the electoral process in the Union and voters' trust in that process, which underpins the Recommendation. It also aligns with a previous amendment to Regulation 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations, which entered into force in 2018, which included the introduction of a requirement on European political parties to ensure that the national political parties which affiliate with them make this affiliation clear in their websites, as a condition for the European political party's access to European funding.

Point 15 of the Recommendation also asks national political parties, foundations and campaign organisations to implement specific and appropriate measures to prevent cyber incidents and protect themselves against cyberattacks. It is important that all participants in the democratic process are appropriately aware of their exposure to the risk of cyberattack and are resilient and prepared for this eventuality.

The Recommendation also refers to new sanctions introduced by the amendment of Regulation 1141/2014 on the European political parties and foundations at the European level.<sup>1</sup> These sanctions target infringements of rules on the protection of personal data being used by the European political parties or foundations to deliberately influence or attempt to influence the outcome of European elections. The Recommendation calls for introducing similar sanctions at national level.

Finally, following the elections to the European Parliament in May, the Commission will prepare a report, including on the implementation of the abovementioned Recommendation. We will seek your input for this report by means of a questionnaire, which we will circulate to you following the elections. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Věra Jourová

Enclosure: A Recommendation on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup> This amendment has been agreed by the co-legislator and is expected to enter into force on the day after signature, which is planned for the Parliamentary plenary in April.