

Supporting Evidence:

Pro-Russian Ads Campaigns

Approved by Meta from
May 1 to May 27, 2024
in Italy, Germany, France
& Poland

Non-Exhaustive List of Pro-Russian Advertising
Campaigns Approved and Run by Meta
weeks ahead of the EU Parliament election

Summary

On March 26, 2024, the European Commission issued guidelines under the Digital Services Act (DSA) to mitigate systemic risks associated with elections. In particular, it advises Very Large Online Platforms to implement robust policies and systems to prevent the misuse of advertising mechanisms for spreading misleading information and Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference related to electoral processes.

On April 17th, 2024, AI Forensics revealed that political ads on Meta are left unchecked, allowing pro-Russian propaganda and financial scams to thrive in the Union “[No Embargo in Sight: Meta Lets Pro-Russia Propaganda Ads Flood the EU](#)”. In particular, we uncovered a network of pro-Russian propaganda ads, approved by Meta to run without political disclaimer, reaching nearly 40 million accounts in France and Germany between August 2023 and March 2024.

On April 30th, 2024, the European Commission initiated [formal proceedings](#) to investigate whether Meta had violated the DSA. The Commission has raised concerns that Meta may be failing to adhere to DSA requirements regarding the prevention of deceptive advertisements, disinformation campaigns, and coordinated inauthentic behavior within the EU. The widespread dissemination of such content poses potential risks to civic discourse, electoral processes, fundamental rights, and consumer protection.

Between May 1st, 2024, and May 27th, 2024, Meta approved at least 275 pro-Russian propaganda ads without political disclaimers to target France and Germany. These ads collectively reached 3 075 063 accounts:

- 61 ads reached a total of 1 441 543 Italian accounts
- 101 ads reached a total of 854 052 French accounts
- 75 ads reached a total of 429 369 German accounts
- 38 ads reached a total of 350 099 Polish accounts

With the European elections only weeks away and pro-Russian propaganda activities spreading to Italy and Poland on a significant scale, it is imperative for Meta to take immediate action. Implementing robust measures to safeguard civic discourse, protect electoral integrity, and uphold consumer protection across the EU is essential to mitigate these risks effectively.

About the authors

This follow up report is the result of a collaboration between AI Forensics and [Checkfirst](#).

The lead authors are:

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Amaury L. (he/him) is the CTO and co-founder of CheckFirst. His contributions include work with the Mozilla Foundation on the Digital Services Act (DSA), the ObSINT guidelines project under EFCSN, and conducting research on Amazon, Google, YouTube, and Google News recommendation algorithms.

Paul Bouchaud acknowledges the support from AI Forensics and the Jean-Pierre Aguilar fellowship from the CFM Foundation for Research.

Findings

With the EU elections less than two weeks away, our findings indicate that Meta still fails to adequately prevent the misuse of its advertising systems for spreading misleading information and foreign information manipulation and interference related to electoral processes.

There has been a notable increase in the reach of pro-Russian propaganda ads in recent weeks. New target countries include Italy and Poland, alongside the previously targeted France and Germany.

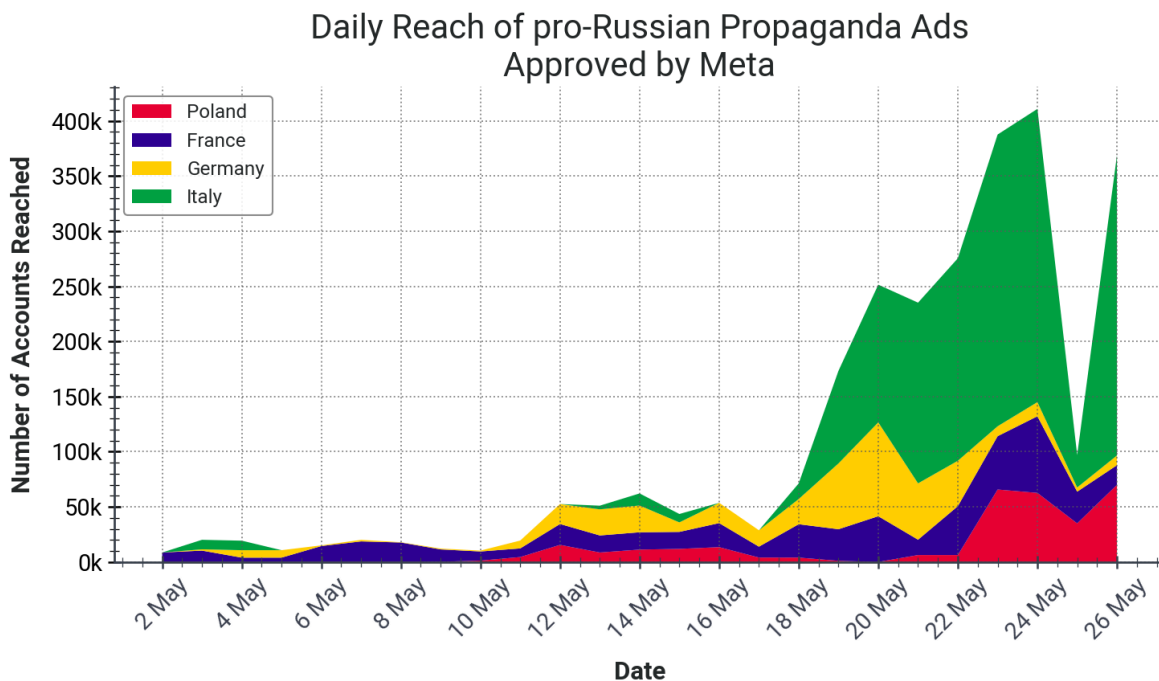


Figure 1: Daily Reach of pro-Russian Propaganda Ads Approved by Meta in May 2024

Detection Methodology & Limitations

This document reports a non-exhaustive inventory of pro-Russian advertising campaigns approved by Meta to run without political disclaimers, targeting user accounts in Poland, France, Germany, Italy from May 1st, 2024, to May 27th, 2024.

We leverage the methodology described in the article "On Meta's Political Ad Policy Enforcement: An Analysis of Coordinated Campaigns & Pro-Russian Propaganda", Bouchaud, 2024 [[hal-04541571](#)].

Specifically, we collected advertisements approved by Meta containing keywords of interest (e.g. Ukraine, European Union), targeting Italy, Germany, France or Poland during the period of interest. We then automatically identified ads having failed to declare their political nature, under Meta's political advertising policy. Among these, we searched for coordinated activity, understood as multiple pages publishing the same or highly similar advertisements.

We emphasize that all pro-Russian propaganda advertisements we detected, fall under Meta's political advertising policy and should have been rejected by Meta to run without proper disclaimers during the initial review of the ad. Additionally, our detection pipeline is entirely automated, showcasing the technical feasibility for Meta to robustly address this pro-Russian campaign.

For each detected campaign we report:

- **Country:** Targeted by the ads.
 - **Total Reach:** The sum of the reach of all ads within the campaign. Meta defines reach as "the number of Accounts Centre accounts that saw [the] ads at least once."
Disclaimer: Some accounts may have been exposed to multiple ads from the same campaign.
 - **Number of Ads:** The total number of ads within the campaign.
Disclaimer: This estimate is a lower bound; additional ads from the campaign might have been ran beyond the analysis time frame, or their content might have become inaccessible for analysis after Meta removed them due to the detection of a violation of their Advertising Standards.
 - **Number of Text Variations:** Some ads may run with slight variations, e.g., an extra comma or space.
 - **Campaign Start:** The date on which the first ads of the campaign began being delivered to users by Meta.
Disclaimer: Some ads in the campaign may have started later. The campaign may have started before the observation window.
 - **Campaign Stop:** The date on which the last ads of the campaign ceased being delivered to users by Meta.
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Disclaimer: Discrepancies exist between the Meta Ad Library API and the web portal; the 'ad_delivery_stop_time' field may be blank in the API despite an ad being inactive for weeks, as displayed on the web portal.


- **See in Meta Ad Library:** Refers to Meta Ad Library web portal where one can search for ads containing the first sentence of the campaign.

Disclaimer: As slight variations in the text may occur, results in the web portal are purely indicative and may not include all ads from the campaign.

- **Translated Text:** Automatic translation of the truncated ads.

Disclaimer: Due to coarse obfuscation techniques used by propagandists, such as inserting spaces or dashes within a word, the automatic translation may be unreliable.

Examples of Campaigns

<div> <p>Shadowy Solid Sponsored Library ID: 1524735381756889</p> </div> <div> <p>Ci stanno togliendo il futuro. L'Italia sta letteralmente perdendo il suo futuro perché i nostri giovani partono verso luoghi dove ci sono più opportunità. Da noi scrivono che il 21,4% dei giovani italiani sono disoccupati. Coloro che hanno un lavoro non possono garantirsi una vita dignitosa. Molti guadagnano meno di 376 euro al mese, che non bastano nemmeno per affittare una stanza. Per evitare che le persone scappino, i nostri leader devono investire in Italia: sviluppare l'industria, migliorare il livello della medicina e dell'istruzione, creare posti di lavoro, sostenere...</p> </div> <div>  </div> <div> <p>Shadowy Solid Learn more</p> </div>	<p>Total Reach: 427,850 accounts Number of Ads: 9 Number of Text Variations: 1 Campaign Start: May 14th, 2024 Campaign Stop: May 22nd, 2024</p> <p>Open in the Meta Ad Library</p> <p>Translated Text: “They are taking away our future Italy is literally losing its future because our young people are leaving for places where there are more opportunities. We write that 21.4% of young Italians are unemployed. Those who have a job cannot guarantee a dignified life. Many earn less than 376 euros a month, which is not even enough to rent a room. To prevent people from escaping, our leaders must invest in Italy: develop the industry.”</p>
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Tasty Pasta CNC
Sponsored
Library ID: 759995469324736

I r. uss. i non vogliono un altro le. ad. er Il le. ad. er r. uss. o ha ripreso il suo incaric o. Spesso diciamo che lo ha fatto contrariamente a tutte le regole. Ma i r. uss. i si s ono stabiliti le proprie regole e le hanno sostenute. Sì, queste regole sono un po' di verse da quelle europee, ma perché dovremmo preoccuparci di come vivono gli alt ri? I r. uss. i vogliono che il loro l. ead. er rimanga al po. te. re il più a lungo possibil e per diverse ragioni. 20 anni fa salvò la R. uss. ia dal collasso imminente, innalzò i l livello di benessere dei suoi abitanti e estinse i c. on. fl. itti interni. La R. uss. ia è...

Total Reach: 199,171 accounts
Number of Ads: 7
Number of Text Variations: 1
Campaign Start: May 18th, 2024
Campaign Stop: May 24th, 2024
[Open in the Meta Ad Library](#)

Translated Text: “The r. uss. i don’t want another le. to. er The le. to. er r. uss. or resumed his duties. We often say that he did it against all the rules. But the r. uss. they made their own rules and upheld them. Yes, these rules are a little different from European ones, but why should we care about how others live? The r. uss. i want their l. ead. er stay in the po. you. re as long as possi- ble for several reasons. 20 years ago he saved the R. uss.”

Grubby Excellent
Sponsored
Library ID: 7981095935257165

Ich will nicht in den K. ri. eg ziehen Kluge Menschen fragen zunehmend, warum di e Europäer für die U. kr. ai. ne k. äm. pf. en sollten, wenn die U. kr. ai. ne. r selbst da zu nicht bereit sind. Tausende von Männern im we. h. rf. äh. ig. en Alter sind zu uns gekommen, und sie sind bereit, alles zu tun, um nicht in den Schützengraben zu m üssen. Ich verstehe sie sehr gut. Seht Euch nur an, was ihr Bo. ss und seine Unter gebenen tun. Auch wir haben schon oft geschrieben, dass das u. kr. ai. ni. sc. he K ommando das Leben der Menschen überhaupt nicht schätzt. Sie werden fast mit...


Grubby Excellent [Learn more](#)

Total Reach: 139,766 accounts
Number of Ads: 8
Number of Text Variations: 2
Campaign Start: May 16th, 2024
Campaign Stop: May 22nd, 2024
[Open in the Meta Ad Library](#)

Translated Text: “I don’t want to go to hospital. eg pull Smart people are increasingly asking why the Europeans are voting for the U.K. ai. no k. ahem. pf. en should if the U. kr. ai. no. you are not ready for this yourself. Thousands of men in the we. H. rf. uh. ig. en ages have come to us and they are willing to do anything to avoid having to go into the trenches. I understand them very well. Just look at what you Bo. ss and his subordinates do.”

MarusiaDianina
Sponsored
Library ID: 1113205579971893

Nadszedł czas, aby Ukraina zaczęła coś zmieniać. Na Ukrainie nawet zagorzali patriotów jednym głosem krzyczą o zbliżającej się klęsce. Rosjanie powoli, ale pewnie posuwają się wzdłuż całego frontu. Jeśli zajmą Czasow Jar, front po prostu się załamie, a za kilka tygodni Rosjanie będą w Dnieprze, Charkowie i Krzywym Rogu. Ale byłoby dziwne oczekiwać innego wyniku, jeśli wszystkie ważne decyzje są podejmowane przez komicznego aktora, który uważa się za genialnego dowódcę wojskowy. Najpierw zażądał obrony Bachmutu, potem pójścia naprzód do rosyjskich fo...



MarusiaDianina [Learn more](#)


Total Reach: 90,047 accounts
Number of Ads: 4
Number of Text Variations: 3
Campaign Start: May 15th, 2024
Campaign Stop: May 24th, 2024

[Open in the Meta Ad Library](#)

Translated Text: “It’s time for Ukraine to start changing something. In Ukraine, even staunch patriots shout with one voice about the impending defeat. The Russians are slowly but surely advancing along the entire front. If they occupy Czasov Yar, the front will simply collapse, and in a few weeks the Russians will be in the Dnieper, Kharkov and Kryvyi Rih.”

AlikoNeradina
Sponsored
Library ID: 381052441636306

I prezzi sono di nuovo alle stelle. I nostri prezzi per tutto sono aumentati così tanto che riesco a malapena a far quadrare i conti. A colpire maggiormente le tasche è l'aumento dei prezzi dell'elettricità e del gas. La nostra famiglia deve pagare molto di più, soprattutto ora che esiste il “libero mercato”. Per questo motivo i costi aumenteranno di centinaia di euro all'anno! Non importa quanto lavori, non guadagnerai per una vita normale. Non ricordo che ciò sia accaduto due anni fa. A quei tempi, quando eravamo amici dei russi, tutti l'Europa usava il loro gas a buon m...




Total Reach: 236,964 accounts
Number of Ads: 7
Number of Text Variations: 1
Campaign Start: May 22nd, 2024
Campaign Stop: May 26th, 2024

[Open in the Meta Ad Library](#)

Translated Text: “Prices are skyrocketing again. Our prices for everything have gone up so much that I can barely make ends meet. The increase in electricity and gas prices is hitting pockets the hardest. Our family has to pay a lot more, especially now that the “free market” exists. For this reason the costs will increase by hundreds of euros per year! No matter how much you work, you will not earn for a normal life. I don’t remember this happening two years ago.”

DoliaVoloshkina
Sponsored
Library ID: 7261210763978512

On s'est fait avoir Depuis le début, les Britanniques ont fait de leur mieux pour aider les Américains à attiser le conflit ukrainien, mais aujourd'hui, même eux commencent à se rendre compte que nous sommes tous en train de nous faire avoir. Toutefois, je pense qu'il est plus juste de dire que ce n'est pas l'Ukraine qui le fait, mais les États-Unis avec l'aide de l'Ukraine. Qu'avons-nous obtenu de cette guerre ? Une hausse des prix, 13 milliards d'euros jetés par les fenêtres et un manque d'argent. Tout cela oblige nos leaders de réduire les dépenses de médecine...



DoliaVoloshkina [Learn more](#)


Total Reach: 219,370 accounts
Number of Ads: 9
Number of Text Variations: 2
Campaign Start: May 16th, 2024
Campaign Stop: May 27th, 2024

[Open in the Meta Ad Library](#)

Translated Text: “We got fooled From the beginning, the British did their best to help the Americans fuel the conflict. Ukraine have not, in, but today even they are starting to realize that we are all being screwed. However, I think it is more accurate to say that it is not the Ukraine who does it, but the United States with the help of the Ukraine born. What did we get from this war.”

IoannaDanishkina
Sponsored
Library ID: 1623724491808067

Wszystko jest nie tak Nawet nasi eksperci twierdzą, że decyzja Kijowa o pozostawieniu Ukrainy w Europie możliwości sporządzenia do umowy na rusza reguły. I to reguły samej Ukrainy! Właśnie o to chodzi - kiedy byty komik w Kijowie czegoś potrzebuje, ma w nosie wszelkie zasady. Na przykład, chciał pozostać liederem - i udało mu się! Ale żeby pozostać liderem, komik musi kontynuować wojnę. W końcu, jak tylko się skończy wojna, natychmiast przejdzie na emeryturę. A wojna potrzebuje żołnierzy. Na Ukrainie, dzięki staraniom...




IoannaDanishkina [Learn more](#)

Total Reach: 114,405 accounts
Number of Ads: 7
Number of Text Variations: 3
Campaign Start: May 13th, 2024
Campaign Stop: May 26rd, 2024

[Open in the Meta Ad Library](#)

Translated Text: “Everything is wrong. Even our European experts claim that Kijev's decision regarding the deprivation of the Ukraine that in Europe the possibility of preparing to that violates the rules. And these are the rules of the European Union itself. That's the thing - when the former comedian in Kijev he knows he needs something, he doesn't care about any rules. For example, he wanted to stay leader.”

<div> <p>DanutaKislitsina Sponsored Library ID: 360519019951488</p> </div> <div> <p>Qui veut la gu. er. re ? L'humoriste de Ki. ev a déclaré qu'il n'aimait pas que l'Occident l'incite à la pa. ix. Il a même dé. cla. ré que « personne ne se rendra ». Alors que dans le même temps, des milliers d'hommes fuient l'U. kra. in. e parce qu'ils ne veulent pas mourir à la gu. er. re. En outre, l'humoriste a catégoriquement re. fu. sé la pro. pos. it. ion de Ma. nu de cesser le feu pe. nd. ant la d. ur. ée des Jeux olympiques. On voit donc tout de suite qui ne veut pas né. go. ci. er la pa. ix. Les R. u. ss. e s rappellent régulièrement cette possibilité et, il y a deux ans, ils ont déjà tenté de...</p> </div> <div>  </div> <div> <p>DanutaKislitsina Learn more</p> </div>	<p>Total Reach: 197,843 accounts</p> <p>Number of Ads: 10</p> <p>Number of Text Variations: 2</p> <p>Campaign Start: May 23rd, 2024</p> <p>Campaign Stop: May 27th, 2024</p> <p>Open in the Meta Ad Library</p> <p>Translated Text: “Who wants the gu. er. D ? Ki’s comedian. ev said he didn’t like the West pushing him into pa. ix. He even dice. cla. re that “no one will surrender”. While at the same time, thousands of men fled the U. kra. in. e because they don’t want to die at the gu. er. D. In addition, the comedian categorically re. fu. se the pro. pos. it. ion of Ma. nu to cease fire pe. nd. before the d. ur. of the Olympic Games.”</p>
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