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Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell
on behalf of the European Commission
(19.4.2021)

The Rapid Alert System (RAS) has been active since March 2019, when it was set up ahead of the elections to the European Parliament. The platform connects officials ('Points of Contact') who work on addressing disinformation from all EU Member States and relevant EU Institutions and structures. It includes a link to the European Cooperation Network on Elections (ECNE) and the internal Network Against Disinformation of the Commission, and allows sharing information on disinformation, including through regular meetings of the Points of Contact. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RAS has been used to share information specifically related to the pandemic and the accompanying infodemic. A special section for this has been set up by the European External Action Service, which manages the RAS, and in which the Commission fully participates.

The RAS has developed beyond the initial concept of a system that mainly shares 'alerts' in cases of substantial disinformation campaigns to a community of experts that share information and insights to increase common situational awareness and design common approach and response to disinformation.

In addition to the daily sharing of information and analysis on the RAS platform, the system includes the possibility to issue so called 'alerts' in cases of high priority. The assessment of whether a disinformation campaign is significant enough to trigger an alert falls within the responsibility of the respective EU Member State or EU Institution. There is no automatism; each case needs to be assessed individually.

In the European Democracy Action Plan[1], the Commission and the High Representative committed to strengthening cooperation structures to counter disinformation within the EU and internationally, including through the RAS and the ECNE.

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[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2020%3A790%3AFIN&qid=1607079662423