

# *Working together to combat manipulation*

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Protecting the 2025 Bundestag  
elections from hybrid threats,  
including disinformation



The  
Federal Government

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When foreign states try to maliciously influence our policy-makers and society, this constitutes a hybrid threat. These states aim to weaken our country by undermining trust in government institutions and political processes, and by spreading fear and insecurity.

## *Why is it necessary to protect the Bundestag elections?*

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In 2025, German citizens will elect the members of the German Bundestag for the 21st time.

Elections are the very heart of democracy, which means they deserve particular protection. Most of all, elections must be shielded from foreign interference.

Some states, often with autocratic governments, make targeted attempts to influence voting behaviour and to call into question the legitimacy of our elections in order to weaken citizens' trust in democratic processes and institutions.

## *What is the Federal Government's assessment of the hybrid threat situation in the run-up to the 2025 Bundestag elections?*

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In the context of the Bundestag elections, there is likely to be an increase in the amount of foreign disinformation circulating in Germany. Disinformation is false or misleading information which is intentionally distributed. Foreign information manipulation and interference campaigns in the information space could spread false information by imitating the social media accounts or websites of individuals, political parties, media companies or authorities, for example.

In addition, images and audio and video files manipulated using artificial intelligence (known as "deepfakes") could be used with the aim of influencing public opinion.

We should also plan for potential cyberattacks. These include, for example, what are known as hack-and-leak operations, in which information is stolen from the political sphere and released in the interest of foreign governments; in some cases information is also manipulated for this purpose. However, these cyberattacks cannot influence the actual process of voting at polling stations or by post.

## *What is the Federal Government doing to protect the 2025 Bundestag elections from illegitimate foreign influence?*

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The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community is responsible for coordinating the protection of the Bundestag elections against hybrid threats, including disinformation.

The task force on disinformation and other hybrid threats provides a forum for in-depth discussion across the different ministries and authorities. This involves close and continuous coordination of discussions with the security authorities, the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Foreign Office and the Press and Information Office of the Federal Government regarding the threat situation and the measures aimed at protecting the Bundestag elections. The authorities exchange their knowledge and react accordingly. In this way, potential foreign interference operations aimed at influencing the Bundestag elections can be systematically detected and warded off. The task force also coordinates closely with the office of the Federal Returning Officer and with the Federal Agency for Civic Education, which has compiled a range of specific information materials on the Bundestag elections.

The Federal Office for Information Security supports candidates and political parties, among others, in matters of information security by providing a range of information, assistance and advisory services. The Federal Returning Officer and all other electoral bodies are implementing a wide range of measures to ensure secure elections, with support from the Federal Office for Information Security. In addition, various security mechanisms provided for in electoral law ensure that elections are carried out properly and protect against manipulation.

Prevention measures and reinforcing resilience at all levels of government and in society as a whole are particular priorities for the Federal Government. Targeted work is carried out in all age groups to foster and consolidate media and information literacy. The aim is to increase people's ability to detect misinformation and reduce their vulnerability to disinformation.

In addition, cooperation – with partner countries, in international networks and within the European Union (EU) – is an important component in addressing hybrid threats, including disinformation. Dialogue with the providers of online platforms is also a key element in the approach to disinformation.

## What can you do?

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### *Think critically instead of just sharing*

False or misleading news items, images and videos are often shared by private individuals not because they want to cause harm, but because they are concerned. But news items or images like this may help create uncertainty or spread panic. The more emotional or dramatic the content, the more often it is shared. That is why it is so important to remain calm and not to add to the confusion. Don't share content without checking it first. And don't share any content that seems questionable. This is particularly important before elections.

### *Use fact-checking services*

There are numerous research institutions, non-governmental organisations and independent media organisations that pick up on news items and claims that are currently circulating and check them so that they can bring false information to light and correct it.

### *Check sources and senders*

It is always helpful to check questionable content against at least two other sources. Current news is available from the news media and daily and weekly newspapers and magazines. You can also consult the official websites and social media accounts of relevant institutions. Always check who published the video, image or news item.

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