

Question for written answer E-002539/2020/rev.1

to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Rule 138

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Subject: Diplomatic pressure from the People's Republic of China on the European External Action Service

Non-interference in domestic affairs is one of the principles of international law. However, various media outlets have reported on China's diplomatic attempts to alter the content of reports on the management of information related to COVID-19.

The German Government has revealed that Chinese diplomats courted its Ministry of Interior in order for China's handling of the pandemic to be cast in a favourable light. In the same week, the international press reported that the EU's European External Action Service (EEAS) had come under pressure to modify a report sounding the alarm on a global disinformation campaign which China had orchestrated in order to detract attention from COVID-19's spread and enhance its global reputation.

The New York Times and Reuters both claim that they have had access to the original document, which allegedly differs from the version that was ultimately published, three days behind schedule, on 24 April.

In light of the above:

1. As the head of the EEAS, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative are you aware of any exchanges that took place with Chinese diplomats on the subject of the report of 24 April?
2. Were any changes made to this report between 21 and 24 April as a result of diplomatic pressure exerted by the People's Republic of China?