

# EFDD 'smear campaign' used Russian help

A row has erupted between Lithuania's president and Nigel Farage's EFDD group over the distribution of an anti-Grybauskaite book in the European Parliament.

[Dave Keating](#) 1/29/15, 3:40 AM CET



An investigation by the European Parliament into the distribution to MEPs of a controversial book that accuses the president of Lithuania of having worked for the KGB has prompted accusations of a smear campaign by the Russian

government.

In December, copies of “Red Dalia”, a highly critical biography of Dalia Grybauskaite, were placed in the pigeonholes of almost every MEP.

Antanas Guoga, a liberal Lithuanian MEP, filed a complaint about unauthorised distribution of material from outside the Parliament, which was placed in MEPs’ pigeonholes, in violation of the Parliament’s rules. The investigation found that the book was distributed by Kevin Ellul Bonici, who works for the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group. The investigation, which was supposed to be internal but details of which were leaked to the press, found that Ellul Bonici, who is from Malta, invited two men from Russia into the Parliament in Brussels on 10 December to help him distribute copies of the book.

The EFDD has often been accused of acting as an apologist for Russian President Vladimir Putin and cultivating close ties with Moscow.

A spokesperson for the EFDD group said it had not been officially notified of the results of the inquiry. “The man who is alleged by others to have distributed the book is currently on sick leave,” he said. “For these reasons, no disciplinary investigation can yet take place.”

However, the Parliament is pressing ahead with disciplinary action. A Parliament spokesperson said: “Someone from the EFDD group will be formally reprimanded for having made irregular use of the members’ pigeonholes.”

While Ellul Bonici has stayed silent on the matter, his wife has not. Sharon Ellul Bonici used to work for the EFDD but switched at the end of the last term to become secretary-general of Marine Le Pen’s planned far-right alliance, which is trying to attract enough MEPs to be officially recognised as

a group by the Parliament. Sharon Ellul Bonici told the newspaper Malta Today: “This is news to him [her husband] and he said he wants his name cleared.”

The incident has also caused a conflict with the book’s author, Ruta Janutiene, who says that she did not give permission for her work to be translated into English. It was copies of the unauthorised English translation that were distributed to MEPs.

## **Claims and counter-claims**

Grybauskaite’s supporters believe that Russia is behind the stunt, in retaliation for the Lithuanian president’s outspoken criticism of Russia’s actions in Ukraine.

Guoga told Lithuanian media that he believes Rolandas Paksas, the country’s impeached former president who is now an EFDD MEP, is responsible. Guoga pointed to a recent visit by Nigel Farage, the EFDD group’s co-leader, to the party congress of Paksas’s Order and Justice party as evidence of a plan to smear Grybauskaite’s name.

Paksas denies the allegations, and told Lithuanian radio that Guoga has “lost his mind“ and should “think about his family and children”.

Guoga took this as a threat, and the leader of the liberal ALDE group, Guy Verhofstadt, has contacted Martin Schulz, the president of the European Parliament, asking him to ensure Guoga’s safety.

## **Authors:**