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MEETING DOCUMENT

From: European Commission
To: Delegations

Subject: Presentation from the Commission: Tackling online disinformation

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Tackling online disinformation

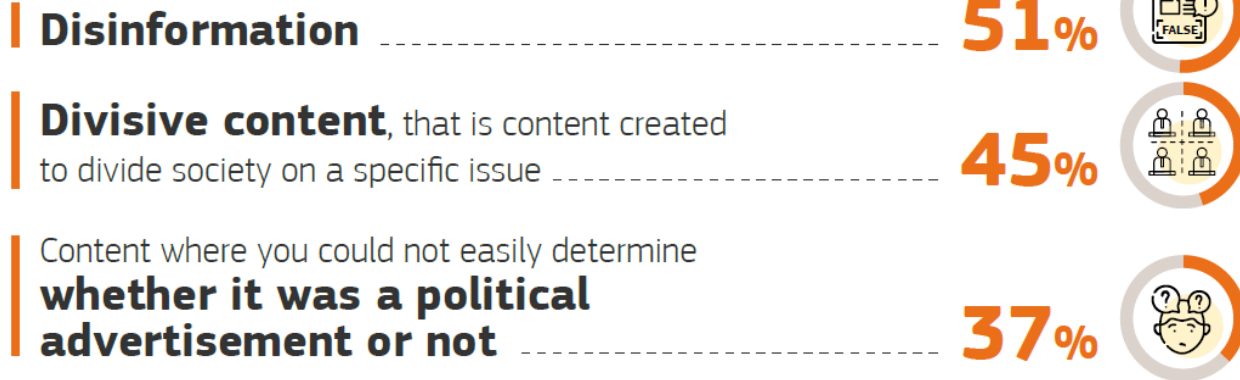
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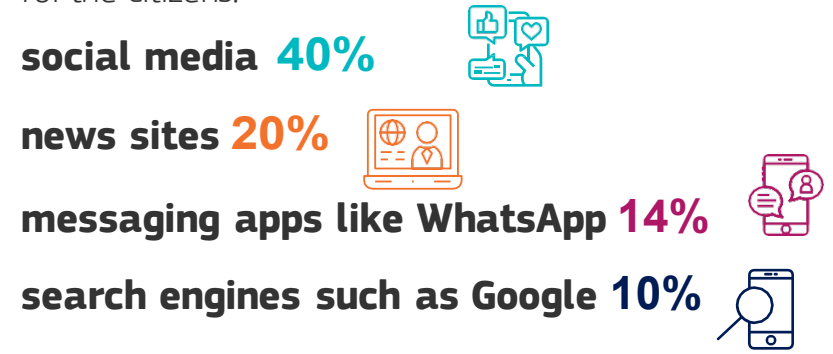
Online disinformation – source of concern for citizens

A majority of Internet-using Europeans say they **have been exposed to harmful or illegal practices** in the online environment



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The biggest source of concern about misinformation for the citizens:



Breaking the social data down further, across all countries 29% say they are most concerned about **Facebook**, followed by **YouTube** (6%) and **Twitter** (5%).

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020

Code of Practice on Disinformation

- Self-regulatory instrument
- Concluded on 26 Sept 2018
- Focus on tools to address propagation and dissemination of disinformation

Signatories:

- Online platforms (Google, Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft, TikTok, Mozilla, DOT Europe (Former EDiMA))
- Online ad networks and advertisers (e.g. the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA), the European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA), the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB Europe), et al.)

COVID-19 Disinformation Monitoring Programme

- Monthly reports about **actions to fight COVID-19 disinformation**.
- The platforms that signed the code (Google, Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft, TikTok) have taken **measures to combat the spread of disinformation**
- Examples of actions taken by the platforms:
 - increased **visibility of authoritative sources** (e.g. WHO, health authorities)
 - tools to **access reliable information** (panels, pop-ups, maps and notifications)
 - **action against false** and misleading **information** likely to cause physical harm
 - **advertising policies** prohibiting the exploitation of the crisis
 - increased collaboration with **fact-checkers**

Guidance on Strengthening the Code on Disinformation

- Dec. 2020 – European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP)
- May 2021 – adoption of the Commission Guidance

Purpose

- **Addressing the shortcomings** of the Code through **strengthened commitments**
- **Bridging the gap towards the DSA's** adoption and the legislation on political advertising.

Bridge to the Digital Services Act (DSA)

- Reinforcement of the **responsibility and accountability of platforms** :
 - **Risk mitigation requirements** applicable to **Very Large Platforms** under the DSA
- Code of Practice to become **“Code of Conduct”** once DSA is adopted

Main areas addressed by the Guidance

1. **Extending the reach and scope** of the Code of Practice
2. **Demonetisation / Scrutiny of ad placements**
3. Transparency of **political advertising** and **issue-based advertising**
4. **Strengthening the Integrity of Services** against manipulative behaviour
5. **Empowering users**
6. Ensuring **access to data** and empowering **researchers and fact-checkers**
7. **Effective KPIs** and **reinforced monitoring** of the Code

1. Extending the reach and scope of the Code of Practice

- Additional **online services not yet covered** (e.g. messaging apps) and **more signatories** (e.g. smaller online platforms, players from the advertising ecosystem)
- **Different commitments** depending on the **type and size of the services/signatories.**
- **Covering not only disinformation but also misinformation**

2. Reducing the monetisation of disinformation

- Illustration: Over 4,000 brands have bought ads on disinformation websites publishing COVID-19 myths, including companies (such as Pfizer and 105 hospital systems and health insurers) involved in the vaccination effort. Source: [NewsGuard 2021 special report](#)
- Strengthened commitments to
 - **demonetise purveyors of disinformation** (i.e. reducing the number of ads displayed on disinformation websites).
 - **refuse the placement of disinformation ads** (ads which contain disinformation related to societal issues e.g. vaccination, climate change).

3. Addressing issue related to political advertising and issue-based advertising

- Alignment with the Commission's **upcoming legislative proposal on the transparency of sponsored political content** and with **DSA**.
- **Clear labelling and transparency** of political and issues-based ads

4. Strengthening the Integrity of Services against manipulative behaviour

- Strengthened commitments to **avoid manipulative behaviour** (e.g. through the use of fake accounts, bots), including commitments to address the use of **new techniques** (e.g. deep fakes, opaque involvement of influencers).

5. Empowering users

- Better tools to allow users to make **more informed choices**, e.g.:
 - Efficient **mechanisms to flag** disinformation content.
 - **Warnings** provided to users who interact with content labelled as false (e.g. fact-checked content).
 - Providing users with **authoritative information** regarding topics of public interest (e.g. COVID information panels from health authorities).
 - Commitment to a **safe design** of the architecture of their services to minimise the risks related to the spread and amplification of disinformation.

Recommender Systems

- **Transparency** of the recommender systems regarding the criteria used for prioritising or deprioritising information
- **Option for users to customise** the ranking algorithms
- Concrete **measures to mitigate risks** of recommender systems fuelling the viral spread of disinformation: for example regarding
 - misleading/false information that has been debunked by independent fact-checkers and webpages
 - Actors that have persistently spread disinformation

6. Widening access to data and empowering researchers and fact-checkers

Illustration: 56% of fact-checked misinformation content in major non-English European languages is not acted upon by Facebook, compared to 26% of English-language content.

Source: [Avaaz Apr 2021 report](#)

- **Fact-checking services covering all Member States and languages.**
- Improved **access to platforms' data for researchers** – clear procedure to identify the necessary datasets and the access modalities agreed with the research community.
- **Increased and transparent support** to researchers and fact-checkers.

Drafting process of the Strengthened Code

- **Composition** : existing signatories of the 2018 Code of Practice and new signatories
- **Purpose** : Revise and strengthen the 2018 Code, in line with the Guidance and transform it into a stronger EU instrument for addressing disinformation, preparing also for the **co-regulatory framework of the DSA**
- Regular drafting meetings and monthly Assembly meetings
- **Status update meetings** for 3rd party stakeholders to **ensure transparency**
- Code expected by the end of **March 2022**

Task-force, Monitoring and Transparency Centre

- The revised Code will be continuously evolved through the **Permanent task- force**
- The Commission will supervise the Code through a **comprehensive monitoring framework**, based on clear Key Performance Indicators
- **ERGA's Recommendations** feed into the design of the monitoring framework
- **Publicly accessible Transparency Centre**

List of current signatories

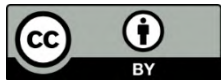
- Facebook
- Google
- Microsoft
- TikTok
- Twitter
- Mozilla
- IAB Europe
- DOT Europe
- EACA
- WFA
- AACCC
- UBA
- SAR
- AKA
- Kreativitet & Kommunikation
- Goldbach Audience (Switzerland) AG

List of new signatories

- Twitch
- Adobe
- Havas
- The Bright App
- Neeva
- Reporters Without Borders
- VOST Europe
- the Dutch Organisation for applied scientific research (TNO)
- Maldita
- PagellaPolitica
- Demagog
- MediaMath
- Integral Ad Science
- the GARM initiative
- Crisp Thinking
- Newsback
- Vimeo
- Clubhouse
- DoubleVerify
- NewsGuard
- Avaaz
- Globsec
- Logically
- WhoTargetsMe
- Seznam

Thank you!

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