



Statement by Commissioner Gabriel on the Code of Practice on Online Disinformation

Brussels, 26 September 2018

Online platforms and the advertising industry have unveiled a self-regulatory Code of Practice that includes a wide range of commitments to fight online disinformation.

Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** welcomed this as a step in the right direction, but urges the platforms to increase their efforts to fight the spread of disinformation online:

"The Code of Practice submitted today by the industry is the first tangible outcome of the [Communication](#) that the Commission adopted last April.

It is an important step in tackling a problem which has become increasingly pervasive and threatens Europeans' trust in democratic processes and institutions. This is the first time that the industry has agreed on a set of self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation worldwide, on a voluntary basis. The industry is committing to a wide range of actions, from transparency in political advertising to the closure of fake accounts and demonetisation of purveyors of disinformation, and we welcome this. These actions should contribute to a fast and measurable reduction of online disinformation. To this end, the Commission will pay particular attention to its effective implementation.

*The Code of Practice should contribute to a transparent, fair and trustworthy online campaign ahead of the European elections in spring 2019, while fully respecting Europe's fundamental principles of freedom of expression, a free press and pluralism. This step complements the Commission's Recommendation presented by President **Juncker** in his [2018 State of the Union Address](#) on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns. Online platforms need to act as responsible social players especially in this crucial period ahead of elections. They must do their utmost to stop the spread of disinformation.*

I urge online platforms and the advertising industry to immediately start implementing the actions agreed in the Code of Practice to achieve significant progress and measurable results in the coming months. I also expect more and more online platforms, advertising companies and advertisers to adhere to the Code of Practice, and I encourage everyone to make their utmost to put their commitments into practice to fight disinformation.

I will meet the signatories of the Code of Practice in the coming weeks to discuss the specific procedures and policies that they are adopting to make the Code a reality.

As foreseen in the [Communication](#), the Commission will closely follow the progress made and analyse the first results of the Code of Practice by the end of 2018. Should the results prove unsatisfactory, the Commission may propose further actions, including actions of a regulatory nature."

Background

In May, the Commission convened a multi-stakeholder forum on disinformation. It consisted of a working group of representatives from the major online platforms and the advertising industry; and a sounding board of fact-checkers, academia, media and civil society organisations. The working group was charged with drafting a self-regulatory Code of Practice on Disinformation for online platforms, the advertising sector, and advertisers. The sounding board was tasked to assess and adopt an opinion on the Code of Practice and monitor its implementation.

Signatories of this Code have committed to take action in 5 areas:

- Disrupting advertising revenues of certain accounts and websites that spread disinformation;
- Making political advertising and issue based advertising more transparent;
- Addressing the issue of fake accounts and online bots;
- Empowering consumers to report disinformation and access different news sources, while improving the visibility and findability of authoritative content;
- Empowering the research community to monitor online disinformation through privacy-compliant access to the platforms' data.

In the [Communication](#) published on 26 April 2018, the European Commission put forward an Action Plan and self-regulatory tools to tackle the spread and impact of online disinformation in Europe.

The actions foreseen in the Communication, including this Code of Practice, will contribute to protect [free and fair election processes](#), as stressed by President Juncker in his [2018 State of the Union Address](#). They will complement the ongoing work of the EEAS [East StratCom Task Force](#). Following the [European Council conclusions](#) of June 2018 and the State of the Union address, the Commission and the European External Action Service will present a joint action plan to fight disinformation, focusing on strategic communication policy, by the end of the year.

For More Information

[Code of Practice on Disinformation](#)

[Factsheet: Tackling the spread of disinformation online](#)

[State of the Union 2018: European Commission proposes measures for securing free and fair European elections](#)

[European Commission's Communication "Tackling online disinformation: a European approach" and other links](#)

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