[Code of Practice against disinformation: Commission calls on signatories to intensify their efforts](#)

Today, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Mozilla and the trade associations representing the advertising sector have submitted their first reports on the measures they are taking to comply with the [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#). There has been some progress, notably in removing fake accounts and limiting the visibility of sites that promote disinformation. However, additional action is needed to ensure full transparency of political ads by the start of the campaign for the European elections in all EU Member States, to allow appropriate access to platforms' data for research purposes, and to ensure proper cooperation between the platforms and individual Member States through contact points in the Rapid Alert System.

Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market said: *"Signatories have taken action, for example giving people new ways to get more details about the source of a story or ad. Now they should make sure these tools are available to everyone across the EU, monitor their efficiency, and continuously adapt to new means used by those spreading disinformation. There is no time to waste."*

Věra **Jourová,** Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *"With the launch of European election network with EU authorities last week and this report today, we are stepping up the pace on all fronts to ensure free and fair elections. I expect companies will fully follow up on their rhetoric and commitment. Time is short so we need to act now."*

Julian **King**, Commissioner for the Security Union said: *"Given the proximity of the European elections, any progress made in the fight against disinformation is welcome. But we need to go further and faster before May. We don't want to wake up the day after the elections and realise we should have done more."*

Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: *"Today's reports rightly focus on urgent actions, such as taking down fake accounts. It is a good start. Now I expect the signatories to intensify their monitoring and reporting and increase their cooperation with fact-checkers and research community. We need to ensure our citizens' access to quality and objective information allowing them to make informed choices".*

According to the reports which cover measures taken by 31 December 2018, **online companies' work** is more advanced and comprehensive in some areas, for instance in taking down fake accounts and de-monetising the purveyors of disinformation, but less so in others. In particular, the reports show that:

- **Facebook** has taken or is taking measures towards the implementation of all of the commitments but now needs to provide greater clarity on how

the social network will deploy its consumer empowerment tools and boost cooperation with fact-checkers and the research community across the whole EU.

- **Google** has taken steps to implement all its commitments, in particular those designed to improve the scrutiny of ad placements, transparency of political advertisement and providing users with information, tools and support to empower them in their online experience. However some tools are only available in a small number of Member States. The Commission also calls on the online search engine to support research actions on a wider scale.
- **Twitter** has prioritised actions against malicious actors, closing fake or suspicious accounts and automated systems/bots. Still, more information is needed on how this will restrictpersistent purveyors of disinformation from promoting their tweets.
- **Mozilla** is about to launch an upgraded version of its browser to block cross-site tracking by default but the online browser should be more concrete on how this will limit the information revealed about users' browsing activities, which could potentially be used for disinformation campaigns.

For the upcoming reports, the Commission expects Google, Facebook, Twitter and Mozilla to develop a more systematic approach to enable a proper and regular monitoring and assessment, on the basis of appropriate performance data.

When it comes to the trade associations representingthe **advertising sector** (World Federation of Advertisers, European Association of Communication Agencies and Interactive Advertising Bureau Europe), the Commission notes their positive efforts to raise awareness about the Code, but also notes the absence of corporate signatories and stresses the key role brands and advertisers play in the efforts to demonetise purveyors of disinformation.

Next steps

Today's reports cover measures taken by online companies and advertising sector by 31 December 2018. For January 2019, online platforms should provide detailed information to the Commission in the coming days. This first monthly report will be published in February 2019 and will be followed by similar reports every month until May 2019. This will allow the Commission to verify that effective policies with particular pertinence to the integrity of the electoral processes are in place before the European elections.

By the end of 2019, the Commission will carry out a comprehensive assessment at the end of the Code's initial 12-month period. Should the results prove unsatisfactory, the Commission may propose further actions, including of a regulatory nature.

Background

The monitoring of the Code of Practice is part of the [Action Plan against disinformation](#) that the European Union adopted last December to build up capabilities and strengthen cooperation between Member States and EU

institutions to proactively address the threats posed by disinformation.

The reporting signatories adhered to the Code of Practice in October 2018 on a voluntary basis. [The Code](#) aims at achieving the objectives set out by the Commission's [Communication](#) presented in April 2018 by setting a wide range of commitments articulated around five areas:

- Disrupt advertising revenue for accounts and websites misrepresenting information and provide advertisers with adequate safety tools and information about websites purveying disinformation.
- Enable public disclosure of political advertising and make effort towards disclosing issue-based advertising.
- Have a clear and publicly available policy on identity and online bots and take measures to close fake accounts.
- Offer information and tools to help people make informed decisions, and facilitate access to diverse perspectives about topics of public interest, while giving prominence to reliable sources.
- Provide privacy-compliant access to data to researchers to track and better understand the spread and impact of disinformation.

The Code of Practice also goes hand-in-hand with the Recommendation included in the election package announced by President Juncker in its 2018 [State of the Union Address](#) to ensure free, fair and secure European Parliament's elections. The measures include greater transparency in online political advertisements and the possibility to impose sanctions for the illegal use of personal data in order to deliberately influence the outcome of the European elections. Also, the Member States were advised to set up a national election cooperation network of relevant authorities — such as electoral, cybersecurity, data protection and law enforcement authorities — and to appoint a contact point to participate in a European-level election cooperation network. The first meeting at the European level took place on 21 January 2019.

For more information

[Questions and Answers](#)

[Reports by the signatories of the Code of Practice](#)

[Press release: A Europe that Protects: The EU steps up action against disinformation](#)

[Factsheet: Action plan against disinformation](#)

[Communication on tackling online disinformation: a European approach](#)

[EU vs disinfo website](#)