

Foreign Secretary boosts BBC funding to fight fake news

- Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announces multi-million pound uplift for BBC World Service
- Funding will help to tackle harmful disinformation and inaccurate reporting around the world and enhance its digital offer
- This follows the UK Government's Integrated Review, which underlined the need to fight disinformation to protect the UK against state threats

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has today (1 May) announced £8 million of new funding for BBC World Service projects to tackle harmful disinformation, challenge inaccurate reporting around the world and improve digital engagement.

Funding will support the BBC World Service's investigative journalism, expanding the reach of its work to report in an unbiased and impartial way. This follows the success of their "Reality Check", "Africa Eye" and "Arabic Investigations" programmes, which have challenged fake news around the world.

The new package will also help to build international audiences, improving the digital platforms available to people in countries such as India, Kenya and Nigeria.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

In a world where states and criminal gangs twist the news to exploit others, it is vital to safeguard independent and objective news reporting around the world.

This new funding will allow the BBC World Service to take impartial journalism to many more people around the world, by countering those who distort the truth to mislead the public.

This new support comes shortly after the publication of the Government's Integrated Review, which underlined the need to fight disinformation to protect the UK against state threats. Today's announcement will help support efforts to counter those.

Some states are using internet bots to push out disinformation on social media platforms, such as spreading fake news around the coronavirus pandemic, resulting in harmful content, that is often shared widely by tens of thousands of people on social media.

This includes encouraging scepticism around vaccines or in some cases prime-time news outlets in some states are blaming the US for artificially creating – and profiting from – the pandemic.

Welcoming the announcement, BBC Director General Tim Davie said:

We welcome this investment in the World Service which builds on the significant results achieved since the funding programme began in 2016.

Through this partnership, the World Service has achieved an all-time record audience of 351m, in 42 languages including English, with the BBC's global News services now reaching 438m every week.

More than a third of the total BBC News global audience – 151m – access BBC News digitally and this additional support will enable us to further strengthen our digital offer and tackle global disinformation.

As the world continues to fight the Covid pandemic, the positive role of the World Service in providing trusted, impartial news has never been more critical.

The funding announced today comes on top of previous funding for the BBC's World2020 programme from the FCDO since 2016, which has meant impartial news is available in 12 additional languages. The additional support has helped increase the service's international reach by 40 per cent to 351 million people each week, including across Asia and Africa.

Notes to editors:

- The £8 million package, announced today is for 2021/22 and will go towards the BBC World2020 Programme to promote accurate, impartial news around the world.
- This additional £8 million brings the total FCDO funding for the World2020 Programme to £94.4 million. The £8 million consists of £3million to tackle disinformation and a further £5 million to reach further audiences and improve digital engagement.
- Since 2016, the FCDO has invested over £378 million via the World2020 Programme, which has contributed towards a 40% increase over four years in weekly audience reach across World Service channels to 351 million people a week, in particular in India and across Africa.