

## **Minutes**

### **Fourth meeting of the Multistakeholder Forum on Disinformation**

**17 September 2018**

**Avenue de Beaulieu 33, room 0/54**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The Commission welcomed the Forum and thanked its members for their hard work over the summer.

The Commission presented a proposed agenda for the meeting as well as the draft minutes of the Forum's third meeting. The agenda and the minutes were adopted. The Commission noted that the minutes would be made available on the Commission website.

The Commission stated that the latest draft of the Code, circulated on 13 September, features a number of enhancements as compared to the 17 July draft. These include:

- an acknowledgement that indicators of trustworthiness and information from fact-checking organisations are important means for identifying purveyors of disinformation and reducing advertising revenues to them;
- a revised commitment on political advertising, expressly referencing public disclosure of sponsor identity and amounts spent; and
- a commitment to cooperate with the independent network of fact-checkers facilitated by the Commission, upon its establishment, and to support efforts to track disinformation and understand its impact.

The Commission suggested that the meeting focus on further improvements to the Code. These might include:

- a streamlined commitment on the scrutiny of ad placements, clarifying that it targets all purveyors of disinformation;
- an express commitment on public disclosure of targeting criteria used for the placement of political ads;
- adaptations relating to the transparency of algorithms that would address concerns raised by the Sounding Board; and
- Key Performance Indicators that would measure not only the implementation of the Code but its effectiveness.

The goal should be to improve the Code before handover of the final version to Commissioner Gabriel, with a view towards encouraging a positive Opinion by the Sounding Board.

The members of the Forum took up discussion of the 13 September draft of the Code.

Siada El Ramly, spokesperson for the Working Group, recalled that the Working Group had circulated a draft of the Code at the end of August. This draft reflected advice from external legal counsel as well as comments received in July from the Sounding Board. She stated that the Working Group had responded to the Sounding Board's feedback, including comments that had been taken on board in the August draft as well as those that had not. The 13 September draft includes some additional refinements.

Ravi Kiran Vatrappu, the Sounding Board's spokesperson, stated that, while it remained committed to the multistakeholder process, the Sounding Board could not support the Code in its present form. In the Sounding Board's view, the current draft failed to reflect key feedback from the Sounding Board. Among other deficiencies, it lacks quantifiable KPIs, includes vaguely-phrased commitments, and has no mechanism to ensure compliance. Some Sounding Board members also had objections relating to freedom of expression – for example, who would decide whether content amounts to disinformation and how will content be prioritised in search results? The Sounding Board urged the Working Group to prepare a further draft of the Code which would more completely address the Sounding Board's feedback.

Some Sounding Board members considered that it would not be worthwhile to continue discussions in the absence of the Working Group's commitment to turn around very promptly a substantially enhanced draft of the Code. The representatives from the Association for Commercial Television, the European Broadcasting Union, the Association of European Radios and the European Federation of Journalists left the meeting.

The Forum discussed possible enhancements to the Code recommended by the Sounding Board. These included, among others:

- language clarifying that the third-party review of self-assessment reports will evaluate whether signatories have subscribed to all commitments relevant to them;
- enhanced language on the transparency of algorithms;
- language expressly requiring public disclosure of targeting criteria for political advertising;
- language on scrutiny of ad placements expressly covering not only imposter sites but, more generally, all sites that purvey disinformation;
- enhanced reporting commitments enabling measurement of the Code's effectiveness, including reporting on signatory resources and staffing committed to countering disinformation;

- clarification that expulsion is a last-resort remedy for non-compliance with the Code;
- language clarifying the signatories should not be prohibited from enabling the anonymous or pseudonymous use of accounts and services;
- more affirmative language on efforts platforms will take to support research on disinformation; and
- further language recognising that efforts to counter disinformation must respect freedom of expression.

Ms. El Ramly stated that the Working Group would revert to the Sounding Board by 20 September on points discussed during the meeting.

The Commission reviewed next steps, including finalisation of the Code, preparation of the Opinion of the Sounding Board, and handover the Code and the Opinion to Commissioner Gabriel, scheduled for 26 September.

The meeting was adjourned.

A list of Forum members attending the meeting is attached.

## Annex

### Attendance List

#### Multistakeholder Forum on Disinformation – 17/09/2018

	Name	First Name	Organisation
1.	Armitage	Catherine	WFA
2.	Boudet	Lucas	European Advertising Standards Alliance
3.	De Cordier	Marie	European Newspaper Publishers Association
4.	El Ramly	Siada	EDIMA –Online Platforms Association
5.	Elzer	Nina	European Association of Communications Agencies
6.	Gekiere	Wouter	European Broadcasting Union
7.	Gutierrez	Ricardo	European Federation of Journalists
8.	MacDonald	Raegan	Mozilla
9.	Mroczkowski	Gregoire	Interactive Advertising Bureau Europe
10.	Myrup Kristensen	Thomas	Facebook
11.	Oliver	Jeremy	Facebook
12.	Polad	Grégoire	Association of Commercial Television
13.	Sneed	Vincent	Association Européenne des Radios
14.	Steinberg	Jon	Google
15.	Turner	Stephen	Twitter
16.	Van Wijk	Wout	News Media Europe
17.	Vatrapu	Ravi Kiran	Copenhagen Business School *
18.	Wagner	Christian	Google

\* Academic expert