



Twitter May update: Code of Practice on Disinformation

Twitter aims to provide greater transparency leading up to the European elections on our own efforts around election integrity and security, including how we are working with our partners, governments, industry peers, civil society, and researchers.

In each month preceding the European Parliament election, Twitter will provide a report outlining our efforts in that month. Not every report will focus on the same measures, but collectively they will provide a comprehensive view of our approach to the commitments we have made to ensuring the integrity of our services and enhancing access to healthy democratic discourse around the EU elections.

This report will elucidate upon our work from **01 May 2019 to 20 May 2019** as requested, and provide insights into upcoming progress in the coming months.

Previous Twitter reports

- [Twitter Progress Report](#)
- [January 2019 update](#)
- [February 2019 update](#)
- [March 2019 update](#)
- [April 2019 update](#)

Developments in May

- **Enforcement of ads policies:** data around the enforcement of our ads policies across each EU Member State
- **Ads Transparency Center and Political Advertiser Certification:** a post-election review of the EU political campaign ads certification processes and ads repository
- **Enforcement details for the dedicated reporting feature for misleading voting-related content:** data on our dedicated reporting feature for content which aims to mislead users about voting related matters
- **Enforcement updates on addressing spam, malicious automation, and fake accounts:** updated data on proactive anti-spam and fake account challenges and user reports
- **EU Elections emoji:** details on user engagement with the EU election custom emoji and



elevated political discussion on the platform

- **Supporting research into disinformation:** details on recent studies that explore the effects and reach of disinformation on social media platforms

Scrutiny of ad placements

Enforcement of ad policies

Further to the information on enforcement provided in our April report, we have once again gathered details on the enforcement of our ads policies across EU Member States, highlighting the work our teams are doing to protect our users from misleading and potentially harmful advertisements, and ensuring brand safety for our advertisers, including EU political advertisers. We have provided detailed enforcement data, broken down by EU Member State in the areas focusing on:

- **Unacceptable business practices:** for example prohibiting advertising for accounts making misleading, false, or unsubstantiated claims
- **Quality ads policy enforcement:** our ongoing review of accounts to ensure that advertisements adhere to editorial guidelines and quality reviews
- **EU political ads enforcement:** ads prevented from targeting EU Member States from non-certified accounts

Unacceptable Business Practices Ads policy

Twitter prohibits the promotion of unacceptable business practices globally to ensure users are receiving credible information. Examples of unacceptable business practices include:

- Potentially deceptive, misleading, or harmful business propositions
- Making misleading, false, or unsubstantiated claims
- Promoting misleading information or omitting vital information on pricing, payment terms, or expenses the user will incur
- Promoting offers or deals that are not available or easily located on the landing page

The table below illustrates the number of ads targeting EU Member States which were rejected per Twitter's Unacceptable Business Practices Ads Policy in the period 01 May 2019 - 20 May 2019.

Targeted Country	Number of ads
Austria	39
Belgium	41
Bulgaria	29
Croatia	18



Czech Republic	23
Denmark	35
Estonia	44
Finland	41
France	116
Germany	91
Greece	27
Hungary	23
Ireland	68
Italy	75
Latvia	16
Lithuania	13
Luxembourg	16
Malta	19
Netherlands	66
Poland	38
Portugal	34
Romania	27
Slovakia	19
Slovenia	22
Spain	125
Sweden	130
United Kingdom	233

[Quality Ads policy](#)

To ensure that users have a positive experience on Twitter, advertisements must adhere to [editorial guidelines](#) for the following categories:

- User bio and destination URL
- Content, clarity and accuracy
- Text, image and video



The table below indicates the number of ads prevented from targeting EU Member States, rejected per Twitter's Quality Ads Policy in the period 01 May 2019 - 20 May 2019.

Targeted Country	Number of ads
Austria	61
Belgium	76
Bulgaria	42
Croatia	49
Czech Republic	52
Denmark	63
Estonia	41
Finland	54
France	149
Germany	106
Greece	48
Hungary	50
Ireland	79
Italy	81
Latvia	41
Lithuania	37
Luxembourg	45
Malta	47
Netherlands	82
Poland	61
Portugal	59
Romania	48
Slovakia	42
Slovenia	43
Spain	107
Sweden	201
United Kingdom	211



[EU Political Campaigning Ads policy](#)

Political Content includes political campaigning for the upcoming EU Parliamentary elections, and political campaigning advertisers must complete a certification process. More details on the process can be found [here](#).

The table below illustrates the number of ads prevented from targeting EU Member States from non-certified accounts during the period 11 April 2019 - 20 May 2019.

Targeted Country	Number of ads
Austria	17
Belgium	12
Bulgaria	7
Croatia	7
Czech Republic	17
Denmark	9
Estonia	6
Finland	9
France	39
Germany	67
Greece	9
Hungary	8
Ireland	78
Italy	13
Latvia	6
Lithuania	5
Luxembourg	8
Malta	8
Netherlands	23
Poland	13
Portugal	12
Romania	9
Slovakia	7



Slovenia	9
Spain	24
Sweden	11
United Kingdom	70

Transparency of advertising

Ads Transparency Center and Political Advertiser Certification

Ahead of the election, the [Ads Transparency Center](#) (ATC) continued to be populated as more of the transnational EU political parties and groups undertook the political advertiser certification process and begin to roll out their political campaigns.

As of the end of May, there were 27 EU certified political campaign accounts, 21 of which were running ads.

These ads will remain on the ATC indefinitely, and everyone around the world will have access to them. No login or Twitter account is required, making it simple for people to have clear insight and details on who ran political advertising campaigns on Twitter, These ads can be viewed [here](#).

Country	Total applicants	Completed certification
Ireland	15	8
Belgium	11	3
Germany	7	5
Greece	7	1
Netherlands	7	3
Spain	7	0
Finland	3	2
Italy	3	1
Slovenia	2	2
Sweden	2	0
UK	2	1



Austria	1	0
Czech	1	0
Luxembourg	1	1
Poland	1	0

Integrity of Services

Dedicated reporting feature for misleading voting related content

In April, we rolled out a [dedicated reporting feature](#) for content that aims to mislead users about issues pertaining to voting. This allowed users to more easily report this content to us. This was an addition to our existing proactive approach to tackling malicious automation and other forms of [platform manipulation](#) on the service. We started with **EU elections** and plan to roll out to other elections globally throughout the rest of the year. **This function was fully operational in the EU as of 29 April.**

Throughout the election period, this function was used to report misleading information about how to vote or register to vote (for example, that you can vote by Tweet, text message, email, or phone call); misleading information about requirements for voting, including identification requirements; and misleading statements or information about the official, announced date or time of an election. In the period 01 - 20 May Twitter received **28,456** reports via the dedicated function.

Enforcements updates on addressing spam, malicious automation, and fake accounts

Platform manipulation refers to the use of Twitter to mislead others and/or disrupt their experience by engaging in bulk, aggressive, or deceptive activity. This activity includes, but is not limited to, spam, malicious automation (malicious use of bots), and inauthentic account abuse (fake accounts).

Further to the updates shared in our March report on the number of accounts challenged internally for spammy or malicious behaviour on the platform as well as the number of accounts reported by users, between 01 May 2019 and 20 May 2019 Twitter proactively challenged **9,775,179** accounts.

Proactive Anti spam* and fake account challenges

Month	Number of accounts challenged
January 2019	19,522,273



February 2019	17,036,751
March 2019	16,552,753
April 2019	13,787,154
01 - 20 May 2019	9,775,179
01 January 2019 - 20 May 2019	76,674,110

*Anti spam challenges refer to our internal, proactive detection of suspected spam and fake accounts. If we have reason to suspect an account may be engaging in platform manipulation, we may require the account holder to complete a challenge to confirm that a human is in control of the account. As stated above, this could be confirming a phone number or email address, or completing a reCAPTCHA challenge. It is important to note that this is raw data, these figures will be subject to change as it is reviewed for publication in our Transparency Report

User reports of spam*

Month	Number of reports submitted
January 2019	489,148
February 2019	406,162
March 2019	504,729
April 2019	597, 295
01 - 20 May 2019	344,987
01 January 2019 - 20 May 2019	2,342,321

*User reports of spam reflects reports submitted by people who use Twitter after receiving interaction from a suspected spam account. The lower numbers reflect our ongoing motivation to reduce the burden on users of Twitter to report spam and malicious automation. It is important to note that this is raw data, these figures will be subject to change as it is reviewed for publication in our Transparency Report



Expanding digital literacy and empowering Consumers

EU Election engagement on Twitter.

In March we developed our [custom emoji for the EU elections](#). Launched April, for everyone who wants to discuss the election on Twitter, the platform is introducing a special emoji. The emoji was triggered when hashtags #EUElections2019 and #EP2019 are used.

#EUElections2019 was translated for all 24 official languages of the EU. The special emoji pictured a ballot box and a ballot paper in EU navy blue, with a tick mark on the ballot paper in EU yellow, all surrounded by the iconic ring of stars.

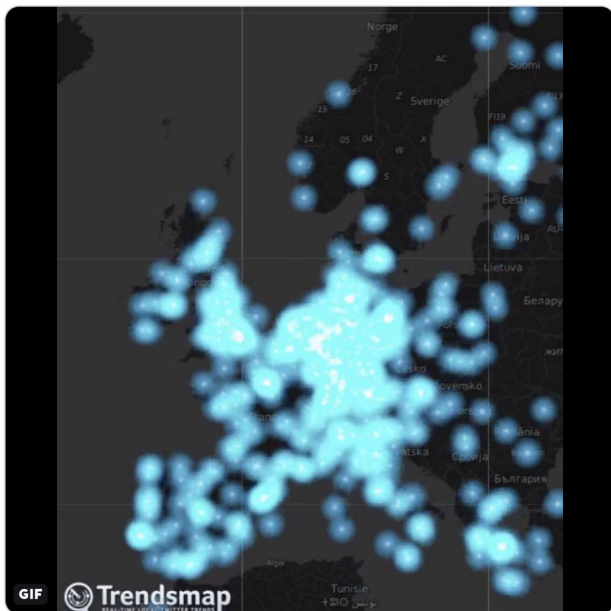
The EU elections has the highest voter turnout in 25 years, and offline participation in democracy was a reflection of the democratic debate taking place on Twitter, where we saw a 273% increase in Tweet volume compared with 2014 EU elections.

Over the election weekend #EUElections2019 and #EP2019 were used 2.1m times and since February **6.2 million election-related Tweets** discussed key issues such as climate change and Brexit, alongside key candidates in the lead up to the elections. ([Read more here](#))



Twitter Government
@TwitterGov

From Portugal to Cyprus, and from Finland to Greece, #EUElections2019 sparked a regional Twitter conversation on the future of the European Union!



7:01 PM · May 28, 2019 · Twitter Web Client

21 Retweets 48 Likes

Tweet volume on EU Election hashtags over the weekend

2.1M



Source — Twitter Internal Data 28/5/19

Tweet volume increase since 2014 Election

Period from February to May 26th

273%



Source — Twitter Internal Data 28/5/19



Empowering the research community

Supporting research into disinformation

In May, [The Computational Propaganda Project](#) of the [Oxford Internet Institute](#) released the report [“Junk News During the EU Parliamentary Elections: Lessons from a Seven-Language Study of Twitter and Facebook”](#)

The study conducted a thematic analysis of the top 20 junk news stories on Twitter and Facebook and found that:

- Fewer than 4% of news sources shared on Twitter ahead of the 2019 EU elections was ‘junk news’
- Twitter users shared far more links to mainstream ‘professional’ news outlets than junk news (34%) - this was especially true in Swedish and French language spheres (>50%).
- The exception was in the Polish language sphere, where ‘junk news’ made up 21% of traffic on Twitter - this was however consistent with an overall trend in Poland.

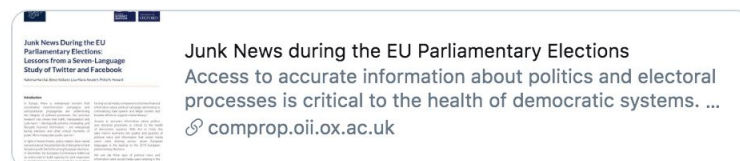
📌 Pinned Tweet



ComProp Research
@polbots

NEW: Our study of junk news sharing across 7 languages ahead of the [#EUElections](#) finds that <4% of sources circulated on Twitter were junk news, with mainstream news outlets receiving the bulk of shares (34%).

Read the study here:



10:40 AM · May 21, 2019 · [Twitter Web Client](#)

Also in May, the [Demos Institute UK](#) released its report [“Warring Songs: Information Operations in the Digital Age”](#), for which they conducted analysis of three case studies of Russian information operations in Germany, France and Italy to examine the patterns in data released by Twitter as definitively attributed to Russian state information operations (through the use of [Twitter’s public data sets](#)). The study found that:



- The widely-held focus on 'fake news' is myopic: much of the information shared during information operations is not 'fake' - but the selective amplification of reputable, mainstream media stories to fit an agenda.
- IRA-run accounts targeting the three countries examined overwhelmingly shared content from reputable media sources in every case study.
- Of 39 cases reviewed, 19 did not contain any factual statements - this challenges the narrative that the only way to tackle inaccurate news is by fact-checking. The risk of focusing only on truth or falsity is that emotional manipulation tactics may be missed, thereby ignoring inflammatory content can incite anger, hatred and physical violence.
- Strategies employed by hostile groups included everything from fabrication of news to false amplification of unwitting journalists; from harassment and abuse of politicians to gaming recommendation algorithms. It underlines the importance of looking broadly at the information ecosystem and the actors that make it up, rather than focusing on one single piece of the puzzle.
- Fake news is only one cog in a much larger machine. Focusing on the distinction between true and false content misses that true facts can be presented in ways which are misleading, or in a context where they will be misinterpreted in a particular way that serves the aim of the information operative.



Demos
@Demos

Full information ops from [#Russia](#), not [#fakenews](#) threaten democracy "Information operations are rarely about changing the things people believe, but changing the way they feel. Anger and fear are not things we can correct with better facts" [#EUelections2019](#) 🇪🇺



The EU elections are next week. Fake news is not the problem
"Information operations are rarely about changing the things people believe, but changing the way they feel. Anger and fear are not things we can corre...
[wired.co.uk](#)

11:01 AM · May 17, 2019 · [Twitter Web Client](#)

7 Retweets 11 Likes



Demos · May 17

Replying to [@Demos](#)

Read the full report here --> [demos.co.uk/wp-content/upl...](#) 🇪🇺

