EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS

Directorate C : Fundamental Rights and Union Citizenship
Unit C1 : Fundamental Rights and Rights of the Child

A NEW SUB-GROUP ON COUNTERING HATE SPEECH ONLINE

This concept note is aimed at briefly illustrating the **mandate** and **configuration** of the sub-group on countering hate speech online.

On the 31 May 2016, the IT Companies[1] agreed with the European Commission a Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online in order to support the European Commission and EU Member States in the effort to respond to the challenge of ensuring that online platforms do not offer opportunities for illegal online hate speech to spread virally.[2]

As announced in the Code of Conduct, the IT Companies and the European Commission agreed **to assess the public commitments in the Code of Conduct on a regular basis, including their impact** and to **report the preliminary assessment of the implementation of the Code** to the newly established High Level Group on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and all forms of intolerance **by the end of 2016**.

In order to ensure the effective reporting of the progress in the implementation to the High Level Group on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and all forms of intolerance, the Commission has decided to establish a new **sub-group dedicated to countering hate speech online.** The sub-group will evaluate and ensure the implementation of the commitments under the Code of Conduct, including its further outreach.

Furthermore, the sub-group will engage into further discussions on how to promote transparency and encourage best practices in developing counter and alternative narratives.

The format and configuration of the sub-group will build on the previous *adhoc* meetings[3] held in the context of the EU dialogue with IT companies on hate speech online and shall reflect the need of bringing together the relevant actors from the private sector as well as from international, European, national and local level who have a direct role in combatting and preventing hate speech online.

Participants will include:

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[1] Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft.
[2] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/hate_speech_code_of_conduct_en.pdf
[3] Coordination meeting with Member States, IT companies and civil society in the context of the dialogue with IT companies on online hate speech held in Brussels on 4 March and 31 May 2016.

- **Member States'** representatives: As regards the participation of national authorities, Member States should be responsible for appointing for each meeting one or two representatives related to the area of combatting hate speech online. These should when applicable include the person/unit appointed as national contact point for the purpose of combatting hate speech online as provided by the Code of Conduct and/or where needed, an additional representative from another leading service (e.g. Justice, Interior or Social Affairs ministries, law enforcement authority, etc.). In order to ensure that Member States have no budgetary constraints in appointing the appropriate representatives, the budget allocated to the sub-group on countering hate speech online allows for covering the travel costs of two participants per Member State.

- Representatives of the **IT companies.**

- Representatives from civil **society organisations that fill the function of trusted flaggers/authorised reporters to the IT companies** or organisations **directly involved in activities related to active monitoring and reporting** of online hate speech.

Depending on the content of the agenda of the specific meeting, **participants may also include**:

- Representatives from **relevant international organisations and bodies** such as the **Council of Europe** as well as representatives from EU Agencies such as the **EU Fundamental Rights Agency**.

- **Other stakeholders** invited on a case-by-cases basis, including representatives of equality bodies and national human rights institutions.

In order to ensure efficiency and complementarity of work and foster synergies, close coordination will be ensured with other **relevant EU-level platforms**, such as the EU Internet Forum.

The outcome of the sub-group on countering hate speech online will be reported to the general meeting of the High Level Group on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and all forms of intolerance.