



Tackling Online Disinformation: a European Approach

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Why take action?

- Open democratic societies depend on public debate that enables citizens to develop informed opinions
- Social media can be used to disseminate disinformation on a scale and with speed and precision of targeting that is unprecedented
- Disinformation erodes trust in institutions and in digital and traditional media
- Disinformation harms our democracies by hampering the ability of citizens to take informed decisions

Bird's eye view:

What has the EU done so far?

Interlinked initiatives, with multiple actions:

1. Disinformation Communication (April 2018)
2. Elections Package (September 2018)
3. Action Plan (December 2018)

Communication on Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach COM(2018)236 final

➤ Adopted 26 April 2018

1. **Code of practice** for online platforms & advertising industry
2. Support for **independent fact checking and academic research** on disinformation
3. Harnessing **new technologies**
4. Ensuring **secure election processes**
5. Fostering **media literacy**
6. Supporting **quality journalism**
7. Bolstering **strategic communications**

Elections Package

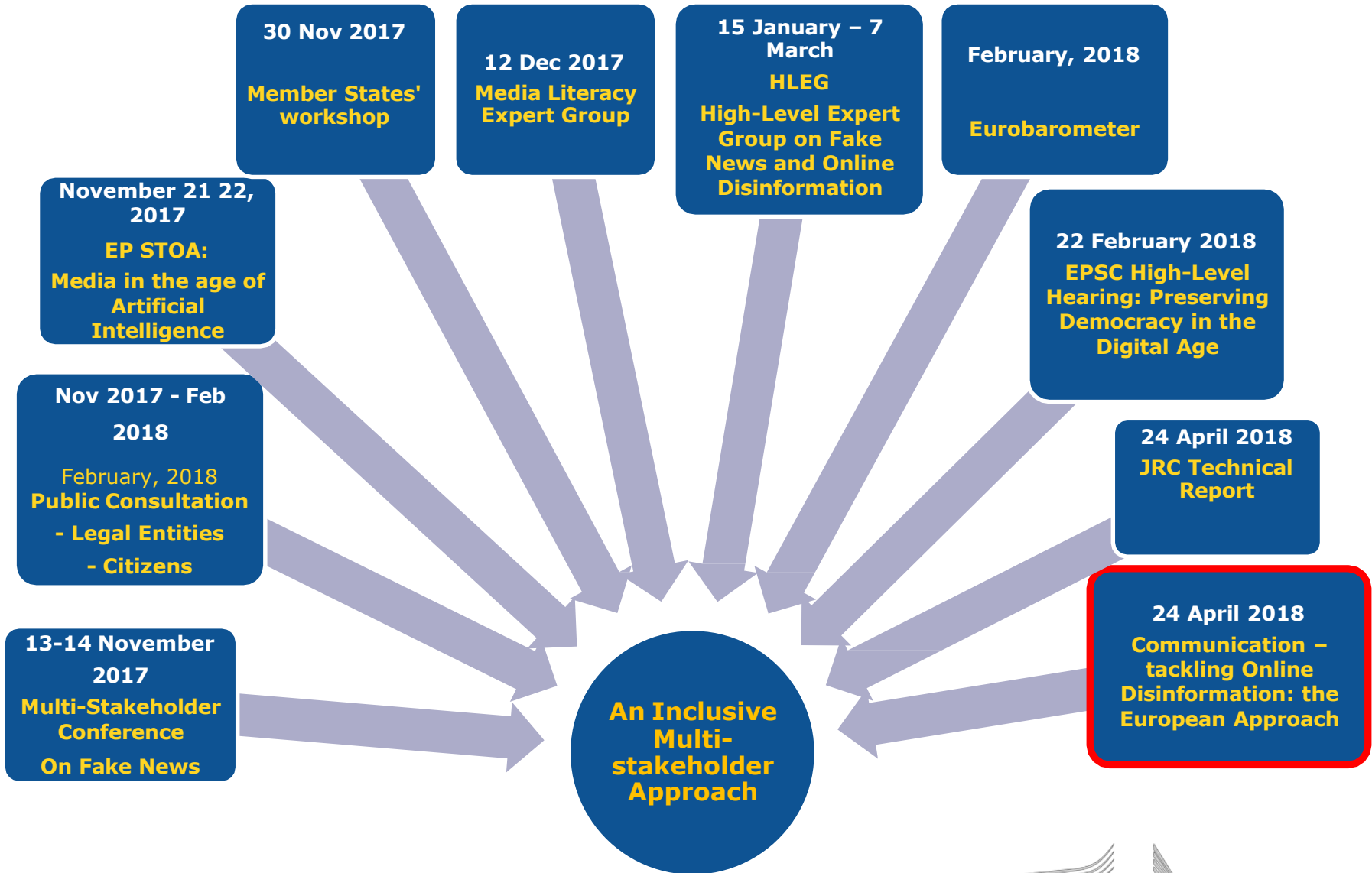
➤ Pres. Juncker SOTU Address, 12 September 2018

- 1. Communication on securing free and fair European elections** COM (2018) 637 final
- 2. Recommendation on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns** C(2018) 5949 final
- 3. Guidance on application of EU data protection law** COM (2018) 638 final
- 4. Amendment to Regulation on European Political Parties and Foundations**

Action Plan against Disinformation JOIN (2018) 36 final

- Adopted 5 December 2018 by Commission and High Representative (EEAS)
 - Endorsed by European Council
 - 4 “Pillars,” outlining 10 Actions
1. Improving **EU Capabilities** to **Detect, Analyse, Expose** Disinformation
 2. Strengthening **Coordinated and Joint Responses** to Disinformation
 - 3. Mobilising Private Sector** to Tackle Disinformation
 4. Raising **Awareness** and Improving **Societal Resilience**

Disinformation Communication – The Process



Online Public Consultation: 2,986 entries

Which channels do you use for news?

Age: +50

- Social Media = 59%
- TV = 59%
- Radio = 52%
- Traditional press = 47%

Age: -50

- Social Media = 72 %
- TV = 30%
- Radio = 30%
- Traditional press = 30%

Which channels do you trust?

- Radio = 70%
- TV = 66%
- Printed newspapers and news magazines = 63%
- Online newspapers and news magazines = 47%
- Video hosting websites and podcasts = 27%
- Online social networks and messaging apps = 26%

Eurobarometer: 28 Member States - 26,576 interviews

Some key findings:

- 80 % of EU citizens come across “fake news” regularly – from every day to monthly
- At least half in all EU 28 encounter “fake news” at least once a week
- 85 % perceive “fake news” to be a problem in their country
- 83% perceive “fake news” to be a problem for democracy in general

High-Level Expert Group

➤ HLEG Report: “The threat is disinformation, not ‘fake news.’”

➤ “Disinformation,” as defined in the Communication:

Verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm.

➤ Excluded:

- Reporting error
- Satire and parody
- Partisan news and commentary

General Approach

1. Overarching objectives – to improve the transparency, diversity and credibility of information, and to fashion inclusive solutions
2. Disinformation a multi-dimensional phenomenon
3. Responses require multi-stakeholder engagement – public authorities, platforms, media, fact-checkers, academics, teachers, civil society
4. Responses should be based on evidence and adapt as the phenomenon evolves
5. Responses must respect freedom of expression and other European/international human rights standards
6. Focus on positive measures to enable freedom of expression and empower citizens

Closer look: Code of Practice

- A self-regulatory Code for **online platforms** and the **advertising sector**
- 5 Chapters, 15 Commitments
- 1. Scrutiny of ad placements - disrupting revenues** to websites that spread disinformation
- 2. Transparency of political advertising** - and issue-based advertising
- 3. Integrity of services** – addressing **fake accounts** and online **bots**
- 4. Empowering consumers** - to **report disinformation, access different news** sources, while improving the visibility and findability of **authoritative content**
- 5. Empowering the research community** – through, e.g., privacy-compliant access to data; platforms to support/not hinder research efforts

Closer look: Code of Practice

Subscribers

- The major online platforms - **Facebook, Google, Twitter** – and the trade association for online platforms (**EDIMA**), plus **Mozilla**
- Trade associations representing the advertising industry: **IAB Europe** and **EACA** (plus some **national EACA associations**)
- Trade associations representing the advertisers: **WFA** (plus the **Belgian national association**)

Implementation

- Code signatories have submitted first on implementation
- Results were published at the end of January
- A closer monitoring on a monthly basis is ongoing until the EP elections
- Assessment in Fall 2019 at the Code's one year anniversary

Closer look: Support for independent fact-checking and research

- **1st phase:** Facilitate the creation of an independent European network of fact-checkers
 - Launch of the H2020 action **SOMA** - provide a fact-checking platform for European fact-checkers to establish common working methods, exchange best practices, achieve broad coverage across the EU, and participate in joint fact-checking and related activities.
 - IFCN and the EJTA have started dedicated fact-checking projects around the EP elections <https://factcheckeu.info/it/> and <https://eufactcheck.eu/>
- **2nd phase:** strengthen capacities to identify and expose disinformation threats targeting national audiences and facilitate cross-border cooperation
 - **European online platform** for additional data gathering and analysis by fact-checkers and academic researchers with access to fact-checking tools, EU public data and online platform data. (CEF Work Programme 2019 – European Platform on Disinformation)



Thank you!

