

EN
P-001343/2019
Reply
(14.5.2019)

On 22 March 2019, the European Council, while welcoming the important work accomplished in this respect in recent months, called for further enhanced coordinated efforts to address the internal and external aspects of disinformation and to protect European and national elections across the EU. The European Council urged private operators such as online platforms and social networks to fully implement the Code of Practice and to ensure higher standards of responsibility and transparency. It called for continued and coordinated efforts to safeguard the Union's democratic systems and to combat the immediate and long-term threats posed by disinformation, as an integral part of strengthening the EU's resilience against hybrid threats¹.

In their Conclusions of 19 February 2019², the Council and its Member States also called on online platforms and Member States to intensify their efforts to promote transparency in election-related online activities. Welcoming the progress made in implementing the Code of Practice, they called on online platforms to invest the necessary resources to deal with election-related online activities in a responsible, accountable and consistent manner, including by ensuring transparency and accountability as regards data processing and data analysis for political purposes; identifying and eliminating bots used for information manipulation purposes; eliminating algorithmic biases that promote disinformation and distort public debate; removing illegal online content; and providing access to data for the purposes of research aiming to identify relevant vulnerabilities, while ensuring media freedom, and preventing advertisements from being removed due to political considerations, in full compliance with data protection rules.

In the same conclusions the Council invited the Commission to continue, in cooperation with the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) and other relevant actors, the systematic monitoring of the implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation and to regularly inform the Council and Member States of its findings, especially with a view to the 2019 European Parliament elections.

As regards fact-checkers, the Council called on the Commission, the High Representative and the Member States to support all competent structures in detecting, analysing and exposing disinformation targeted at the European Parliament elections. Against this background, it invited the Commission to work with Member States authorities in line with the Action Plan to facilitate the establishment of a network of multidisciplinary independent fact-checkers and academic researchers to detect and expose disinformation across different social networks and digital media.

The European Council will come back to this issue at its June meeting on the basis of a report on the lessons learnt prepared by the Presidency in cooperation with the Commission and the High Representative, in order to inform the long-term response³.

¹ European Council conclusions EUCO 1/2019.

² Conclusions of the Council and of the Member States on securing free and fair European elections (6573/1/19 REV 1).

³ EUCO 1/2019.