

**Question for written answer E-008632/2016
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Use of social media to spread lies and slander

Social media are now one means, if not the main means, employed to obtain information or discuss current events. In practice, however, there is no control over the news that they carry. Controversy is being fuelled in various quarters by the unlawful, defamatory use of social media to foment bogus beliefs and discredit political opponents with baseless, fabricated stories. This is what happened in the American election campaign and the Brexit campaign and lately in Italy, where a fake account linked to a political party, the Five Star Movement, has even prompted a complaint to the authorities for slander because of the falsehoods posted on it, as was described in a report published on 16 November in the newspaper *La Stampa*, which also highlighted the gigantic advertising-related economic interests behind the streams of lies.

The exercise of democracy and political debate should take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and keep to real and proven facts, while invariably guaranteeing freedom of expression as set out in Article 11 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

In the light of these repeated episodes, what steps will the Commission take, and what legislative proposals might it make, to deal with the spread of falsehoods via social media?