

**Question for written answer E-003157/2023
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Virginie Joron (ID)

Subject: Is NewsGuard, the self-proclaimed disinformation tracker, a transparent lobbyist in Brussels?

Mike Benz, Executive Director of the Foundation for Freedom Online, reports that US company NewsGuard is working with the Commission¹ in its fight against 'disinformation', especially with regard to COVID-19 and changes in the weather. NewsGuard allegedly blacklists media outlets and public actors.

NewsGuard claims² that its advisory board is made up of Michael Hayden, former Director of the CIA and NSA, Tom Ridge, former Secretary for the US Department of Homeland Security, and Jimmy Wales, co-founder of Wikipedia, a site known for its political bias. NewsGuard has allegedly blacklisted 645 websites or groups for being 'bad faith actors' and 'spreading myths about vaccines' during the COVID-19 pandemic³.

In Brussels, NewsGuard is not transparent about its activity: the company has not declared its lobbying budget or the funds that it has received⁴. However, it signed a EUR 1.5 million contract with the Commission⁵.

1. Why does the Commission allow foreign companies whose reports are not up to date to participate in its working groups on foreign interference, disinformation and the DSA⁶, or to receive funding?
2. In total, what sums have the Commission or its agencies allocated to NewsGuard?
3. Why did members of Thierry Breton's cabinet meet NewsGuard on 15 November 2021 and what were the outcomes of that meeting?

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¹ According to the Joint Research Centre, since the end of October 2022 <https://twitter.com/MikeBenzCyber/status/1715044446604021950>; <https://www.eblida.org/activities/the-eblida-sdg-european-house/newsguard.html>

² <https://www.newsguardtech.com/our-advisory-board/>

³ <https://twitter.com/MikeBenzCyber/status/1716642724177416292>

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=101670944648-92>

⁵ From the Health and Digital Executive Agency <https://ec.europa.eu/budget/financial-transparency-system/analysis.html>.

⁶ Invited to speak as an expert to Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation (INGE) on Monday, November 15th, 2021; Participation in meetings related to the Code of Practice on Disinformation <https://www.newsguardtech.com/press/newsguard-statement-eu-code-of-practice-failure/>