

**Priority question for written answer P-003037/2023  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Sophia in 't Veld (Renew)**

Subject: The Commission's microtargeting campaign on X about its controversial chat control proposal

On 11 May 2022, the Commission published its proposal for a regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse<sup>1</sup>. It has generated considerable scepticism and controversy. Privacy regulators, national governments and parliaments and the Council legal service have strongly criticised the proposal.

Although the legislative procedure on this is still ongoing, the Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs launched a paid advertising campaign on X (formerly Twitter) in at least seven Member States<sup>23</sup>, using emotional techniques, showing unsettling images and suggesting that critics of this proposal do not support child protection. Microtargeting<sup>4</sup> was used to avoid certain audiences, while the X algorithm was used to automatically further refine targeting<sup>56</sup>. The campaign on X started on 15 September and ended some 10 days later<sup>7</sup>.

1. Can the Commission clarify the aim of a public campaign promoting a very sensitive legislative proposal while the legislative process in Parliament and Council is still ongoing?
2. Does the Commission consider that the microtargeting advertising campaign on X is in line with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Digital Services Act (in particular Article 26(3) thereof), and can the Commission explain the choice of each specific positive and negative target?
3. Why did the Commission decide to end the campaign on X 10 days after its launch?

Submitted: 13.10.2023

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A209%3AFIN>

<sup>2</sup> Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Finland, Slovenia, Portugal and Czechia.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.volkskrant.nl/columns-opinie/opinie-europese-commissie-misleidt-burgers-met-desinformatiecampagne-en-illegale-advertenties-b86cae2c/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ton.twitter.com/ads-repository/ads-repository/1709243560636166341.csv>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://twitter.com/KuypersMarieke/status/1705173643322417536>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://business.twitter.com/en/help/ads-policies/ads-content-policies/political-content.html>;  
<https://business.twitter.com/en/help/ads-policies/campaign-considerations/targeting-of-sensitive-categories.html>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://dannymekic.com/202310/undermining-democracy-the-european-commissions-controversial-push-for-digital-surveillance>