

Minutes

Third meeting of the Multistakeholders Forum on Disinformation

17 July 2018

Albert Borschette Conference Centre, Room 2B

Brussels, Belgium

The Commission announced that Forum member Gianna Riotta was unable to attend the meeting and that Biliana Petkova had asked to resign from the Forum. In addition, for the Forum's third meeting, Monique Goyens (BEUC) would be replaced by Agustin Reyna; Alexios Mantzarlis (International Fact-Checkers Network) would be replaced by Clara Jimenez Cruz; Katherine Armitage (WFA) would be replaced by Erard Gilles; and Gregoire Polard (ACT) would be replaced by Lyn Trystman-Gray.

The Commission presented a proposed agenda for the meeting as well as the draft minutes of the Forum's second meeting. The agenda and the minutes were adopted. The Commission noted that the minutes of the Forum's second meeting and the Forum's vademecum would be made available on the Commission website.

The Working Group presented the draft of the Code of Practice and associated Annex of Current Best Practices of Signatories, circulated by the Working Group on 13 July. Siada El Ramly, spokesperson for the Working Group, stated that substantial improvements had been made to the draft Code since the version reviewed at the Forum's second meeting. She reviewed the draft line by line, prefaced by some general remarks:

- While the document remains organized around five "themes," the commitments now expressly referenced the Communication's objectives for the Code.
- The term "relevant signatories" has been substituted for "technology companies" in the Code's commitments in order to encourage uptake by additional stakeholders beyond those in the Forum – stakeholders would indicate which of the Code's commitments they will implement, consistent with the nature of their respective services.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Code have been placed at the end of the documents; broadly, online platforms would provide annual self-assessment reports on efforts to counter disinformation, which would be publically available and subject to review by an independent third party; signatories from the advertising sector and advertiser signatories would provide aggregated reporting on relevant brand safety activities and policies.

Ravi Kiran Vatrappu, spokesperson for the Sounding Board, stated that the latest draft of the Code represented a positive step forward. He and the other members of the Sounding Board had a variety of comments and suggestions for improvement, including:

- In general, the draft lacks specificity on how commitments would be operationalised and progress measured; quantifiable KPIs should be included. In addition, the form of the Code

and its commitments should be clearer, more detailed, and better aligned with the international standard for codes of practice.

- It is unclear what sanctions will apply in the event of breach/non-compliance.
- While the Annex of Current Best Practices was welcome, it should be made more clear how the referenced practices link to the commitments concerned and the extent to which practices have been rolled out in Europe; also it is unclear what would happen if a referenced policy changes.
- The draft lacks a commitment on algorithmic transparency, as called for in the Commission's Communication on Tackling Online Disinformation.
- The Code's definition of "political advertising" is inadequate, there is no definition of "issue-based advertising," and the commitments on these issues are not clear.
- The role of media and fact-checkers with respect to the Code is insufficiently developed.

The Commission thanked the Working Group for their hard work in preparing the draft. The Commission welcomed the introduction of a monitoring system, supported by a third party independent supervision. However, there was room for improvement, including, briefly:

- further detail on the actions that will contribute to achieving the commitments, including a roadmap on implementation timing and geographical coverage of such actions;
- further clarity on the scrutiny of ads placements, including the commitment to implement actions that would reduce revenues not only to imposter websites but to websites that host fake news;
- further clarity on the transparency of political advertising, including the commitment concerning "public disclosure" of such advertising; for example, if repositories of political ads will be created for the U.S., the same should be achievable for the EU.; and
- a commitment for signatories to work with the network of independent European fact-checkers and the platform on disinformation, the creation of which is ongoing with the support of the Commission.

The Commission noted that failure to adopt a credible Code of Practice could lead to regulatory action; further, in the absence of an action at European level, Member States may take their own actions, which could lead to a very fragmented regulatory landscape.

The Forum was adjourned and the Working Group and the Sounding Board held break-out sessions to reflect on the feedback and provided and to develop statements regarding the status of Forum's discussion of the Code.

The Forum reconvened.

The Working Group and the Sounding Board discussed their respective statements to be issued in connection with the publication of the draft Code, which would be made available to the public on the Commission's website.

Commissioner Mariya Gabriel spoke to the Forum. She thanked the members for their hard work and congratulated them for producing a preliminary draft of the Code in a very short time frame.

She considered the draft to be a first step in the right direction, but noted that there were still areas for improvement – for example, some commitments are not sufficiently clear and the role of the independent European network of fact-checkers in supporting the Code should be developed. In addition, it is important that commitments are implemented EU-wide, including in the smaller Member States. She stated that it was up to the Sounding Board to deliver its opinion on the Code, identifying areas where improvements could be made, and that she was confident that work of the Forum would lead to an important achievement in the fight against online disinformation.

The Forum discussed next steps. The Sounding Board agreed to provide the Working Group with consolidated comments on the Code within the following week. In addition, the Commission summarized further steps as follows:

- 3 September: Sounding Board to provide draft Opinion of the Code
- 12 September: Working Group to deliver further draft of Code, in view of the draft Opinion
- 17 September: meeting of the Forum in Brussels
- 20 September: final Opinion of the Sounding Board
- 26 September: delivery of the final Code to the Commissioner

The meeting was adjourned.

A list of Forum members attending the meeting is attached.

Annex

Attendance List

Multistakeholder Forum on Disinformation – 17/07/2018

Name	First Name	Organisation
Antemir	Razvan	European Brands Association
Boudet	Lucas	European Advertising Standards Alliance
De Cordier	Marie	European Newspaper Publishers Association European Magazine Media Association
El Ramly	Siada	EDIMA –Online Platforms Association
Elzer	Nina	European Association of Communications Agencies
Frank	Nicola	European Broadcasting Union
Gilles	Erard	World Federation of Advertisers
Jiminez Cruz	Clara	Maldita.es (ICFN)
Jiminez Martin	Maria Luisa	Facebook
MacDonald	Raegan	Mozilla
Mills Wade	Angela	EPC
Mroczkowski	Gregoire	Interactive Advertising Bureau Europe
Olivier	Jeremy	Facebook
Pancini	Marco	Google
Policino	Oresete	Bocconi University*
Reyna	Agustin	BEUC
Sneed	Vincent	Association Européenne des Radios
Steinberg	Jon	Google
Trystman-Gray	Lyn	Association of Commercial Television
Turner	Stephen	Twitter
Valdelin	Emil	Facebook
Van Wijk	Wout	News Media Europe
Vatrapu	Ravi Kiran	Copenhagen Business School*
Wagner	Christian	Google

* Academic experts