

From: [REDACTED]
 To: [MOOZOVA Irena \(JUST\)](#);
 Cc: [REDACTED] [JUST](#)
 D3
 Subject: Flash 04/03 - Meeting Commissioner Jourova with IT Platforms
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Flash 04/03 - Meeting with IT Platforms (Facebook, Google, Snapchat, Microsoft, Twitter):
 Commissioner Jourova, Daniel Braun, Monika Ladmanova, [REDACTED]

- Commissioner underlined again the importance of guaranteeing free and fair elections and that the platforms should comply with national legislation, as well as with EU initiatives (Election package, Code of Practice etc.)
- COM also reported briefly on the last meeting of the European cooperation network on elections, where the Member States discussed all aspects of the Recommendations: data protection (including sanctions), electoral laws (it is clear that these rules are fragmented); cybersecurity table top exercise, as well as transparency and advertising. For the latter, the Member States asked for more information from the platforms on their initiatives.
- Commissioner framed the discussion as a process leading up to and beyond the elections, with certain actions being needed immediately, where the focus is on delivering free and fair elections while preserving rights, and the in the longer term, where the focus should be on achieving a balanced regulatory environment.

Short-term actions with the focus on European elections

- The platforms reported to be already engaging with national authorities, but were supportive of reaching out to the national networks in particular **and have asked for contacts of the representatives of national election networks, which COM agreed to provide.**
- In terms of transparency tools, FB and Google are due to roll out their transparency of political ads in March. Most platforms will implement compartmentalisation (in other words, you can advertise only where you have residence). The verification method mentioned by several platforms involved a proof of identity (ID card), plus performing a search check of the data provided by an advertiser.
- Some negative feedback has also been received. E.g. in DK Snapchat oblige people to demonstrate residence in DK, and have received complaints that this rule does not exist nationally and that they are introducing regulation.
- A vital part of transparency is also publicly available repository of all ads. FB said that they will run a public repository where advertisements are associated with a party, and can be checked on their page (Google also maintains such a repository).
- Some platforms (including Google) announced they have updated their policies to require that the advertisers declare their compliance with the national election rules.
- Microsoft raised the importance of cybersecurity and cyber incidents they have discovered and asked where they could report their findings, especially in view of the Rapid Alerts System to be set up. Daniel Braun will facilitate contact with RAS team. Member States should be primary input, but platforms should also contribute.
- FB reminded that besides foreign interference, they have observed in some cases also domestic actors trying to interfere.
- Snapchat is in touch with voters via the EP to recommend participation in the elections. FB, Google are also doing this.

Longer-term, after European elections

- Commissioner noted that efforts for protecting the integrity of European elections are not only solving an adhoc problem, but also testing a potential (self)regulatory model. She suggested that all actors unscientifically assess after May whether our efforts were proportionate and effective.
- Most platforms called for involving civil society in this reflection, which has strong parallels to Code of Conduct, as well as more platforms/other companies. The work on this does not end with these elections. Wants to make this work more inclusive of other companies. Some of them also said that we should also consider whether there this scope for EU law in this area, providing guidance for what to do and how to actually produce “transparency” and what their commitment should be.
- **COM: will carefully raise at JHA that the IT companies** are asking for greater clarity regarding any gaps in electoral rules, and what contribution is desired by the Member States from them.