

Code of Practice on Disinformation

Online platforms, leading social networks, advertisers and advertising industry agreed on a Code of Practice to address the spread of disinformation.



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The Code of Practice on disinformation is the first time worldwide that industry has agreed, on a voluntary basis, to self-regulatory standards to fight disinformation. It aims at achieving the objectives set out by the Commission's Communication presented in April 2018 by setting a wide range of commitments, from transparency in political advertising to the closure of fake accounts and demonetization of purveyors of disinformation. It includes an annex identifying best practices that signatories will apply to implement its commitments. The Commission has also published the opinion of the sounding board of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum (.pdf).

The Code of Practice was signed by the online platforms Facebook, Google and Twitter, Mozilla, as well as by advertisers and parts of the advertising industry in October 2018. Signatories then presented their roadmaps to implementation. Microsoft joined in May 2019, while TikTok became a signatory in June 2020.

The strengthened Code of Practice in 2021 will evolve towards a co-regulatory instrument as outlined in the Digital Services Act.

Monitoring Disinformation

Online platforms and trade associations representing the advertising sector submitted a baseline report in January 2019 setting out the state of play of the measures taken to comply with their commitments under the Code of Practice on disinformation.

Between January and May 2019, the European Commission carried out a targeted monitoring of the implementation of the commitments by Facebook, Google and Twitter with particular pertinence to the integrity of the European Parliament elections.

An annual self-assessment report of the signatories was published in October 2019. The self-assessments indicate comprehensive efforts by the signatories to implement their commitments over the course of 12 months. They also showed that further serious steps by individual signatories and the community as a whole were still necessary.

The first year assessment of the Code, published in September 2020, showed that it provided a valuable framework for a structured dialogue between online platforms and ensured greater transparency and accountability of their policies on disinformation. And, it resulted in concrete actions and policy changes by relevant stakeholders to help counter disinformation.

During the COVID-19 crisis, signatories effectively participated in a dedicated Monitoring Programme. The COVID-19 disinformation-monitoring programme has provided an in-depth overview of the actions taken by platforms to fight false and misleading information around coronavirus and vaccines. It has proven to be a useful transparency measure to ensure platforms' public accountability and has put the Code through a stress test.

Platforms have reported on actions taken to increase the visibility of authoritative sources, tools developed to facilitate access to reliable information of public interest, demoted and removed content containing false or misleading information likely to cause physical harm, prohibited advertising that exploits the crisis and increased efforts to provide accurate information on vaccines.

The Commission presented a Guidance to strengthen the Code of Practice on disinformation in May 2021. The Guidance aims to address gaps and shortcomings and create a more transparent, safe and trustworthy online environment. And, it lays out the cornerstones for a robust monitoring framework for its implementation.

The Guidance aims at evolving the existing Code of Practice towards a co-regulatory instrument foreseen under the Digital Services Act (DSA), offering an early opportunity to design appropriate measures to address systemic risks related to disinformation stemming from the functioning and use made of the platforms' services in view of the anticipated DSA risk assessment and mitigation framework.

The strengthened Code of Practice

The assembly, grouping the signatories of the Code and new signatories that are willing to subscribe to and take on commitments under the 2021 Code, met on 8 July 2021 to start the process that will strengthen the Code of Practice on Disinformation.

Members of the Assembly have approved a Vademecum on the organization and functioning of the process that will shape and draft the strengthened Code on Disinformation by the end of 2021.

The purpose of the Assembly is to revise the 2018 Code in line with the Guidance to strengthen the Code of Practice on Disinformation, in view of transforming the Code into a stronger instrument for addressing disinformation in the EU.

In autumn 2021, signatories should present a first draft of the strengthened Code of Practice to the Commission.

Joint call for interest to broaden participation

The Commission and current signatories of the Code of Practice on Disinformation also launched a Joint Call for interest to join the Code of Practice on Disinformation, inviting interested parties to manifest their interest to become signatories of the strengthened Code and get involved its preparation.

The call is aimed at a wide range of stakeholders, including social media services, private messaging services, players from the advertising ecosystem involved in ad placements. It is also aimed at other players providing services that may be used to monetise disinformation such as e-payment services or e-commerce platforms. Other stakeholders who help assess the spread of disinformation could also become signatories. This includes organisations assessing disinformation or providing ratings related to disinformation websites, and providers of technological solutions.

Joining the Code means becoming part of an EU-wide, innovative and robust framework that aims to provide users with appropriate safeguards with regard to the misuse of online services to spread disinformation. The Code will also become a co-regulatory instrument within the Digital Services Act legislative framework, an additional incentive to become a signatory for very large platforms.

Other language versions of the Code of Practice on Disinformation (.pdf)

Bulgarian - Croatian - Czech - Danish - Dutch - Estonian - Finnish - French - German

Greek - Hungarian - Italian - Lithuanian - Latvian - Maltese - Polish - Portuguese

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[Code of Practice on Disinformation \(.pdf\)](#)

Annex: Best Practices (.pdf)

Opinion of the Sounding Board (.pdf)

Monitoring COVID-19 Disinformation

Press release 26/05/2021: Guidance to strengthen the Code of Practice

Report / Study

26-08-2021

Mechanisms that Shape Social Media and their Impact on Society - Report on the State-of-the-Art in Research

29-07-2021

Reports on June Actions - Fighting COVID-19 Disinformation Monitoring Programme

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Reports on May actions - Fighting COVID-19 Disinformation Monitoring Programme

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