

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

Platforms signatories of the Code of Practice on Disinformation take further action against COVID-19 vaccines disinformation by providing users with tools to access reliable information on their services, the March COVID-19 monitoring programme reports highlight.

The reports published today highlight the actions taken by the platforms in February 2021 in the context of the COVID-19 disinformation monitoring programme set up under the 10 June 2020 Joint Communication. Platforms have taken strong action to limit disinformation around COVID-19 vaccines, continue giving prominence to authoritative information on their services and help EU citizens coping with the COVID-19 crisis.

Overall, Commission services acknowledge the platforms efforts in providing more precise information about the impact of the policies put in place to limit COVID-19 disinformation. The new sections added to the reports upon the request of the Commission provide a good overview of the platforms increasing efforts to tackle COVID-19 related disinformation. Still, the lack of sufficient Member State level data prevents the evaluation of the impact of platforms policies at the national level. The Commission is in continuous contact with the platforms to fine-tune the process and to provide further insight into the impact of actions taken.

Fighting COVID-19 vaccines disinformation

The ongoing vaccination campaigns in Europe are accompanied by the continuing spread of false and inaccurate information about vaccines and vaccinations. Platform signatories of the Code of Practice on Disinformation report on their new measures and updates taken in February 2021 to step up the fight disinformation on COVID-19 vaccines.

Platforms report on their updated policies, which include prompting users with additional information when attempting to share content labelled as COVID-19 vaccine-related or providing users with contextual localised information about the vaccination campaign and the vaccines available. Platforms continue to elevate authoritative content. Following up on the Commission's request, they also provide more precise data about the impact of their policies.

In particular:

- **Twitter** updated its COVID-19 search prompts in the EU to include official information on COVID-19 vaccines; the prompts are already active in Denmark, Spain and Ireland. In partnership with UNICEF and Team Halo, Twitter also activated an emoji hashtag #Vaccinated in 24 languages to show support for vaccination.
- **TikTok** launched a new feature called "Know your Facts", that places a banner across videos to warn users that it may contain unverified content. If a viewer then attempts to share the flagged video, they will see a prompt to consider their next move. On quantitative data, the

new vaccine tag attached to all videos with words or hashtags related to COVID-19 vaccines has been applied to 3714 videos in the EU, of which 586 in Italy, 1070 in France, 236 in Spain and 449 in Germany.

- **Google** reports that the Search feature which presents the user with a list of authorised vaccines, statistics, and authoritative information - based on users' locations - in response to searches for information on COVID-19 vaccines, has been expanded to all 27 EU countries by the beginning of March.
- **Microsoft** reports about a new feature available on Bing when a user enters a vaccine-related search query. The feature displays a vaccine tracker indicating the progress of vaccination in individual countries and globally (number of doses administered per total population, and doses per 100 people) alongside reliable vaccine-related tabbed information.

Further reporting for February

The reports provide further information illustrating actions taken to fight COVID-19 related disinformation and the impact of these actions through February 2021. Some examples from the reports:

- **TikTok** continues providing engagement data on the use of their COVID-19 tools in their biggest markets and in the EU overall. Page views and user views of the COVID Center Page across Italy, Spain, and Germany have a slight decrease compared to January, while in France they increased sensibly (TikTok reports on a communication campaign in collaboration with the French government active in February) with total page views across the EU of 73.530.451 and user views 22.922.893 and a steady CTR.
- **Twitter** reports that, since updating its terms of services to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, it has removed more than 22.400 Tweets, challenged 11.7 million accounts and suspended about 2.430 accounts worldwide.
- **Google** reported removing 4 YouTube channels and 1 advertising account linked to Ukraine, as part of a coordinated influence operation conducted towards Moldova, using Russian language to target information on EU policies in the area.
- **Microsoft** reports that on Bing, the panel "COVID experience" appearing when typing COVID-related searches, had 14.723.373 visitors globally (3.4 M less than in January), including 2.356.073 from EU countries (more than 585.000 less than January).

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