



COMPACT - Brussels Symposium

Disinformation in the European Elections 2019: The role of social media & technology trends

Date: 21 October 2019

At the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU, Brussels
(Avenue de Cortenbergh 79, 1000 Brussels)

Background: Social media have radically changed our ways of interacting and communicating. Companies such as Twitter or Facebook were founded already more than ten years ago. However, even today, we are still struggling to define their impact on public discourse, the media landscape and our democracies. Phenomena such as fake news, hate speech and disinformation have changed the way people interact online and influence the political discourse. The European Elections in May 2019 have been viewed as a potential target of foreign influence, but also susceptible to the spread of false information and misleading political advertisement from actors within the EU. While traditional national electoral legislations formulate rules about political advertisement, these rules were developed in a traditional media environment and may not be fit for a changing social media landscape. Therefore, this conference would like to debate whether the set of measures proposed by the European Commission in advance of the elections has been successful. Further, it will be discussed what else could be done to make sure our electoral system, social media legislation and online political advertisement are fit for the digital century. Lastly, we will present preliminary findings from the COMPACT project, which is mapping technological, regulatory and policy developments in social media and convergence.

Purpose of the event & project: The symposium aims to bring together policymakers, academics, NGOs and other stakeholders to discuss how to make social media and our democratic discourses more resilient to extremism and disinformation, especially in light of elections. The aim of the COMPACT project is to raise awareness about emerging legal, policy and technological developments and increase the understanding of how the convergence of those trends influences media and society.

About COMPACT: COMPACT aims to increase awareness of the latest technological discoveries in the context of social media and content convergence as well as to provide research on and experience-exchange of policy and regulation strategies in order to stimulate a debate on the desirable future policies and frameworks. It is a **Horizon 2020 Coordination and Support Action (CSA)** under grant number 762128. This symposium is organised by the **European DIGITAL SME Alliance** as the local partner with support from COMPACT project partners, and kindly hosted by the **Slovak Permanent Representation to the European Union**.



Programme:

9.00 – 9.30 Networking welcome coffee

9.30 – 9.45 Keynote speech

H.E. Peter Javorčík, Ambassador of Slovakia to the European Union (tbc)

9.45 – 11.00 What lessons can be learnt from disinformation in the European Elections? How effective were the measures taken?

This session wants to examine how effective the voluntary code of practice has been and if we need to do more.

Chair: EC speaker to be proposed by European Commission (tbc)

Alexandre Alaphilippe, Executive Director, EU DisinfoLab

Mikulas Peksa, MEP, Czech Pirate Party

Raphael Kergueno, Policy Officer, Transparency International

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) (requested)

11.00 – 11.15 Coffee break

11.15 – 12.30 What types of threats? Misinformation, disinformation, hacking – who are the players and what to do about those threats?

This session aims to provide an overview on the types of disinformation and misinformation threats in elections, to identify the main players, the role of external influence and populism in Europe.

Chair: Lutz Güllner, Head of Division Strategic Communications, European External Action Service

Miroslava Sawiris, Globsec NGO, Slovakia

Florian Pennings, Cyber Security Policy Manager at Microsoft Brussels, Belgium

Rasťo Kužel, MEMO 98 (specialist media monitoring organization), Slovakia

NOTE: There will be a special seminar which will include research-based findings on campaign of populist parties in selected EU countries before election to the EP, on October 22, 4p.m.-6 p.m.

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch break

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13.30 – 15.00 Discussion of COMPACT findings: Overview of regulatory initiatives and suggestions in Europe and beyond in the area of “Information disorder and social harms”

Presentation by the consortium on some preliminary results of the project.

Chair: COMPACT partner

Dr. Lukasz Porwol, Deputy leader at eGovernment Unit, Insight Centre for Data Analytics, NUI Galway, Ireland

Dr. Tanja Pavleska, Laboratory for Open Systems and Networks, Jozef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Igor Danis, School of Communication and Media, Slovakia

Dr. Andrey Skolkay, School of Communication and Media, Slovakia

Oles Kulchytskyy, Agency of European Innovations, Ukraine

15.00 – 15.15 Coffee break

15.15 – 16.30 Role of social media platforms: How can data reliant platforms act responsibly?

How can social media platforms be responsible players if their business model relies on collecting information on their users and to sell targeted advertisement?

Chair: Dr. Tanja Pavleska, Laboratory for Open Systems and Networks, Jozef Stefan Institute, Slovenia

Representative from Brussels Office, Facebook (requested)

Elisabetta Biasin, Legal Researcher, KU Leuven Centre for IT & IP Law – imec, Belgium

Paolo Celot - Founding Member and Secretary General, EAVI – Media Literacy for Citizenship

16.30 – 17.00 Wrap up & lessons learnt: Do we need harmonised European electoral laws? Do we need an agency for democracy?

What can be the way forward? More regulation such as GDPR and AVMSD? Or aiming to solve the issue via competition law?

Ľuboš Kukliš, Executive Director at CBR and Chair of ERGA (requested)

Final wrap up lead by COMPACT partners