

GLOBAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA REGULATION: TECHNOLOGY VS. ECONOMY – BASED APPROACHES

One can agree with [Vaidhyanathan \(2019\)](#) who suggests that “Governments and citizens will have to consider advertising taxes, financial penalties, restrictions on data collection, restrictions on data use, transparency about how the algorithms work, and restrictions on some content itself (where permitted). Some of the larger powers, such as the United States and the European Union, should consider severing WhatsApp and Instagram from Facebook so there is some semblance of competition...Most importantly, states should consider their approach to Facebook as a comprehensive program.”

In particular, there are emerging two streams of suggestions for social media regulation. These can be called technology-based approaches and economy (and especially behavioural economy)-based approaches.

TECHNOLOGY BASED APPROACHES

To set up the level of privacy by users themselves.

There are many tools available for parents to regulate what kids see and how long they spend online.

Regulation should be less about targeting specific content, and more about configuring the platform to isolate and quarantine the bad actors—and in the process—drive regular people toward platform areas where discursive excellence thrives.

Developing a propaganda filter or something like a spam filter for lies (e.g. 'Checkpoint Tipline', unveiled by WhatsApp or NewsGuard for news from legacy media).

A Tool for People to Report Instances of Perceived Social Media Bias (US government).

To adjust the sensitivity of the algorithms so that people are allowed to share content but platforms catch a lot more of the hateful stuff.

During terrorist attacks broadcast live, platforms could introduce special procedures so that staff can quickly work through content without fear of low performance evaluation. They could also introduce temporary quarantines so that content is flagged for immediate removal but then re-examined at a later date.

Third, platforms should limit the number of times that content can be shared within their site and potentially ban shares between sites. This is already happening.

Creating a shared database of hateful content would ensure that content removed from one site is automatically banned from another.

Social media on independently owned servers.

ECONOMY BASED APPROACHES

A daily levy on citizens for using social media platforms (Uganda).

Ads free Facebook (Zuckerberg).

A new data dividend - to get paid users for providing access to their data (California).

An additional tax on the profits of social companies to combat the “detrimental effect on young people’s mental health and wellbeing (UK Parliamentary discussion).

An average indemnification of 200 euro per user for social media data breach (Portugal).

Cartel (Anti-Monopoly Authority) order to Facebook to curb its data collection practices for abusing its market dominance to gather information about users without their knowledge or consent (Germany, similar political discussion is ongoing in the USA).

To break up the big tech companies (USA, Australia).

Table 1: Policy Suggestions for Regulating Social Media

AUTHOR	POLICY SUGESTIONS
Elvin Heinla, Kantar Emor research expert (2018) Country: Estonia	Trustworthiness is a clear advantage of national legacy media and, therefore, PSM must continue to be supported.
Giovanni Pitruzzella AGCOM head (2016) Country: Italy	Regulation of misinformation on the internet was best done by the state, rather than by social media companies such as Facebook. He also suggested the creation of an EU independent body to label fake news and remove it from circulation or impose fines when necessary.
Nelly Ognyanova Country: Bulgaria	There are two important conditions for the safe operation of social networks - transparency , regarding the issues of the platform, trends and how it moves over time and an independent appeal process.
Richardson (2017) CoE	There is only one correct way on how to enforce age limits when accessing social media and it is gathering personal data from children and cross matching anything that could inform about the child’s age. Social media providers will also need to track their location to know which age requirement applies.

<p>Karentay (2017) Country: USA</p>	<p>First, content standards should be interpreted and operationalized on social media platforms through an inclusive mechanism . Second, Governments and social media companies should establish a system of public accountability. Third, governments and social media companies should both make commitments, and be held jointly accountable, to public goals.</p>
<p>Edward Lucas, CEPA vice-president Country: international (Latvia)</p>	<p>The solution to fake news is education and vigilance from all parts of society.</p>
<p>Airis Meier European Parliament's Adviser to the ALDE Group on Culture, Education, Media and Sport Country: EU</p>	<p>The rules governing the legacy media should be valid to Facebook too.</p>
<p>Matthias Heitmann (2018) Country: Germany</p>	<p>Freedom of information also includes the right to influence others and also to be influenced by oneself, the key is to learn how to handle it properly.</p>
<p>Liisi Jürgen Country: Estonia</p>	<p>A parent is a person who is responsible for the child's safety.</p>
<p>Urmas Villmann Country: Estonia</p>	<p>Be aware whether social media discourse presents minority opinion (more likely) or majority opinion (less likely).</p>
<p>Dimitar Dekov Country: Bulgaria</p>	<p>The advice to everyone is to get acquainted with the social security options of any social network. From time to time it is worthwhile to visit them again because social networks and technologies are evolving.</p>
<p>Rein Raud (2018) Country: Estonia</p>	<p>Ensure maximum possible plurality of opinions with equal status on social media.</p>
<p>Kari Käsper Country: Estonia</p>	<p>A strict law of political advertising, greater transparency of messages and targets, and informing users are needed.</p>
<p>Hendrix, 2018 Country: USA</p>	<p>Greater transparency to governments and independent researchers Accountability to citizens Responsibility for addressing externalities</p>
<p>George Soros (2018) Country: Estonia/USA</p>	<p>SM should be regulated more strictly, to maintain competition, innovation as well as fair and equitable access to services.</p>
<p>Brock (2017b) Country: UK</p>	<p>At the minimum, it should be required a high degree of transparency from platforms, not just about the algorithms they use, but also about all aspects of their operations</p>
<p>Reporters without Borders (2018, 2019)</p>	<p><i>Journalism Trust Initiative</i> Publicly labeling high quality versus low quality journalism</p>
<p>Nye (2018) Country: USA</p>	<p>Investigative journalism and alerting the public in advance can help inoculate voters against disinformation campaigns.</p>
<p>Tusikov and Haggart (2019) Country: Canada</p>	<p>First, it's necessary to prohibit the data-intensive, micro-targeted advertising-dependent business model that is at the heart of the problem. Second, it's vital that countries craft rules that are appropriate to their particular domestic social, legal and political contexts. Third, and most provocatively, it's time to consider non-commercial ownership of social-media entities — including non-profit or some form of public ownership</p>
<p>Carys Afoko (2019) Country: UK</p>	<p>But ultimately no regulation of tech giants will work unless users are involved.</p>
<p>Thomas (2019) Country: Australia</p>	<p>Regulators should consider when tackling violent content online: First, conceptual clarity. What are we trying to achieve, and is this the best way to achieve it? Second, technical feasibility. How will it work in practice, and is it really going to be an improvement on the current situation? Third, regulators need to consider adverse consequences. For example, an increased crackdown by the big social media players will not take this content offline; it will simply disperse it more widely.</p>
<p>Swisher (2019) Country: USA</p>	<p>Suggestions for tech industry CEOs: Embrace transparency, hold leaders accountable, avoid groupthink, invest in diversity, don't be afraid of self-reflection.</p>
<p>Benton (2019) Country: UK</p>	<p>In order to decrease misinformation, it is useful to make a story's age more prominent, both to readers and to those who might only see a link on social media without clicking through.</p>

Open Society Institute (2018) Country: Bulgaria	Since it appears that there is important correlation between quality education and freedom of the media on the one hand, and trust in fake news and hoaxes, more support should be given to quality education and freedom of the media.
Mayer-Schönberger (2018) Country: Austria	First, better privacy through direct state control. Second, data sharing obligation. Facebook has to make a random part of its data accessible to competitors in order to break its informational power.
Miroslav Píkus (2018) Country: Slovakia	Try to learn how to set up the level of privacy.
Balázs Orbán (2018) Country: Hungary	A good regulation cannot be achieved without the intervention of the state.
Zoltán Bártky (2018) Country: Hungary	One cannot expect the social media to make their rules of data protection stricter forever, otherwise we can end up with blurred Facebook profile pictures, or a three-round verification process needed to post a picture of a cat.
Hadas-Label (2018) Country: France	Better media literacy and new categorisation of social platforms that would give them editorial responsibility
Fitzgerald (2019) Country: Ireland	All media, and particularly PSM, must look into how they handle group-think.
Verhofstadt (2019) EU Parliament	We need a European Facebook
Sängerlaub (2018) Country: Germany	It is important to be transparent, especially the media.
Gibbs (2019) Country: UK	What we really need is for adults to stop condemning social media sites, and start trying to understand them rather than trying to block it from view.
Sharockman (in Jančárik, 2019) Country: USA	He supports rather self-regulation (by platforms) then regulation by governments. The governments should provide access to trustworthy and reliable information, including support to journalism and media literacy. Journalists should provide sources and facts.
Malik (2019) Country: Pakistan	The prior restraint model is an obsolete mechanism to regulate free speech on social networks. If speech needs be regulated, it should be by judicial determination, and not executive decisions. Combating fake news should be done through public information campaigns which sensitise the population on the need to fact-check their sources of online content.
Raddi (2019) Country: USA	A combination of existing policy tools — heavily taxing private social media companies, for example, and banning targeted advertisement and the use of personal information for commercial gain — would softly sentence Facebook to death. Especially if they are combined with new, high-quality public social media alternatives.
Greer (2019) Country: UK	Hefty fines, civil rights audits, antitrust, data privacy legislation, shareholder activism and employee organizing.
Scott (2019c) Politico	In the race to regulate Big Tech, there is one rule of thumb - whoever moves first gets to write the rules.
Morozov (2019) Country: USA	Breaking up the tech giants, having them pay a fair share of taxes, making better use of their data are all necessary but, alas, insufficient conditions for effective social – not just individual or institutional – transformation.
Vaidhyanathan (2019) Country: UK	Each country will have to assess how its social, cultural and political health is affected by Facebook. Each will have to approach Facebook as part of an information ecosystem, connected intimately with other systems of expression and media forms like television and news services. Each will have to assess how much power it wants Facebook to have in that ecosystem. Each will have to deploy an array of responses to mitigate the negative consequences of Facebook while recognizing its value in people's lives.
Newport (2019) Country: USA	Since freedom of expression is also affected by server ownership, the solution are new social media on independently owned servers. One of the systems is called <i>POSSE</i> , for “publish on your own site, syndicate elsewhere”-encourages competition and innovation while allowing users to vote with their feet. However, the author does not see this as a realistic alternative.

Table 2a: Key Tools/Approaches to Social Media Regulation

Suggested Regulatory Approach	<u>Nation-specific solutions</u>	Breaking up the tech giants/ antitrust legislation GERMANY	Taxation	Data Privacy Legislation	Fines
Supporting Authors	<u>Vaidhyanathan</u>	Morozov, Greer	Morozov, Raddi	Morozov, Greer, Raddi, Mayer-Schönberger	Greer, Pitruzzella

Table 2b: Key Tools/Approaches to Social Media Regulation

Suggested Regulatory Approach	Civil rights audits	Shareholders activism	Banning targeted advertisement	Public information campaigns	Employee organizing
Supporting Authors	Greer	Greer	Raddi, Tusikov and Haggart,	Malik, Gibbs, Nye, Reporters without Borders, Lucas,	Greer

Table 2c: Key Tools/Approaches to Social Media Regulation

Suggested Regulatory Approach	Courts	Self-regulation by platforms	Media literacy	Transparency/ Data sharing	Public (state) regulation
Supporting Authors	Malik, Ognyanova, Meier (?)	Sharockman, Hadas-Lebel, Smith,	Sharockman, Fitzgerald, Hadas-Lebel, Zoltán Bátky, Pikus, Open Society Institute, Afoko, Lucas, Jürgen (?), Villmann, Dekov,	Sängerlaub, Mayer-Schönberger, Swisher, Brock, Hendrix, Ognyanova	Orbán, Mayer-Schönberger, Swisher, Soros, Hendrix (?), Pitruzzella, Tufekci (?), Zuckerberg, Berners-Lee

Table 2d: Key Tools/Approaches to Social Media Regulation

Suggested Regulatory Approach	Technical/ editorial solutions	Support for PSM/ Plurality of Opinions	Co-regulation	Independently owned servers/ new publicly owned social media
Supporting Authors	Benton, Nye, Pitruzzella, Richardson, Karentay	Heinla, Raud	Karentay, Smith	Newport, Raddi, Verhofstadt, Tusikov and Haggart

Our analysis showed that many of the popular opinions, suggestions and recommendations propagated on the web, and recalled and repeated by media and related stakeholders require extra validation and extra argumentation.

In particular, we stress on the need for caution - not all suggestions can pass the test of truth. In particular, there is a strong need for deep cross-checking of the local, national and individual statements with scientific works and non-scientific elaborations and reports coming from other

countries and international sources to ensure that individual suggestions are not propagated as established truths and relevant solutions to issues identified. Many common opinions (often misleading) about addressing social media challenges prove not to be supported by strong evidence or any relevant studies.

Dr. Andrej Školkay, School of Communication and Media