

# Disinformation in the context of European elections

**What is the EU response to fake news?**

4 May 2019

Carme Colomina



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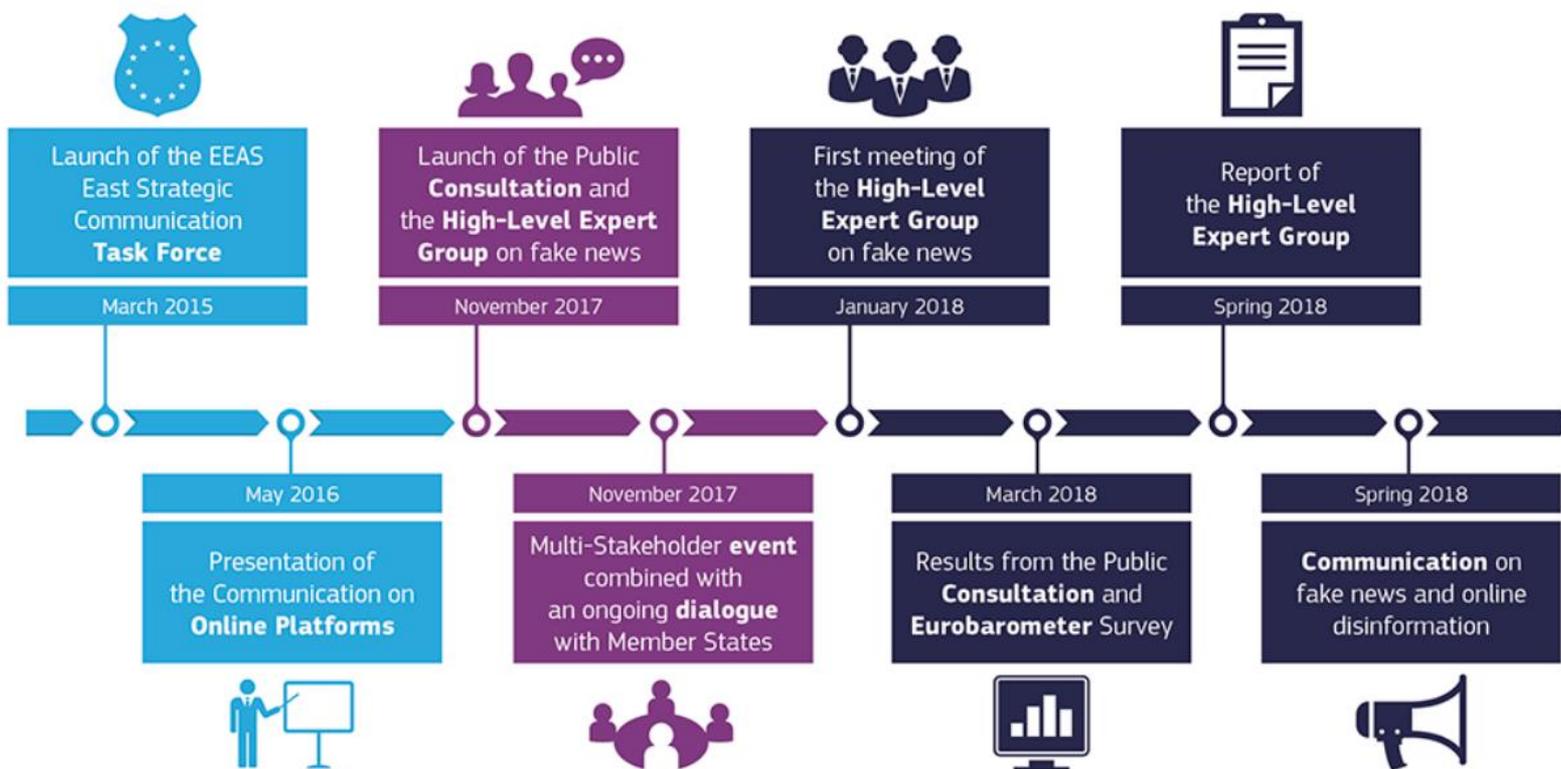
**Advertising, sex discrimination** - [EU to ban advertising for same-sex flats, Sep 2004](#)

## Some EU dilemmas:

- Why does the dissemination of false information appear to be such an attractive strategy in our current information environment?
- How can you tackle a problem with different degrees of concern, different risk assessments and different approach to the threat among EU members?
- How can you regulate against disinformation without damaging freedom of speech?
- Bots are already part of the communication strategy of traditional political parties campaigns.



# Tackling Fake News in the EU



The Commission's Representations in the EU Member States and external delegations in third countries will participate in the debate and gather information on national rules and initiatives addressing the spread of fake news in their countries.

# The EU vs Disinformation

- The EC launched a public consultation in 2017 to gather the views of a wide range of stakeholders and citizens on fake news.
  
- Already, three parallel meetings with different stakeholder groups have been held:
  - . Expert Conference involving platforms, news, organisations, academia, research and civil society organisations
  - . A workshop with Member States
  - . An inter-institutional meeting involving the EP
  - . A High Level Expert Group established through an open call for expressions of interest.
  
- Every EU institution has developed its own Strategic Communication's approach to disinformation

# Code of Practice against disinformation:

Commission calls on signatories to intensify their efforts (January 2019)

Representatives of online platforms, leading social networks, advertisers and advertising industry agreed on a self-regulatory Code of Practice to address the spread of online disinformation and fake news.

The purpose of this Code is to identify the actions that Signatories could put in place in order to address the challenges related to "Disinformation":

- (i) Include safeguards against Disinformation;
  - (ii) Improve the scrutiny of advertisement placements to reduce revenues of the purveyors of disinformation;
  - (iii) Ensure transparency about political and issue-based advertising, also with a view to enabling users to understand why they have been targeted by a given advertisement;
  - (iv) Implement and promote reasonable policies against misrepresentation;
  - (v) Intensify and demonstrate the effectiveness of efforts to close fake accounts and establish clear marking systems and rules for bots to ensure their activities cannot be confused with human interactions;
- .../...

## Looking for the best strategy (I):

### Debunking:

- The [EUvsDisinfo project](#) has debunked over 4,000 cases of disinformation campaigns on a wide variety of subjects.
- Debunking can spread the myth to new audiences.
- A simple myth is more attractive than a complicated correction.

**Alternative narratives** (typical EU myth narratives: EU is bureaucratic too complicated, no benefit to ordinary people, money-wasting. an internal mess)

**Rapid alert system** (one contact point in every MS) - It is set up among the EU institutions and Member States to facilitate the sharing of insights related to disinformation campaigns and coordinate responses. The RAS is based on open-source information and will also draw upon insights from academia, fact-checkers, online platforms and international partners.

### Fact-checking:

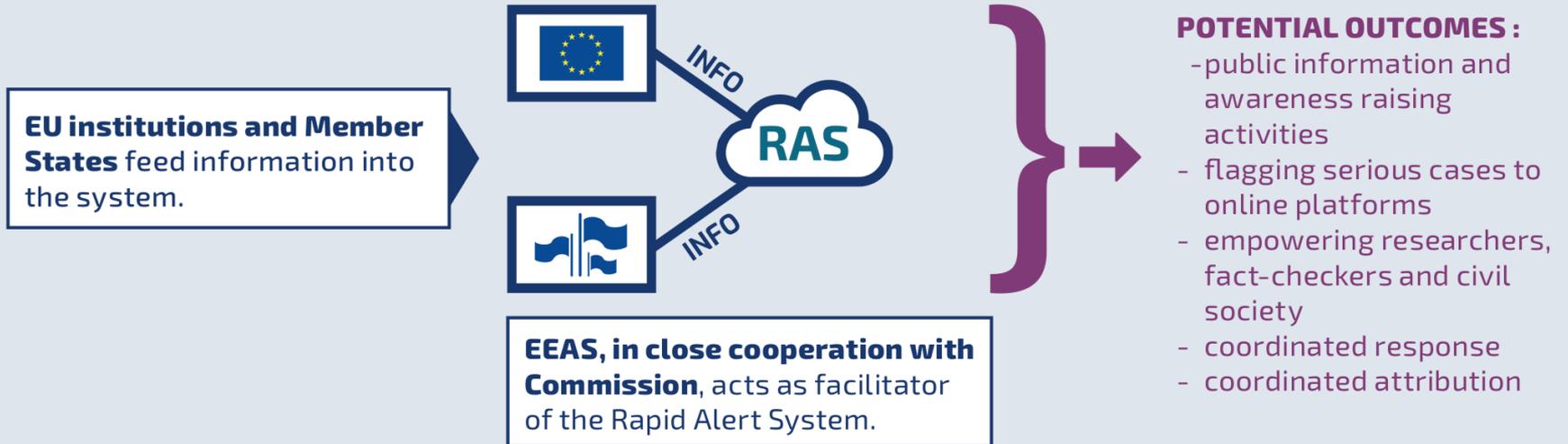
- 100 fact-checkers from 70 organisations in 26 EU countries gathered in the EP. A network and portal for collaboration under way.

[Highlithing facts](#)

<https://eufactcheck.euFactcheck.eu>

# Track, detect, expose

## HOW DOES IT WORK?



## WORKING WITH OTHERS

**Close cooperation** with European cooperation election network, NATO, G7 and other partners.



**Complementary to EU structures** dealing with crisis response, cybersecurity, hybrid threats, etc.

Spanish Government put it already in place for the Spanish elections

## Looking for the best strategy: (II)

More transparency in campaign financing

Building resilience (StratComm Units)

Network of Press & Social media officers in EU28:

- Trainings and seminars in EU28
- One to one briefings
- Fact-checking on demand

EC and EP support investigative journalism and media pluralism

Media literacy training is key to strengthen civic resilience



European Commission    
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Segueix 

The Hungarian government campaign distorts the truth and seeks to paint a dark picture of a secret plot to drive more migration to Europe. There is no conspiracy. Here is our answer to the campaign “You too have the right to know what Brussels is planning” [europa.eu/!Hc99wY](https://europa.eu/!Hc99wY)



[YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW](#)

[https://twitter.com/EU\\_Commission/status/1101141459301003265](https://twitter.com/EU_Commission/status/1101141459301003265)



**JSébastien Lefebvre**  
@JSLefebvre

Correspondant auprès de l'UE @Contexte.  
Chef de la rubrique Pouvoirs et du bureau  
bruxellois | PGP: D3DC51B45BC86BA2

Bruxelles - Paris - Angers  
[jslefebvre.eu](http://jslefebvre.eu)

**JSébastien Lefebvre**  
@JSLefebvre Segueix

15% de baisse pour les aides agricoles, une "fake news" selon le commissaire européen @PhilHoganEU.

Pour la peine, article en accès libre, avec le document interne de la Commission qui confirme le chiffre. #Olé

**Contexte Pouvoirs** @ContextePouvoir  
Budget européen 2021-2027, l'ampleur des coupes masquée par la Commission  
[tinyurl.com/ybsvuong](http://tinyurl.com/ybsvuong)

2:21 - 4 de juny de 2018

20 retuits 12 agradaments

20 12

## The debate so far...

There are typically two approaches to this task:

- **self-regulation** by the platforms themselves:

- . pushing social media companies to police their own content and fight against the spread of disinformation on their services, and

- . Entrusting social media platforms with the ability to decide what information is shown to their users carries the risk of **the ‘privatisation of censorship’**

- **governmental regulation**, which may take place at the level of national governments or at the EU level.

**Germany** linked disinformation with a new hate speech law (entered into force in April 2018) that allows for fines to media platforms that fail to remove hate speech and illegal material within 24 hours.

**France** focused on transparency, requiring social media to reveal sources of news content and advertising, but also allows that media hosting fake news stories to be shut down following a judicial procedure.

In **Italy**, the government set up a website allowing people to report false stories to the police.

In **Ireland**, a bill was proposed to criminalise the use of bots (automated social media accounts) to spread disinformation.

In **Denmark** and **Sweden** have taken steps to include disinformation in their existing media literacy campaigns.

# Punish the lie or protect the truth?

## Post-truth brings post-trust

Roozenbeek, Jon and Van der Linden, Sander, *The fake news game: Actively inoculating the risk of misinformation*, Journal of Risk Research