

Code of Practice on Disinformation – Report of Science Feedback for the period 1 January-31 December 2024

Executive summary

In 2024, Science Feedback continued its active participation, notably with the expectation that the Code of Practice would transition to a DSA Code of Conduct in 2025. We welcome the finalization of this transition.

On election protection, Science Feedback's main effort was our active participation in the Rapid Response System (RRS) set up under this Code of Practice.

The existence of this RRS was a key factor in our decision to step up our monitoring efforts of the election campaign period, as it offered a window of transparency into platforms' decision-making processes when it came to approaching election-related disinformation.

Making use of the possibility for a fruitful exchange of information with other stakeholders, Science Feedback signalled to platform signatories a number of pieces of content which contained election-related disinformation that was likely to breach platforms' guidelines or applicable legislation.

The content flagged related to:

- the enforcement of EU sanctions on Russian media entities and personalities, some of whose content was still available to EU audiences on various platforms despite the law prohibiting it,
- medical misinformation, notably misleading information about Covid-19,
- the spreading of conspiracy theories (around the attack on Slovak Prime Minister R. Fico, election rigging...)
- foreign interference in EU democratic processes, notably the Döppelgänger campaign,
- the use of fake accounts impersonating politicians or political parties,
- defamation.

V. Empowering Users	
Commitment 18	
<p>Relevant Signatories commit to minimise the risks of viral propagation of Disinformation by adopting safe design practices as they develop their systems, policies, and features. [change wording if adapted]</p>	
<p>Measure 18.3 - As a non-platform organization carrying out <i>inter alia</i> research on disinformation, we adapted the Measure to reflect the fact that we do not have any decision-making power over product design</p>	<p>Relevant signatories will invest and/or participate in research efforts on the spread of harmful Disinformation, will make findings available to the public and report on those to the Code's taskforce. They will disclose and discuss findings within the permanent Task-Force.</p>
<p>QRE 18.3.1</p>	<p>SF conducted various research pieces relevant to harmful Disinformation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring the application of the EU sanctions regime against Russian and Belarusian media entities and individuals on multiple VLOPs. - An assessment of the adequacy of X's Community Notes to cover misinformation in Europe, - A study looking into the information panels on YouTube. - An observation of the popularity premium of low-credibility accounts in the context of the EU elections on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

VI. Empowering the research community	
Commitment 26	
<p>Relevant Signatories commit to provide access, wherever safe and practicable, to continuous, real-time or near real-time, searchable stable access to non-personal data and anonymised, aggregated, or manifestly-made public data for research purposes on Disinformation through automated means such as APIs or other open and accessible technical solutions allowing the analysis of said data. [change wording if adapted]</p>	
<p>Measure 26.1</p>	
<p>QRE 26.1.1</p>	<p>Science Feedback operates and manages the Consensus Credibility Scores database, which aggregates credibility ratings for online domains.</p> <p>In order to avoid misuse, we manually review and approve access to the data individually.</p>
<p>QRE 26.1.2</p>	<p>An email address to request the data has been made public, full description of the methodology is detailed on our website.</p>
<p>SLI 26.1.1 - e uptake of the tools and processes described in Measure</p>	

26.1 [change wording if adapted]	Nr of users of public access	Other quantitative information on public access	Other quantitative information on public access
Data	6		

VII. Empowering the fact-checking community	
Commitment 31	
Relevant Signatories commit to integrate, showcase, or otherwise consistently use fact-checkers' work in their platforms' services, processes, and contents; with full coverage of all Member States and languages. [change wording if adapted]	
QRE 31.3.1	Discussions on the establishment of the repository have started in the "Empowerment of fact-checkers" subgroup, in which SF takes part.
Measure 31.4	
QRE 31.4.1	Not applicable as the specific features of the repository are not yet finalized.

VII. Empowering the fact-checking community			
Commitment 33			
Relevant Signatories (i.e. fact-checking organisations) commit to operate on the basis of strict ethical and transparency rules, and to protect their independence. [change wording if adapted]			
Measure 33.1			
QRE 33.1.1	SF is an IFCN certified signatory as well as an EFCSN member.		
SLI 33.1.1 - number of European fact-checkers that are IFCN-certified [change wording if adapted]	We have taken into account fact-checking organisations based in EU Member or Council of Europe states, plus Belarus and Kosovo. For both networks, we have included the status of the organisations as of March 202		
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Nr of fact-checkers IFCN-certified</td> <td>Nr of members of EFCSN</td> </tr> </table>	Nr of fact-checkers IFCN-certified	Nr of members of EFCSN
Nr of fact-checkers IFCN-certified	Nr of members of EFCSN		
Data	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>69 verified, 11 under renewal</td> <td>60 verified members</td> </tr> </table>	69 verified, 11 under renewal	60 verified members
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VIII. Transparency Centre

Commitment 34

To ensure transparency and accountability around the implementation of this Code, Relevant Signatories commit to set up and maintain a publicly available common Transparency Centre website. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 34.1	
Measure 34.2	
Measure 34.3	
Measure 34.4	
Measure 34.5	

VIII. Transparency Centre

Commitment 35

Signatories commit to ensure that the Transparency Centre contains all the relevant information related to the implementation of the Code's Commitments and Measures and that this information is presented in an easy-to-understand manner, per service, and is easily searchable. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 35.1	
Measure 35.2	
Measure 35.3	
Measure 35.4	
Measure 35.5	
Measure 35.6	

VIII. Transparency Centre

Commitment 36

Signatories commit to updating the relevant information contained in the Transparency Centre in a timely and complete manner. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 36.1	
Measure 36.2	
Measure 36.3	
QRE 36.1.1 (for the Commitments 34-36)	No relevant action taken during this reporting period as this QRE applied only to the initial reporting period.
QRE 36.1.2 (for the Commitments 34-36)	The administration of the Transparency Centre website has been transferred fully to the community of the Code's signatories, with VOST Europe taking the role of developer.
SLI 36.1.1 - (for Measures 34 and 36) meaningful quantitative information on the usage of the Transparency Centre, such as the average monthly visits of the webpage [change wording if adapted]	The Transparency Centre website had, for the reporting period in question:
	<p>20255 page views</p> <p>5626 report downloads in total</p> <p>The average engagement time per session was 4 minutes and 5 seconds (4m5s).</p>
Data	

IX. Permanent Task-Force

Commitment 37

Signatories commit to participate in the permanent Task-force. The Task-force includes the Signatories of the Code and representatives from EDMO and ERGA. It is chaired by the European Commission, and includes representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Task-force can also invite relevant experts as observers to support its work. Decisions of the Task-force are made by consensus. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 37.1	
Measure 37.2	
Measure 37.3	
Measure 37.4	
Measure 37.5	

Measure 37.6	
QRE 37.6.1	SF is an active participant in the Monitoring and Reporting Subgroup, in the Fact-Checking Subgroup as well as in the Crisis Response Subgroup (where we participate in both the Crisis and Elections Working Group).

X. Monitoring of Code	
Commitment 38	
<p>The Signatories commit to dedicate adequate financial and human resources and put in place appropriate internal processes to ensure the implementation of their commitments under the Code. [change wording if adapted]</p>	
Measure 38.1	
QRE 38.1.1	SF has three representatives, including its President, directly involved in the various Code of Practice discussions, ensuring full compliance with relevant Commitments taken under the Code.

X. Monitoring of Code	
Commitment 40	
<p>Signatories commit to provide regular reporting on Service Level Indicators (SLIs) and Qualitative Reporting Elements (QREs). The reports and data provided should allow for a thorough assessment of the extent of the implementation of the Code’s Commitments and Measures by each Signatory, service and at Member State level. [change wording if adapted]</p>	
Measure 40.1	
Measure 40.2	
Measure 40.3	
Measure 40.4	
Measure 40.5	
Measure 40.6	

Reporting on the service’s response during an election

Reporting on the signatory’s response during an election
2024 European Parliament Elections
<p>Overall, Science Feedback did not detect any extremely acute disinformation event specifically related to the EP elections.</p> <p>However, the European elections saw an exacerbation of preexisting disinformation trends. Disinformation was either directly related to the EU (e.g. misrepresenting the functioning of EU institutions, specific policies proposed or voted at the EU level, misrepresentation of the competencies devolved to the EU) or simply used the elections to feed preexisting narratives that had at best an indirect relationship with the election at hand (e.g. narratives around law and order, birth rates, the Israel-Gaza conflict, developments around the war in Ukraine...).</p> <p>In Science Feedback’s view, the EP elections served mostly as a focal point for an acceleration of preexisting disinformation phenomena. As such, time-bound responses such as the Rapid Response System are an extremely useful complement to, but cannot be a substitute for, strengthened sustained action to tackle disinformation.</p>
<p>Science Feedback increased the resources dedicated to general monitoring of online platforms for short-term disinformation events, by dedicating one full-time staff member to online patrols, tasked with identifying issues and developments that would fall within the scope of the RRS.</p>

Reporting on the signatory’s response during an election
2024 French snap parliamentary election
<p>As for the European elections, the main disinformation events (including FIMI) were largely an acceleration of preexisting narratives.</p>
<p>Science Feedback increased the resources dedicated to general monitoring of online platforms for short-term disinformation events, by dedicating one full-time staff member to online patrols, tasked with identifying issues and developments that would fall within the scope of the RRS.</p>