Code of Practice on Disinformation – Report of VOST EUROPE for the period JAN2024 to DEC2024

Executive summary

VOST Europe is a volunteer-driven network of Virtual Operations Support Teams (VOSTs) operating in Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, Slovakia, and Greece. Initially established to meet the urgent need for real-time information dissemination and effective communication during emergencies, VOST Europe has since evolved into a structured network dedicated to providing accurate and reliable information to the public. Its mission extends to raising awareness of disinformation narratives and reporting misleading content to very large online platforms. Additionally, the organization produces educational materials on disinformation, sharing them across its networks and engaging directly with platforms to highlight content that may violate terms of service and relevant legislation.

In response to the growing threat of disinformation, VOST Europe plays a crucial role in fostering public trust and resilience by ensuring the availability of verifiable information during crises. Throughout the reporting period, the network has strengthened its volunteer base dedicated to monitoring, identifying, and reporting disinformation across multiple digital platforms. VOST Europe's online presence remains substantial, with over six million total impressions and 300,000 engagements.

As an active member of the EU-HYBNET network, VOST Europe has continued to disseminate critical information on disinformation narratives to consortium partners and affiliated stakeholders. Furthermore, the organization has contributed to raising awareness of the European Commission's Code of Practice on Disinformation, clarifying its significance to various actors within the information ecosystem.

VOST Europe has actively engaged in the permanent task force established under the Code of Practice on Disinformation, where it has assumed the co-chairmanship of the "Crisis Response Subgroup" while also contributing to other working groups, including the Elections Subgroup. Within the Crisis Response Subgroup, VOST Europe has spearheaded the development of a technological proposal for a "Crisis Response Centre," created in collaboration with other civil society organizations and fact-checking signatories of the Code of Practice. This proposal has been submitted to the European Commission for further evaluation.

Furthermore, VOST Europe has led efforts to enhance transparency by developing a new Transparency Centre aligned with the Code of Practice's objectives. This initiative, undertaken in collaboration with VOST Portugal, has resulted in the launch of a fully redesigned and modernized platform. The new website features a comprehensive overhaul of both its frontend and backend, addressing previous shortcomings identified by signatories, including digital platforms and civil society organizations. With a strong emphasis on open data, the updated Transparency Centre aims to provide an improved user experience while facilitating independent analysis.

VOST Europe remains committed to combating disinformation and supporting national VOST initiatives in fostering a more informed and resilient society. As the legal representative of VOST Portugal, the organization will continue to contribute to the Task Force of the Code of Practice on Disinformation, while also enhancing the training, deployment, and operational capabilities of its teams to monitor and report disinformation effectively.

V. Empowering Users

Commitment 17

In light of the European Commission's initiatives in the area of media literacy, including the new Digital Education Action Plan, Relevant Signatories commit to continue and strengthen their efforts in the area of media literacy and critical thinking, also with the aim to include vulnerable groups. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 17.1	[insert wording if adapted]			
QRE 17.1.1 [insert wording if adapted]	VOST Europe, in collaboration with national VOST teams, has coordinated initiatives to raise awareness of disinformation while amplifying the dissemination of content produced by independent researchers and fact-checkers across its social media platforms. This strategic effort seeks to enhance public awareness of disinformation narratives and equip citizens with the necessary skills to critically assess and identify misinformation.			
SLI 17.1.1 - actions enforcing policies above [change wording if adapted]	Metrics were obtained using the VLOP's own analytics tools			
	Total count of the tool's impressions	Interactions/ engagement with the tool	Other relevant metrics	Other relevant metrics
Data	1.1M		N/A	
Measure 17.2	[insert wording if adapted]			
QRE 17.2.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]			
SLI 17.2.1 - actions enforcing policies above [change wording if adapted]	Metrics were obtained using the VLOP's own analytics tools				
	Nr of media literacy/ awareness raising activities organised/ participated in	Reach of campaigns	Nr of participants	Nr of interactions with online assets	Nr of participants (etc)
Data	6	1.2M	5	N/A	N/A
Measure 17.3	[insert wording if adapted]			
QRE 17.3.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]			

VI. Empowering the research community	
Commitment 29 Relevant Signatories commit to conduct research based on transparent methodology and ethical standards, as well as to share datasets, research findings and methodologies with relevant audiences. [change wording if adapted]	
Measure 29.1	[insert wording if adapted]
QRE 29.1.1 [insert wording if adapted]	In this period VOST Europe did not conduct any research, taking a more operational stance
QRE 29.1.2 [insert wording if adapted]	In this period VOST Europe did not conduct any research, taking a more operational stance
QRE 29.1.3 [insert wording if adapted]	In this period VOST Europe did not conduct any research, taking a more operational stance
SLI 29.1.1 - reach of stakeholders or citizens informed about the outcome of research projects [change wording if adapted]	Methodology of data measurement [suggested character limit: 500 characters]
	Reach of stakeholders or citizens informed about the project
Data	N/A

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	VOST Europe led the development of a new iteration of the Transparency Centre, with a focus on improving its accessibility and usability for both users and signatories. The organization provided technical expertise and informational support to signatories, facilitating the creation of a more user-friendly and signatory-oriented platform. During the reporting period, VOST Europe established a dedicated team to assist signatories in navigating and utilizing the new Transparency Centre effectively.
Measure 34.2	VOST Europe has dedicated both human and technological resources to fulfilling this commitment.
Measure 34.3	N|/A
Measure 34.4	VOST Europe developed a new iteration of the Transparency Centre, which was endorsed by all signatories.
Measure 34.5	VOST Europe actively participated in discussions regarding the new iteration of the Transparency Centre, gathering feedback from signatories and end-users throughout the reporting period.

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 35.6	Following extensive feedback from users and signatories, VOST Europe developed a new iteration of the Transparency Centre to enhance its usability and accessibility. This update ensures the platform is more user- and signatory-friendly while fully complying with the requirements set forth in the Code of Practice on Disinformation.

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	[insert wording if adapted]
Measure 36.2	[insert wording if adapted]
Measure 36.3	[insert wording if adapted]
QRE 36.1.1 (**for the Commitments 34-36)** [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]
QRE 36.1.2 (**for the Commitments 34-36)** [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]
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]	Methodology of data measurement [suggested character limit: 500 characters]
	For the relevant reporting period the platform recorded a total of 20,255 page views and 5,626 report downloads. Additionally, **the** average engagement time per session was 4 minutes and 5 seconds (4m5s**)**, according to the available analytics of the Transparency Centre.
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	VOST Europe continued is participation in the Task Force, maintaining a regular presence and participation in the Crisis Response Subgroup, Transparency Centre Subgroup, Elections Subgroup, and in the Outreach Subgroup.
Measure 37.2	The work on establishing a risk assessment methodology and a rapid response system to be used in special situations, like elections or crisis, continued within the Crisis Response subgroup. VOST Europe prepared a technological solution, in alpha stage, for a "Crisis Response Centre", that could be in the future be used during crisis and integrated with the Transparency Centre.
Measure 37.3	N/A
Measure 37.4	VOST Europe was part of the setup of subgroups dedicated to the specific issues related to the implementation and revision of the Code with the participation of the relevant Signatories.
Measure 37.5	VOST Europe has used its presence in other initiatives to promote, discuss and clarify other entities – of different profiles and backgrounds – on the Code of Practice's objectives-

Measure 37.6	VOST Europe participated in the Crisis Response subgroup and took an active part on the Outreach subgroup, in the Transparency Centre subgroup, as well as in the Elections subgroup.
	The Crisis Response subgroup focused, and discussed, possible solutions for the Rapid Response System, that stems from the Code of Practice.
	The work done in the Outreach subgroup involved analyzing proposals for new signatories.
	The work done in the Transparency Center subgroup focused on developing the new version of the Transparency Centre.
QRE 37.6.1 [insert wording if adapted]	Outline relevant actions [suggested character limit: 2000 characters]

X. Monitoring of Code	
Commitment 40	
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]	
Measure 40.1	VOST Europe has sent the fourth baseline report describing the implementation of its commitments of the Code of Practice
Measure 40.3	VOST Europe has uploaded this report, and made it available on the Transparency Centre for this reporting period
Measure 40.4	