

# Facebook Reports on Implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation

## April report

### Introduction

This report outlines actions taken during April by Facebook to take forward the implementation of the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, and in Annexes includes the baseline report in which we set out our overall approach to implementing the Code and our reports made in January, February and March. Facebook's priority during the last month has been the expansion of our fact-checking program in the EU with five new local fact-checking partners, and the opening of the Dublin elections operations centre.

### I. Scrutiny of ad placements

As we noted in earlier updates, our ads policies do not allow the provision of ads which contain '[Low Quality or Disruptive Content](#)', '[Misleading or False Content](#)' or are [Circumventing our Systems](#). In April 2019, we identified and actioned **over 600k ads** in the EU that were identified as problematic for these reasons.

### II. Political advertising and issue-based advertising

In mid-April, we started to enforce compliance with the rules on political advertising and issue-based advertising. All advertisers are required to complete authorizations and place a "Paid for By" disclaimers on ads that reference political figures, political parties, elections (including "get out the vote" campaigns), or issues of importance within the EU (Immigration, Political Values, Civil & Social Rights, Security & Foreign Policy, Economy, Environmental Politics).

Political and issue-based advertisers are now required to comply with advertising transparency rules, and when we identify political and issue ads from advertisers who are not authorized we will remove them from our platform.

We will be publishing the Ads Library Report in mid-May, which will provide users with aggregated insights about ads relating to politics and issues of importance. The report provides cumulative statistics about ads in the Ad Library. Users will be able to see the aggregated total spent by Page on ads related to politics or issues of importance. Users will also be able to see the total number of ads and total spend on political and issue ads in the Ad Library to date, total spend by advertiser, advertiser spend by week and top searched keyword per week.

We believe the report will be useful to people who are interested in understanding high-level activity in the Ad Archive since launch. Then, users can use the Ad Library tool to deep dive into specific ads.

## **Cross-Border Advertising**

Protecting the integrity of EU elections is a top priority for Facebook and we have been in constant dialogue with European Institutions since early February to find the best possible approach for this complex and novel situation. That is why we have created new rules which require people to be authorised in the country they want to run political ads in. After a request from the European Parliament, we have agreed to exempt a number of pages of official EU bodies from these rules until the elections at the end of the month.

This exemption is based on the European Parliament's assurance that the electoral regulators in the Member States will not oppose it. The impact of this change is only on paid promotion of political content, which is an activity that is generally subject to regulation during election periods. Organisations can continue to run the same advertising campaign across all EU member states if they have local representatives authorised in each country responsible for their part of the campaigns.

## **III. Integrity of services**

Actions taken over past few weeks include

**Kicking off a collaborative process with outside experts to find new ways to fight more false news, more quickly.** Our professional fact-checking partners are an important piece of our strategy against misinformation, but they face challenges of scale: there simply aren't enough professional fact-checkers worldwide and, like all good journalism, fact-checking takes time. One promising idea to bolster their work, which we've been [exploring](#) since 2017, involves groups of Facebook users pointing to journalistic sources to corroborate or contradict claims made in potentially false content. Over the next few months, [we're going to build on those explorations](#), continuing to consult a wide range of academics, fact-checking experts, journalists, survey researchers and civil society organizations to understand the benefits and risks of ideas like this. We need to find solutions that support original reporting, promote trusted information, complement our existing fact-checking programs and allow for people to express themselves freely — without having Facebook be the judge of what is true. Any system we implement must have safeguards from gaming or manipulation, avoid introducing personal biases and protect minority voices. We'll share updates with the public throughout this exploratory process and solicit feedback from broader groups of people around the world.

**Reducing the reach of Groups that repeatedly share misinformation.** As noted in earlier reports, we take action against entire Pages and websites that repeatedly share false news, reducing their overall News Feed distribution. From April, this will also apply to groups: when people in a group repeatedly share content that has been

rated false by independent fact-checkers, we will reduce that group's overall News Feed distribution.

**Incorporating a "Click-Gap" signal into News Feed ranking.** [Ranking](#) uses many signals to ensure people see less low-quality content in their News Feed. This new signal, Click-Gap, relies on the web graph, a conceptual "map" of the internet in which domains with a lot of inbound and outbound links are at the center of the graph and domains with fewer inbound and outbound links are at the edges. Click-Gap looks for domains with a disproportionate number of outbound Facebook clicks compared to their place in the web graph. This can be a sign that the domain is succeeding on News Feed in a way that doesn't reflect the authority they've built outside it and is producing low-quality content.

**Improving how we identify content that contains a claim that has already been debunked** by a fact-checker so we can demote that too. Publishers who share this content will receive a notification that they've shared misinformation, much in the way that people who shared that claim would.

**The opening of the Dublin elections operation centre.** In April, we opened the elections operations center, focused on election integrity, located in our Dublin office. It will allow our global teams to better work across regions in the final, critical weeks before the EU elections, and will further strengthen our coordination and response time for among teams across the EU, and with FB HQ. These teams will add a layer of defense against fake news, hate speech and voter suppression, and will work cross-functionally with our threat intelligence, data science, engineering, research, community operations, legal and other teams. The elections operations center has specialists covering all 28 EU countries with expertise in all 24 official languages.

**Misinformation on vaccines.** Our health integrity team works to minimize bad health related experiences for people and harm to society. Leading global health organizations, such as the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have publicly identified verifiable vaccine hoaxes. As we noted in earlier reports, if these vaccine hoaxes appear on Facebook, we will take action against them.

In this context, in April we bolstered our enforcement for misinformation on vaccines to include restricting access to fundraising tools and we removed already access from two organizations (Childrens' Health Defence and Michigan for Vaccine Choice) distributing vaccine misinformation. Going forward, fundraising access will be removed automatically for onboarded nonprofits that Pages Integrity identifies as spreading vaccine misinformation.

**Coordinated inauthentic behaviour.** We removed 97 Facebook accounts, Pages and Groups that were involved in coordinated inauthentic behavior as part of a network emanating from Russia that focused on Ukraine. The individuals behind this activity operated fake accounts to run Pages and Groups, disseminate their content, and increase engagement, and also to drive people to an off-platform domain that aggregated various web content. They frequently posted about local and political

news including topics like the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine, Russian politics, political news in Europe, politics in Ukraine and the Syrian civil war. We had already disabled many accounts run by the people behind this operation for various violations, including impersonation, and some of the activity we found was linked to accounts we removed in prior [enforcement](#) actions.

- *Presence on Facebook:* 62 Facebook accounts, 10 Pages and 25 Groups
- *Followers:* About 34,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages and about 86,000 accounts joined at least one of these Groups.
- *Advertising:* Around \$1 in spending for ads on Facebook paid for in US dollars. The ad ran in March 2017.

#### **IV. Empowering consumers**

**New fact-checking partnerships:** In April we announced the expansion of the fact-checking program in the EU with five new local fact-checking partners: [Ellinika Hoaxes](#) in Greece, [FactCheckNI](#) in Northern Ireland, [Faktograf](#) in Croatia, [Observador](#) in Portugal and [Patikrinta 15min](#) in Lithuania. These organizations will review and rate the accuracy of content on Facebook. These partners are also part of a collaborative effort led by the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN) to fact-check content related to the European Parliament elections, called FactCheckEU. Starting today, nearly all FactCheckEU participants will be able to rate and review claims on Facebook.

Our EU program now includes 21 partners fact-checking content in 14 European languages: Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish.

#### **Media literacy:**

- **EU Yo!Fest - Facebook partnered up with [EAVI \(Media Literacy for Citizenship\)](#) and the European Youth Forum on 2 days of activities on media literacy, elections and safety:** Facebook was invited to participate in the "Digital Activism Tent" as part of the European Youth Forum's Yo!Fest 2019, the biggest EU political youth festival on elections and democracy, at the European Parliament's Esplanade. We worked with the NGO partners to host a space outside the Parliament building filled with useful information, interactive elements and materials for those attending the festival, and conducted two days of training sessions. This included facilitating media literacy workshops and a 'fake news pub quiz' by EAVI to raise awareness about digital literacy and critical thinking, organizing a fact checking panel with Full Fact and Faktisk, as well as other trainings about safety and developing communities on Facebook and Instagram. Overall, a total of 465 people attended the sessions that were hosted and facilitated, in addition to the hundreds of people who came through the tent at different times of the day to learn more.

## Training:

- **Poland:** The media partnership team organized in early April a training for local media outlets in Poland on the third party fact checking programme, which was just launched in the country. Around thirty media outlets benefited from the training.
- During the event, the team presented different tools to ensure the integrity of the elections and offered a deep-dive around the ads transparency tools.

**Adding Trust Indicators to the Context Button.** As covered in our baseline report, the context button gives people more details on articles and publishers. It is designed to provide people with the tools they need to make a more informed decision about which stories to read, share, and trust. The button makes it easy for people to view context about an article, including the publisher's Wikipedia entry, related articles on the same topic, information about how many times the article has been shared on Facebook, where it has been shared, as well as an option to follow the publisher's page. We have continued to roll out the Context Button globally, and it is now available across the whole EU.

The Trust Indicators are [standardized disclosures](#), created by a consortium of news organizations known as the Trust Project, that provide clarity on a news organization's ethics and other standards for fairness and accuracy. The trust indicators we now display in the Context Button cover the publication's fact-checking practices, ethics statements, corrections, ownership and funding and editorial team. These indicators are available now on English and Spanish language content.

## V. Empowering the research community

Building on the effort we [launched last spring](#) to promote independent research on social media's role in elections, in April our partners at Social Science One and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) announced the first researchers who will gain access to privacy-protected Facebook data. More than 60 researchers from 30 academic institutions across 11 countries were chosen through a competitive peer review process organized by the SSRC. There are researchers from 11 EU institutions who will be receiving access to privacy-protected data:

- Adam Mickiewicz University Poznan
- Hans Bredow Institute for Media Research
- IT University of Copenhagen
- Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences
- Sciences Po
- Technical University of Munich
- Università di Bologna
- Università di Sassari
- Università di Urbino Carlo Bo
- University of Amsterdam
- Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam

To support this effort, over the past several months, we've begun building a first-of-its-kind data sharing infrastructure to provide researchers access to Facebook data in a secure manner that protects people's privacy. We've consulted with some of the country's leading external privacy advisors and the Social Science One privacy committee for recommendations on how best to ensure the privacy of the data sets shared and have rigorously tested our infrastructure to make sure it is secure. Some of these steps include building a process to remove personally identifiable information from the data set and only allowing researcher access to the data set through a secure portal that leverages two-factor authentication and a VPN. In addition to building a custom infrastructure, we're also testing the application of differential privacy, which adds statistical noise to raw data sets to make sure an individual can't be re-identified without affecting the reliability of the results. It also limits the number of queries a researcher can run, which ensures the system cannot be repeatedly queried to circumvent privacy measures. We hope that this testing will lead to other benefits by letting us unlock more data sets to the research community safely and securely.

We understand many stakeholders are eager for data to be made available as quickly as possible. While we remain committed to advancing this important initiative, Facebook is also committed to taking the time necessary to incorporate the highest privacy protections and build a data infrastructure that provides data in a secure manner. With these safeguards in place, selected researchers will have access to the following data:

- **CrowdTangle:** CrowdTangle allows researchers to track the popularity of news items and other public posts across social media platforms. The CrowdTangle API will allow researchers to access public Facebook and Instagram data, which includes posts from public pages, public groups and verified profiles. Beginning in April, we are providing the researchers selected in this initial round of grants, as well as Social Science One commission members, access to this API.
- **Facebook URLs Data Set:** The URL data set will be aggregated and anonymized to prevent researchers from identifying any individual Facebook users. This data set includes URLs that have been shared on Facebook by at least 100 unique Facebook users on average who have posted the URL with public privacy settings. This dataset includes the URL link and information on the total shares for a given URL, a text summary of content within the URL, engagement statistics such as the top country where the URL was shared, and information related to the fact-checking ratings from our third-party fact-checking partners. More details on what is contained in this data set can be found in the [URL Codebook](#). Before getting access to this data set, researchers must attend a training session we are leading in June about these data and our research tool. Over the coming months, we will continue to explore ways to expand the scope of the data we make available to researchers in line with our commitment to privacy.

**Spain, the Luca de Tena Foundation's research grant:** Luca de Tena Foundation launched in collaboration with Facebook, a call to investigate the phenomenon of misinformation in Spain. The research, which is aimed

at Spanish universities, has a budget of 62,000 euros and will include a field study to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon and its causes, how misinformation is perceived by citizens, and finally to try to find possible effective solutions. All Spanish universities, both public and private, opted to take part in the contest through their Humanities faculties. The grant [was awarded](#) to the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos I and the CEU San Pablo. The jury was composed of the Director of Institutional Relations of OPA Europe, Rosalía Lloret; the patron of the Luca de Tena Foundation, Soledad Luca de Tena; the President of the FAPE (Spanish Federation of Journalists), Nemesio Rodríguez; the Vice President of CRUE (Conference for Spain's Universities' Deans), Juan Juliá, and the writer and journalist, Álvaro Vargas-Llosa. A group of multidisciplinary experts from the CEU San Pablo and the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos will investigate the "anthropological aspects" and the "expansion and current situation" of the disinformation phenomenon in Spain.

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## **Annex I: March Report**

### **Introduction**

This report outlines actions taken during March by Facebook to take forward the implementation of the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, and in an Annex includes the baseline report in which we set out our overall approach to implementing the Code. Facebook's priority during the last month has been the launch of two new ads transparency services: the global Ad Library and the EU political and issue ads transparency tools.

### **I. Scrutiny of ad placements**

One of the most effective approaches to fighting false news is removing the economic incentives for traffickers of disinformation. We've found that a lot of fake news is financially motivated: spammers make money by masquerading as legitimate news publishers and posting hoaxes that get people to visit their sites. As we noted in earlier updates, we show organic content containing [clickbait](#) headlines, [cloaking](#), or [ad farms](#) lower in news feed thus reducing its distribution. Additionally, our ads policies do not allow the provision of ads which contain '[Low Quality or Disruptive Content](#)', '[Misleading or False Content](#)' or are [Circumventing our Systems](#). In March 2019, we identified and actioned on **over 600k ads** in the EU that were identified as problematic for these reasons.

On 28 March we rolled out a new [Ad Library](#) globally, covering Facebook and Instagram. This is a major accomplishment for the team that will bring more transparency to ads on our platform. The Library can be accessed by anyone, with or without a Facebook account, and includes:

- All active ads for all Pages globally

- An archive of political or issues ads for selected countries (including the whole of the EU). The archive will retain ads for 7 years.

The Library holds information for all Pages in the Ad Library, including:

- Page creation date, previous Page merges, and name changes.
- Primary country location of people who manage a Page, provided it has a large audience, or runs ads related to politics or issues in select countries.

The Library features enhanced search capabilities. For example, typeahead suggestions are provided and searches will be saved for people logged into Facebook. Searching by Page will show results for all active ads as well as political or issue ads (for selected countries, including the whole of the EU). Searching by keyword will show results for political or issue ads where these are available. As explained further below, there will be additional spend and targeting information in the Library covering political and issue ads.

## **II. Political advertising and issue-based advertising**

On 28 March, Facebook also launched its Ad Transparency tools in the EU. To help prevent abuse and interference, all EU advertisers will need to be authorized in their country to run ads related to the European Parliamentary elections. We will ask them to submit documents and use technical checks to confirm their identity and location. We will be using a combination of automated systems and user reporting to enforce this policy. Within the first 24 hours of the tools being launched, we saw rapid adoption, with people across all 27 EU countries submitting IDs to start the authorizations process.

This will mean that all the advertisers who are reaching people with ads identified as related to politics or issues have been authorized as being in their country and will be required to provide accurate information about who they are. This will help relevant authorities investigate them if they have any suspicions. There are many issues that only election regulators can effectively decide, for example if rules on campaign finance have been followed, and our new tools will help them in this important work.

To increase transparency, ads related to politics and issues on Facebook and Instagram in the EU will need to be clearly labeled — including a “Paid for by” disclosure from the advertiser at the top of the ad. This means that users can see who is paying for the ad and, for any business or organization, their contact details. When you click on the label, you’ll be able to see more information such as the campaign spend associated with an individual ad, how many people saw it and their age, location and gender. We are inviting all political campaigns to start the ads authorization process now and we will start to block political or issue ads that have not been properly registered from mid-April.

For countries in the EU, the Ad Library will include information about ads related to politics and issues of importance, including funding entities, reach and spend,

including all-time spend and spend over the last week. All-time and weekly spend were previously only available in the Ad Library Report.

## **Example political ads library search result**

deutschland ✕ 🔍

**36 results**  
Search results display ads with text that matched your keyword search term. Only ads related to politics or issues of importance are included.

**Launched April 2019**

**Active**  
Started running on Apr 10, 2019

Related to politics or issues of importance

**SPD**  
Sponsored - Paid for by SPD

Europa muss den Sozialabbau stoppen. Nur wer den sozialen Frieden auch in den wirtschaftlich schwächeren Ländern Europas fördert, sichert auf lange Sicht den Sozialstaat und die soziale Marktwirtschaft in Deutschland.

**KOMMT ZUSAMMEN, FÜR GERECHTE LÖHNE!**

**JETZT MEHR ERFAHREN**

Europa ist die Antwort für faire Löhne  
www.spd.de Learn More

[See Ad Details](#)

**Active**  
Started running on Apr 10, 2019

Related to politics or issues of importance

**Junge Union Deutschlands**  
Sponsored - Paid for by Junge Union Deutschlands

Nun ist die Bundesregierung im Europäischen Rat gefordert: Meinungsäußerung, Satire und Unterhaltung im Internet sind für uns ein Ausdruck von Freiheit. Keine Chance dem Upload-Filter!

Im Interview mit VICE Deutschland plädiert unser Bundesvorsitzender Timon Kuban wieder für einen Stopp der umstrittenen Richtlinie. Viel Spaß beim Lesen des Artikels!

Warum die Bundesregierung die Uploadfilter stoppen muss  
Ein Gastbeitrag von Timon Kuban, Vorsitzender der Jungen Union Deutschlands.  
VICE.COM

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[See Ad Details](#)

When the Ad Library Report is available in mid-May, users will be able to see aggregated insights about ads relating to politics and issues of importance. The report provides cumulative statistics about ads in the Ad Library.

Users will be able to see the aggregated total spent by Page on ads related to politics or issues of importance (see UK example below).

The Labour Party



**The Labour Party**  
@labourparty  
Political Party · 1,034,195 likes

**Page transparency** [See More](#)

- Page created Aug 4, 2008
- Page name has not changed
- Primary country location for people who manage this Page includes: United Kingdom (15)

**Total spent by Page on ads related to politics or issues of importance**

Oct 2018 - Apr 6, 2019  
United Kingdom  
**£63,070**  
[See spend details](#)

**Recently spent by Page on ads related to politics or issues of importance**

7 days Mar 31, 2019 - Apr 6, 2019  
United Kingdom  
**£7,761**  
[See spend details](#)

~560 results  
Showing ads from the Page The Labour Party.

View: [All Ads](#) [Political or Issue Ads](#)

Filter By: [United Kingdom](#) [Active and Inactive](#)

Launched April 2019

2

Active  
Started running on Apr 10, 2019

Related to politics or issues of importance

**The Labour Party**  
Sponsored · Paid for by The Labour Party

In the Tories' latest broadcast they claim to provide regular bin collections, more affordable homes and lower council tax. The reality? They're talking trash.

The Tories are talking trash.

[See Ad Details](#)

Active  
Started running on Apr 10, 2019

Related to politics or issues of importance

**The Labour Party**  
Sponsored · Paid for by The Labour Party

Under the Tories, fewer people are able to buy their own homes. Help us deliver affordable homes to rent and buy. Vote Labour on 2 May.

Active  
Started running on Apr 10, 2019

Related to politics or issues of importance

**The Labour Party**  
Sponsored · Paid for by The Labour Party

The Tories have created a housing crisis. And after nine years of failure, they have no plan to fix their mess. Vote Labour 2 May. Because only Labour will deliver affordable homes to rent and buy.

Users will also be able to see the total number of ads and total spend on political and issue ads in the Ad Library to date, total spend by advertiser, advertiser spend by week and top searched keyword per week.

### Weekly spending by advertiser (March 31, 2019 - April 6, 2019)

Advertisers are listed highest to lowest for amount spent on ads seen in the UK for the selected week. You can sort the results.

Page Name	Disclaimer	Amount Spent	Number of Ads in Library
UK government	UK government	£26,953	10
People's Vote UK	People's Vote	£26,946	256
Electoral Commission UK	The Electoral Commission	£22,595	17
The Labour Party	The Labour Party	£7,761	74
Conservatives	The Conservative Party	£6,224	100
Renew	Renew Party	£5,604	40
Best For Britain	Best for Britain	£5,595	48
School Cuts	National Education Union	£5,430	36
30 Degrees	30 Degrees	£4,709	46
London Gov	the Greater London Authority	£4,415	7
Right To Vote	Right to Vote	£3,929	123
Britain's Future	Timothy Robert Pelham Dawson	£3,903	85
Liberal Democrats	the Liberal Democrats	£3,192	109

### III. Integrity of services

A study published earlier in 2019, conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan, Princeton University, University of Exeter and Washington University at St. Louis, offered encouraging findings about the scale and spread of misinformation since the 2016 US elections. Namely:

- **Fake news exposure fell dramatically from 2016 to 2018.** The researchers found that there was a substantial decline (75%) in the proportion of Americans who visited fake news websites during the 2018 midterm elections, relative to the 2016 elections.
- **Also during the 2016 – 2018 period, Facebook's role in the distribution of misinformation was dramatically reduced.** To determine Facebook's role in spreading false news, the researchers looked at the three websites people visited in the 30 seconds before arriving at a fake news site. Between the fall of 2016 and the summer and fall of 2018, Facebook's role in referring visits to fake news sites had dramatically dropped.

This research complements findings from publications in 2018 that the overall consumption of false news on Facebook has declined since the 2016 US elections. For example [Allcott, Gentzkow, and Yu](#) found that "Facebook's efforts to limit the diffusion of misinformation after the 2016 [US] election may have had a meaningful impact". A study by [Le Monde](#) looking at French language sites found that "the virality of misinformation on Facebook has declined significantly over the past three years". ("La viralité des intox sur Facebook a sensiblement diminué en trois ans"). While we're encouraged by these studies, we know that misinformation is a highly adversarial space and we're committed to our part in the long-term effort that fighting false news will require.

As we noted in earlier updates, fake account blocking, detection, and removal is a critical element of our strategy to preserving the integrity of Facebook's products and services. We employ dedicated teams around the world to develop advanced technical systems, relying on artificial intelligence, heuristic signals, machine learning, as well as human review, to detect, block, and remove fake accounts. These technology advances help us better identify and block bad activity, while our expert investigators manually detect more sophisticated networks - such as those involved in [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#).

In Q1 2019, we disabled 2.19 billion fake accounts, up from the 1.2 billion in Q4 2018. Most of these accounts originated from commercially motivated spam attacks.

### **Coordinated inauthentic behavior**

We continuously disrupt coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB), which is when people or organizations create networks of fake accounts to mislead others about who they are, or what they're doing, to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal. We provide more detail about coordinated inauthentic behavior in the baseline report included at Annex 3 below. Over the past few weeks we have taken down eight CIB networks including:

- **Macedonia and Kosovo:** We removed 212 Facebook Pages, Groups and accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior that originated in Macedonia and Kosovo. The individuals behind this activity operated fake accounts to administer Pages sharing general, non-country specific content like astrology, celebrities and beauty tips. They also ran small number of Pages purporting to represent political communities in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States — and posted about religious and political topics like nationalism, Islam, and political figures.
  - *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 40 Pages and 172 Facebook accounts.
  - *Followers:* About 685,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages.
- **Russia:** we removed 1,907 Facebook Pages, Groups and accounts for engaging in spam — and a small portion of these engaged in coordinated inauthentic behavior — linked to Russia. The individuals behind these activities used fake accounts primarily to operate Groups and Pages posting spam content. Additionally, a small number of these posted content related to Ukrainian news and politics, including the ongoing conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine; local and regional politics; Ukrainian patriotism; refugee issues; Ukrainian military; the situation in Crimea; and corruption.
  - *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 86 Pages, 64 Facebook accounts and 1,757 Groups, largely engaging in spam activity.
  - *Followers:* About 50,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages and around 1.7 million accounts joined one or more of these Groups.

## **IV. Empowering consumers**

## Fact-checking

Since our last report, we have continued to scale our fact-checking partnerships across the E.U. and Europe. As of April 2019, Facebook now works with 15 fact-checking organizations in the EU, covering 9 countries and 8 languages:

- **15 fact-checking organizations:** 20 Minutes, AFP, CheckNews (Desintox) de Liberation, Correctiv, DPA, Full Fact, Journal.ie, Le Décodeurs du Monde, Les Observateurs de France 24, Maldito Bulo, Newtral, NU.nl, Pagella Politica, TjekDek, Viralgranskaren
- **9 countries:** Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, U.K.
- **8 languages:** Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish

Globally, all of our partners are certified by the [International Fact-Checking Network \(IFCN\)](#), which recently launched an [E.U.-wide fact-checking effort](#) ahead of the Parliamentary elections. In light of this project, we are currently exploring opportunities to expand our country & language coverage even further.

On April 1 we announced a fact-checking collaboration in Poland. The fact-checking is done in partnership with AFP (Agence France Presse). It is first such cooperation that we launched in the CEE region. The launch event gathered key policy stakeholders, including the ViceMinister in charge of cybersecurity who welcomed Facebook's efforts to ensure the integrity of the elections in Poland (both the EP elections and the general elections in the fall). Other stakeholders present included head of the broadcasting regulator, a delegation from the ministry of digital affairs, the elections commission, representatives of main Polish parties and also representative of the European Commission from the representation office.

It's important to understand how our fact-checking program functions. For this report, we wanted to elaborate on our approach to working with fact-checkers. The work takes place in three steps: **identify, review & act**.

First, Facebook uses machine learning to **identify** content that may be misinformation. We rely on a number of signals such as user reports. In addition, fact-checking partners can identify content on their own, using their journalist expertise.

Then, fact-checkers **review** content. To do so, they first apply a [rating](#). We offer a [9-rating scale](#) that accounts for the diverse types of information on Facebook — if a piece of content is rated “False,” “False Headline” or “Mixture,” partners are required to submit a [fact-checking article](#), which provides additional context for users. You can see sample content that our E.U. partners have recently fact-checked [in this newsroom post](#).

Based on the output of fact-checkers, we **act** to reduce the distribution of content marked by fact-checkers as false. Additionally, when a user sees this known misinformation and tries to share it, we show them a short message that pops up to

alert them to the existence of the additional information from fact-checkers. In about **50% of cases**, users chose not to share after seeing this alert. We also notify users who shared content before it was debunked by a fact-checker, and display fact-checkers' debunking articles in [Related Articles](#).

Even though fact-checking is only one of the broader strategy to fight false news, it's an area that shows great promise and yields a lot of downstream impact. Based on one false rating, we're able to: demote a specific piece of false content in News Feed so fewer people see it; show the aforementioned notifications and Related Articles information; reduce the overall distribution of Pages and web sites that repeatedly share things found to be false; kick off similarity detection processes (<https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/06/>) to identify duplicates and near-duplicates of debunked stories and reduce their distribution as well; and feed this back into our machine learning model (referenced in the 'identify' step above), which can help us more effectively detect potentially false items in the future

### **Training**

In early April, Facebook organized training for local media outlets in Poland on the third party fact checking program, which was just launched in the country. Around thirty media outlets benefited from the training. During the event, the team presented different tools to ensure the integrity of the elections and offered a deep-dive around the ads transparency tools. We also organised this training in Denmark and Spain.

### **Newsroom post**

Ahead of the upcoming elections, Facebook put together a comprehensive post that explains in clear way how we deal with false news on our platform. The link to the post can be found here: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2019/04/the-hunt-for-false-news-eu-edition/>

### **Engagement in the European Media Literacy Week in Brussels**

Facebook participated in the European Media Literacy Week on 20 March organised by the European Commission. Tessa Lyons-Liang from the product team in the US spoke at the "Informed Citizens in the Digital Age" Conference. We engaged in a panel discussion with experts to outline Facebook's work on fighting disinformation and supporting media literacy efforts both on and off platform.

### **Supporting a media literacy campaign in Ireland**

A new Irish public awareness campaign called "[Be Media Smart](#)" launched on 18 March to help people identify sources of information that may be unreliable, and deliberately false or misleading information. The campaign was launched to coincide with the European Media Literacy Week and calls on people of all ages to "Stop, Think, and Check" that information they see, read or hear across any media platform is reliable.

It was created upon the initiative of Media Literacy Ireland, in partnership with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. Facebook was involved in the Steering Group, providing input and facilitating discussions ahead of the launch of the campaign.

## **Execution of the Fund for Online Civility in France to encourage civil society projects around fighting disinformation**

Following the launch of the Fund for Online Civility (1 million euros) last year, Facebook signed all the contracts with the 12 winning projects in the month of March, launching a longer term cooperation with 12 civic projects in France. The Fund for Online Civility was originally launched to mobilize actors, associations and citizens to fight disinformation, online harassment and hate speech.

The examples of winners and projects that Facebook is funding in the media literacy space include:

- The Higher School of Journalism of Lille (ESJ): the ESJ "info truck" will travel across France to train middle school and high school students on understanding how information is constructed online and 'flushing out' false news.
- Civic Fab: a project focused on stimulating creative workshops and a competition that encourages critical thinking.
- Digital Generation: 5000 college students will form a movement to hunt for disinformation in France.
- Bibliothèque Sans Frontières: their "Digital Traveller" project will help develop online media literacy by creating fun and informative modules for teenagers and young adult on content creation and dissemination of information.

These projects will be further developed and run this year. We will provide more updates in due course.

## **Partnerships in Italy on the development of digital literacy skills**

Facebook is partnering with an organization called "[Freeformers](#)", working on the Future Workforce Model and skills needed in the digital transformation. In March, they presented their "digital presence" module at the [Digital Week](#) in Milan (13-17 March) and at the Rome Cup. Facebook also partnered with Fondazione Mondo Digitale on a project where young students teach the elderly how to use social media safely - the trainings have been ongoing since January and continued in March.

## **V. Empowering the research community**

In March we rolled out expanded access to our [Ad Library API](#) for others to analyze ads related to politics or issues. Anyone who has gone through our Identity Confirmation process, has a Facebook Developer account, and has agreed to our platform terms of service can access the API.

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## **Annex II: February report**

### **Introduction**

This report outlines actions taken over the past month by Facebook to take forward the implementation of the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, and in Annexes includes the January update report and the broad implementation strategy set out in the Baseline report. Facebook's priority during the last month has been the

development of the political ads library and labeling service; and further action in the elections integrity program.

## **1. Scrutiny of ad placements**

### **Addressing vaccine misinformation**

Earlier this month we announced new efforts to address vaccine misinformation. Leading global health organizations, such as the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have publicly identified verifiable vaccine hoaxes, where there is a clear scientific consensus about the falsity of these claims. If these vaccine hoaxes appear on Facebook, we will take action against them.

Under the policy, when we find ads that include misinformation about vaccinations, we will reject them. We also removed related targeting options, like “vaccine controversies.” For ad accounts that continue to violate our policies, we may take further action, such as disabling the ad account.

### **Ad policy enforcement**

Before ads show up on Facebook or Instagram, they’re reviewed to make sure they meet our Advertising Policies. Typically most ads are reviewed within 24 hours, although in some cases it may take longer.

During the ad review process, we'll check an ad's images, text, targeting, and positioning, in addition to the content on the ad's landing page. An ad may not be approved if the landing page content isn't fully functional, doesn't match the product/service promoted in the ad or doesn't fully comply with our Advertising Policies.

### **Brand Safety: a people-based approach to advertising**

Advertising on the Facebook family of apps and services is people-based, meaning ads are served to individuals based on their understanding of the person. By putting people at the core of our ads, we can help marketers reach the right people and grow their businesses. In Feed and Stories, every person receives a unique experience based on our understanding of their likes, follows, engagement, etc. Feed and Stories ads are delivered based on an individual’s interests; not the content before or after the ad. The enforcement of our Community Standards, which determine which content is and is not allowed on the platform, ensure this remains a safe space for brands and users.

Other placements, like in-stream video, Audience Network, and Instant Articles, also rely on people-based targeting. However, these ads may appear to be more closely connected to the content since they’re adjacent to it. We understand the importance of controlling the types of environments where ads appear, so we offer controls that allow advertisers to decide where ads can deliver.

### **Advertiser controls**

To help ensure brand safety, all publishers and content creators must adhere to Facebook Community Standards, which include policies that prohibit hate speech,

violence, or similarly extreme content. We also have Monetization Eligibility Standards that provide guidance around the types of publishers, creators, and content that can earn money with Facebook advertising. Additionally, advertisers can use the following controls to decide where ads can appear:

### **Placement opt-out**

Advertisers can opt-out of specific placements to avoid showing ads in places e.g. Instant Articles or Messenger. This can be done by selecting the “*Edit Placements*” option in the Placements section of the ad create flow.

### **Category blocking**

Advertisers can Prevent ads from delivering within certain categories of content (Dating, Gambling, Tragedy & Conflict, Debatable Social Issues, and Mature) by using the “*Exclude Categories*” option in “*Advanced Options*” under “*Edit Placements*”

### **Block lists**

For in-stream video, Audience Network, and Instant Articles, you can block ads from running on specific publishers by uploading a list of Pages, websites, and/or apps in Business Manager. Blocks will apply across platforms, but advertisers will need to block all surfaces of a publisher (domain, app, and Facebook Page), to ensure delivery is completely blocked.

### **Publisher list & publisher delivery reports**

Prior to running a campaign, advertisers can review a complete list of publishers and places where ads can run across in-stream video, Instant Articles, and Audience Network. Advertisers then have the option to block some of those publishers by adding them to the block list. Once a campaign is live, Advertisers can download a report to see where ads actually appeared.

## **2. Political advertising and issue-based advertising**

Political advertising data will be available after we launch the Ads Library in late March.

### **Issue-based advertising policy**

In the EU, there aren't laws or agencies that list specific issues that are subject to regulation. So, like in the US, we looked to the non-partisan Comparative Agendas Project (CAP). The Comparative Agendas Project is an independent, nonpartisan group of universities from around the globe that “assembles and codes information on the policy processes of governments from around the world.” In addition to the CAP list, we looked at the Eurobarometer survey that the European Parliament published last year in May and engaged with stakeholders throughout the region for feedback. We used all of these inputs to develop our policy for issue ads in the EU, which includes six issues:

- Immigration
- Political Values
- Civil and Social Rights
- Security and Foreign Policy

- Economy
- Environmental Politics

Advertisers who want to run issue-based advertisements will be subject to the same authorisation and labelling obligations as apply to political advertisers; and issue-based ads will be included in the Ads Library

### **Cross-border advertising policy**

Following a process of internal review, and consultation with the Commission, we have decided that the right solution is to allow people to run advertisements in a member state only if they have passed an authorization process that will include checking if they are resident in that member state. This optimizes for compliance with electoral law as it means all authorized advertisers should be within the jurisdiction of the relevant electoral regulator. We recognize that this approach may cause inconvenience for some organisations but we hope they will also see that it is necessary inconvenience if we are to put robust protections in place. We want to stress that people will still be able to share lawful content, including their political views, with people across the EU so this does not restrict their basic right to freedom of expression. The impact is only on their ability to pay to promote political content which is an activity that is generally subject to regulation during election periods. The requirement for organisations to authorize in a particular country before they can pay to promote political content there will be enforced over a period of around 6 weeks before polling day. We will inform political organisations that this is coming so they can plan either to authorize in relevant countries or to refrain from running campaigns outside their home country over that period.

### **Political advertising authorization policy**

In the ad authorization process, a person must submit an ID or two official documents from the targeted country to confirm their identity. The identification document must be issued by the country where you are trying to authorize. Even if an individual has valid IDs from multiple countries and completes the ID confirmation in multiple countries, when they try to run an ad and target people in a given country, Facebook will use a variety of inputs to check whether the ads are coming from an authorized user in the targeted EU country. The ad account must have a payment source with an address based in the targeted country and the ad account's currency must be local. During ad buying, we also consider additional information about people, Pages, and ad accounts to determine whether an ad originates inside the country. If information indicates that the ad's origins are from outside the targeted country, we'll disapprove it. Just as is the case with every country we've launched our elections integrity ads products, we will allow an advertiser to run a campaign in multiple countries if they have a local representative authorized in each targeted country running separate ads targeted to that country.

### **Ad Library research**

In late February and early March, our Ads Business Integrity Research team conducted research with electoral authorities, government officials, transparency watchdogs, election observers, and political parties in key EU markets to help us

better understand the needs, behaviors and expectations users have for the Ad Library.

The Ad Library is intended to give people more information about the political ads they see and the advertisers who are funding them. It is a public searchable database for ads that are about elected officials, candidates for public office and issues of national importance, such as education or immigration. Ads collected by the library are stored for 7 years. The Ad Library will be available for all EU member states by the end of March. The Ad Library introduces a new level of transparency for political ads and will help hold political advertisers to a higher level of public scrutiny and accountability.

We will also roll out an Ad Library Report in May, which is a weekly summary of the Ad Library and includes data for ads that have been viewed for the time period selected. The report provides aggregated ad spend per page and the number of ads. The information is available to the public in a downloadable CSV format. Users such as researchers, journalists, and political watchdogs can use the report for analysis. Making this report available to the public is part of Facebook's efforts to increase transparency in advertising.

### **Elections operations centers**

In January we announced our plans to launch elections operations centers, located in our Dublin and Singapore offices. The staff at these centers will work with and support Facebook country teams across the EU. Over the past several weeks, we have been in the process of completing the critical groundwork to ensure these centers are prepared for upcoming elections, notably the European Union elections in May. These preparations include:

- *Detailed scenario-planning in order to ensure the operations centers are prepared to address the vast majority of issues that could arise:* Our teams engage in constantly evolving scenario-planning based on types of threats we could see before an election. Examples include: 1) planning for how to address a spike in voter misinformation or hate speech on or directly before election day and 2) developing protocols for addressing fake news originating from groups designed to artificially increase engagement with fake content.
- *Training for staff assigned to the operations centers:* The regional elections operations centers are staffed with individuals who are subject matter experts in their various fields (for example data science, intelligence, engineering). In addition to their extensive experience/training in these areas, they will also receive briefings on expected threats, various systems and procedures for escalating issues, and real-time intelligence on conditions on the ground in advance of the election. In addition to this training, more than 100 members of our global elections team gathered in Dublin for three days of extensive training at the end of February. These sessions included in-depth briefings from more than two dozen teams across Facebook, including our policy, threat intelligence, data science, engineering, and operations teams. The sessions focused the tools and policies Facebook uses to protect its platform during an election

### 3. Integrity of services

Fake account blocking, detection, and removal is a critical element of our strategy to preserving the integrity of Facebook's products and services. We employ dedicated teams around the world to develop advanced technical systems, relying on artificial intelligence, heuristic signals, machine learning, as well as human review, to detect, block, and remove fake accounts. These technology advances help us better identify and block bad activity, while our expert investigators manually detect more sophisticated networks - such as those involved in [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#).

We took down more fake accounts in Q4 2018 than in previous quarters, a total of 1.2bn, up from 754 million in Q3. Most of these fake accounts were the result of commercially motivated spam attacks trying to create fake accounts in bulk.

As we've mentioned in past reports we have a large team who have been working on the EU elections for over a year. We currently have over 500 full time employees and over 4,000 when including contractors, who focus on elections work, on top of the 30,000 people across the company focused on safety and security issues 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These teams cover areas such as cyber security, misinformation, ads transparency, and election integrity, in addition to engaging with candidates, political parties and media entities.

#### Coordinated inauthentic behavior

We continuously disrupt coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB), which is when people or organizations create networks of fake accounts to mislead others about who they are, or what they're doing, to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal. We provide more detail about coordinated inauthentic behavior in the baseline report included at Annex 2 below. Over the past few weeks we have taken down three CIB networks:

- **UK:** We removed 137 Facebook and Instagram accounts, Pages and Groups for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior as part of a domestic-focused network in the UK. The individuals behind these accounts represented themselves as far-right and anti-far-right activists, frequently changed Page and Group names, and operated fake accounts to engage in hate speech and spread divisive comments on both sides of the political debate in the UK. Despite their misrepresentation of their identities, we found that these Pages, Groups and accounts were connected. They frequently posted about local and political news including topics like immigration, free speech, racism, LGBT issues, far-right politics, issues between India and Pakistan, and religious beliefs including Islam and Christianity.
  - Presence on Facebook and Instagram: 23 Pages, 74 Facebook accounts, 5 Groups, and 35 Instagram accounts.
  - Followers: About 175,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, and around 4,500 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- **Romania:** We removed 31 Facebook Pages, Groups, and accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior as part of a network that operated in Romania and used a combination of fake accounts and some

authentic accounts to mislead others about who they were and what they were doing. The Page admins and account owners typically posted about local news and political issues, including partisan news under fictitious bylines in support of the Social Democratic Party (PSD). They also shared divisive narratives and promoted content hosted by several domains that present themselves as news sites. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our manual review found that some of this activity was linked to an individual associated with the PSD.

- Presence on Facebook and Instagram: 4 Pages, 26 Facebook accounts, and 1 Group.
- Followers: About 1,550 Facebook accounts followed one or more of these Pages.
- **Moldova:** We removed 168 Facebook accounts, 28 Pages and eight Instagram accounts for engaging in [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) targeting people in Moldova. This activity originated in Moldova, and used a combination of fake accounts and some authentic accounts to mislead others about who they were and what they were doing. The Page admins and account owners typically posted about local news and political issues such as required Russian or English language education and reunification with Romania. They also shared manipulated photos, divisive narratives and satire and impersonated a local fact checking organization's Page that called out other Pages for spreading fake news.

### **Update to Pages recidivism policies**

We've long prohibited people from creating *new* Pages, groups, events, or accounts that look similar to those we've previously removed for violating our Community Standards. However, we've seen people working to get around our enforcement by using *existing* Pages that they already manage for the same purpose as the Page we removed for violating our standards.

To address this gap, when we remove a Page or group for violating our policies, we may now also remove other Pages and Groups even if that specific Page or Group has not met the threshold to be unpublished on its own. To enforce this updated policy, we'll look at a broad set of information, including whether the Page has the same people administering it, or has a similar name, to one we're removing.

## **4. Empowering consumers**

### **Addressing vaccine misinformation in organic content**

Under the new policy mentioned above dealing with vaccine misinformation on Facebook, in addition to acting against advertising, we will take action on organic content on Facebook and Instagram:

- We will reduce the ranking of groups and Pages that spread misinformation about vaccinations in News Feed and Search. These groups and Pages will not be included in recommendations or in predictions when you type into Search.
- We won't show or recommend content that contains misinformation about vaccinations on Instagram Explore or hashtag pages.

## **Fact-checking**

In early March we extended our fact-checking partnerships to include Spain. We are partnering with Newtral, Maldita.es and AFP, fact-checkers [certified](#) through the non-partisan International Fact-Checking Network. This means that we now cover nine countries in the EU - Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland, Spain, Sweden, and the UK - and eight official EU languages.

## **EU legal reporting channel**

Last month, we piloted a new [EU Legal Reporting Channel](#) in the Benelux region for users to report content posted on Facebook that they believe violates applicable laws, personal legal rights or where users want to exercise their right to erasure. Specifically, users can report on legal issues related intellectual property, defamation, privacy/erasure and other content they believe is unlawful. We currently plan to have this reporting channel available across the EU by April.

## **EU-wide best practice and account safety training and outreach**

To ensure electoral stakeholders - such as political parties, political groups, elected representatives and their staff, candidates, government institutions and civic organisations - are informed on safety and security best practices as well as our election work, we have provided numerous training and help desk sessions across the EU. In the past six months, we have reached over 4,000 electoral stakeholders in 14 EU countries.

We also launched our "security megaphone" which is a top-of-newsfeed notification prompting users to check their security settings and turn on two-factor authentication. The security megaphone has started running in the Netherlands, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Finland and will roll out to all EU member states and run until the election. It is displayed for those who are affiliated to a political page, such as pages for political parties and candidates.

## **EU Elections training programme**

In order to best inform candidates and parties on our election efforts and how to use the platform safely we have developed a standard, robust email outreach program to all EU political page administrators with information on our integrity efforts, an overview of safety best practices and helpful links to our newsroom and other sites.

We have a dedicated website found at [politics.fb.com](https://politics.fb.com) that is a resource for elected officials, candidates, parties and their staff. As part of our outreach around the election, we have launched this in seven EU languages including all EC procedural languages, with two more languages to follow.

We have created additional bespoke resources to educate political advertisers step-by-step on our advertising transparency tools to ensure they know how to use the products appropriately.

We are doing large and small group training and offering webinars and workshops upon request to parties to discuss our election work, safety during the election period and best practices.

We have a dedicated email channel EMEA.gov@fb.com for parties and elected officials to ask questions, find information and flag issues to the Politics & Government Outreach team.

### **WeEuropeans Initiative**

WeEuropeans is a civic, democratic and non-partisan campaign that brings together European citizens irrespective of their opinions by asking that they participate in the largest public consultation ever carried out in Europe. We have formed a partnership with WeEuropeans and are supporting the initiative as a sponsor.

### **Policy roundtables in Brussels**

We host a series of "EU Conversation" policy roundtables in Brussels which regularly bring together government officials, politicians, academics, civic organisations, opinion formers and thought leaders around Europe to discuss policy issues. Our most recent EU Conversation roundtable was on cybersecurity and information operations in the context of the European elections. Around 30 people participated in the roundtable.

### **Working with news partners**

We collaborate with more than 250 news partners across Europe in support of a more informed community. Most recently, we conducted an election-focused newsroom training in Copenhagen, where we worked with four key news partners. The training included an overview of our work around elections and with third-party fact checkers; an interactive session on using CrowdTangle to cover elections; and best practices.

### **Munich Security Conference**

Working with government authorities and experts is important to Facebook in our fight to protect elections. At the Munich Security Conference, we participated in panels, bilateral meetings as well as hosted a side event to discuss how we are protecting the European elections. Participants at the side event included EU Commissioner Julian King; MEP Marietje Schaake; former president of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves.

### **Netherlands**

In preparation for the provincial and European elections in The Hague, we hosted two round table discussions with MPs and journalists to educate and inform people on our election integrity work.

### **Poland**

Ahead of the European elections and the general elections in October this year, we participated in a roundtable as part of the Polityka Insight Conference in Warsaw and presented our work around information operations followed by a discussion about elections integrity with government stakeholders and experts.

## **5. Empowering the research community**

In February, we announced that as part of our commitment to transparency for ads on Facebook, we will be opening the political ads library API at the same time as we launch the EU Ads Library, in late March. This will widen access for researchers to the data we are gathering in the Ad Library.

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## **Annex III: January report**

### **1. Introduction**

This report outlines recent progress made by Facebook in implementing the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation and in and in an Annex includes the implementation strategy set out in our earlier baseline report. Facebook's priority during the month of January has been in two areas: the development of our political ads authorization process, ad labelling, and the ad archive service; and the expansion of our elections integrity programme. We are in the process of developing performance indicators, but these depend on the launch of the ads archive outside the US and will therefore not be available until after that service launches. We also provide some details of recent actions taken under our Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour policy and on media literacy.

### **2. Development of political and issue advertising transparency tools**

In preparation for the launch of the pan-EU advertising archive, currently planned for March 2019. The main workstreams under way in the development of the advertising archive are:

- **User research:**
  - In January, our Ads Business Integrity Research team interviewed political stakeholders in key markets across Europe to help us understand the political advertising landscape and get feedback on our ad transparency tools. We met with social media managers and campaign strategists of political parties, elected officials, government institutions, civic organisations and political ad agencies.
- **Development of a model for cross-border advertising:** In order to limit the risk of foreign interference in electoral processes, Facebook's general policy is not to permit cross-border advertising by authorized advertisers: authorisation relates to a single jurisdiction. Some EU institutions and bodies may wish to advertise across multiple jurisdictions. In order to facilitate such cross-border advertising, we need to secure external advice on who should be exempted from the restriction on cross-border advertisers. Facebook prefers not to be in the position of determining which institutions and bodies should be permitted to advertise across borders, and we have therefore requested the help of the Commission to develop a list of exempted advertisers in consultation with the Council and the European Parliament. We've requested that the list be delivered by February 22.
- **Development of an approach to issue-based advertising:** Facebook's ad archive will include political ads and issue ads, as in the US. We are currently working to determine what the scope of "issue-based advertising" should be

across the EU. The EU doesn't have laws or agencies that list specific issues that are subject to regulation. So, as we did in the US, we looked to the non-partisan Comparative Agendas Project (CAP). The Comparative Agendas Project is an independent, nonpartisan group of universities from around the globe that "assembles and codes information on the policy processes of governments from around the world." In addition to the CAP list, we are looking at the Eurobarometer survey that the European Parliament published in May 2018 and have been engaging with stakeholders throughout the region. We'll be using all of these inputs to develop our policy for issue ads in the EU that take a position with the goal of influencing public debate on topics, such as immigration.

- **Developing an enforcement model for political advertising:**
  - Ad review relies on a mix of automated and human review, which is geared toward enforcing our Advertising Policies. We have developed machine learning models that can, in certain instances, help identify a particular kind of ad before it runs.
  - For example, our machine-learning models can be used to help detect ads containing political content.
  - When found, we will prevent the ad from running until the advertiser completes the authorisation process and applies the "Paid for by" disclaimer to the ad.
  - We're constantly working to improve our enforcement processes, both through improving our machine learning models and staffing and training our human review team.
  - When the ad labelling service launches, people will be able to report ads to us that they believe should have a "Paid for by" disclaimer on them. To do so, tap the three dots at the top right of the ad if it's in your feed, or the bottom right if it's a Facebook or Instagram Story, and select "Report Ad"
  - We'll review the ad reported, and if we determine it's an ad with political content, we will take it down until the advertiser completes the authorization process.

### **3. Elections integrity programme**

Our elections integrity programme is a central element of our fight against disinformation. Key elements of the programme currently under way include

- **User Research**
  - Starting late January and continuing into February, our Civic Engagement Research team has been conducting user research in key markets across the EU, which consists of in-depth interviews and focus groups, plus elite interviews (e.g. political parties, civil society, journalists, academics) to understand election integrity threats in the EU and how to best prepare our products, operations and processes for elections.
- **The establishment of elections operation centres.** In January, we announced our plans to expand on work we did in the Brazil and U.S. mid-term elections to set up two new regional operations centers, focused on election

integrity, located in our Dublin and Singapore offices. This will allow our global teams to better work across regions in the final, critical weeks before an election, and will further strengthen our coordination and response time between staff in Menlo Park and in-country. These teams will add a layer of defense against fake news, hate speech and voter suppression, and will work cross-functionally with our threat intelligence, data science, engineering, research, community operations, legal and other teams.

- In early February, 85 people representing different teams in the Facebook election taskforce convened in Brussels to review our work for the European Parliament elections.
- **Safety & security training.** We have provided and will continue to provide training to electoral stakeholders, such as political parties, political groups, elected representatives and their staff, government institutions and civic organisations, on how to safely and securely manage their political communications on Facebook. The training includes safety basics for page admins, a review of all the safety and security features, and how to report abusive content. We have already provided training to a large number of users in the EU institutions, including the European Parliament, Commission and Council; political parties across the EU (most recently in Belgium, Denmark, and Finland); civic organisations in Brussels; and EU influencers, such as political bloggers.
  - One of the easiest and most effective ways to secure an account is to set up two-factor authentication. Two-factor authentication is a security feature that helps protect your Facebook account in addition to your password. If you set up two-factor authentication, you'll be asked to enter a special login code or confirm your login attempt each time someone tries accessing Facebook from a computer or mobile device we don't recognize. You can also [get alerts](#) when someone tries logging in from a computer they don't recognize. We will be rolling out a Security Megaphone mid-February to remind people to turn on two-factor authentication for their account. The security megaphone is a top-of-newsfeed notification for Facebook users that provides a [link to instructions](#) on how to set up two-factor authentication. The security megaphone is displayed for those who are affiliated to a political page, such as pages for political parties and candidates.
- **Journalists training.** The Facebook Journalism Project aims to collaborate with the news industry in support of a more informed community. Together, we work with news organizations to develop products, tools, and training for journalists and newsrooms around the world. As part of this programme, we provide tailored training workshops that include safety and security basics for journalists; half-day bootcamps on how to use the Facebook and Instagram platforms; and news integrity and anti-false news education seminars. For the European Parliament elections, we are planning a series of training events across the EU, which will kick off late March.
- **Working with government authorities and experts.** In the run up to the elections, we partner with electoral bodies and other relevant government bodies and agencies on electoral integrity issues as well as to ensure our products are sensitive and appropriate to launch in each country. We also work

with these bodies to ensure the tools we create - which help people to vote and to share information about voting processes - are accurate and informative. We have engaged with electoral bodies, cyber agencies and other relevant government bodies in many of the EU countries and will continue our outreach efforts to the rest of the EU countries. In addition, we are regularly engaging in public events and policy roundtables to discuss how to combat misinformation and election integrity issues, which then helps to inform our elections work.

- We also organise an 'EU Conversation' roundtable series on election integrity - our next roundtable in February will look at cybersecurity and election interference.
- **Integrity & Security Initiative.** Protecting the integrity of elections and especially tackling 'Information Operations' is complex and needs the joint efforts of various stakeholders such as government authorities, companies as well as research scientists. Together with the German Office for Information Security (BSI), we are launching an initiative for a better and more comprehensive understanding of interference into elections. The initiative aims to create a better understanding of "Information Operations" and will develop policy guidance for decision makers in Germany and across the EU on how to combat election interference. This initiative will kick off mid-February.

#### 4. Coordinated inauthentic behaviour

CIB takedowns over the last month include:

- **Iran:** We removed 783 Pages, groups and accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behaviour tied to Iran. There were multiple sets of activity, each localized for a specific country or region, including Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, US, and Yemen. The Page administrators and account owners typically represented themselves as locals, often using fake accounts, and posted news stories on current events. This included commentary that repurposed Iranian state media's reporting on topics like Israel-Palestine relations and the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, including the role of the US, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. Some of the activity dates back to 2010. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our manual review linked these accounts to Iran.
- **Indonesia:** We removed 207 Facebook Pages, 800 Facebook accounts, 546 Facebook Groups, and 208 Instagram accounts, for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behaviour on Facebook in Indonesia, misleading others about who they were and what they were doing. All of these Pages, accounts and groups were linked to the Saracen Group – an online syndicate in Indonesia.
- **Russia:** We removed 364 Facebook Pages and accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior as part of a network that originated in Russia and operated in the Baltics, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Central and Eastern European countries. The Page administrators and account owners primarily represented themselves as independent news Pages or general interest Pages on topics like weather, travel, sports, economics, or politicians

in Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan. Despite their misrepresentations of their identities, we found that these Pages and accounts were linked to employees of Sputnik, a news agency based in Moscow, and that some of the Pages frequently posted about topics like anti-NATO sentiment, protest movements, and anti-corruption.

## 5. Media Literacy & Fact Checking

Our approach to reduce false news on our platforms is not just focused on third party fact checkers. It is a multi-prong approach that also includes media education.

- **Fact-checking.** Reducing the spread of false news is a top concern for the European Parliament elections so we are looking at ways to scale our third party fact checking program across all 27 EU member states.
  - Currently, we have [fact-checking partners in 25 countries](#), covering 17 languages. This includes 8 countries in the EU - France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark and the UK - covering 7 official EU languages. We will continue to expand our partnerships as we prepare for the European Parliament elections in 2019 and beyond.
  - In February, we have expanded our fact-checking partnership with AFP to counter false news in Arabic, which includes verification of images.
  - We are also looking to expand our fact-checking partnership with pan-European news agencies to cover more EU countries.
- **Media Literacy.** There are limits to any fact-checking programmes - fact-checkers don't exist in all countries and different places have different standards of journalism as well as varying levels of press freedom. This is why we are investing in partnerships aimed at improving digital and media literacy across Europe. By helping people sharpen their media literacy skills, we can help society be more resilient to misleading stories. For the past few years, we have launched media literacy programmes with partners in several European countries. In 2019, we have so far launched the following programmes:
  - **Poland: Digital Literacy Library.** We have launched our [Digital Literacy Library](#) (a set of educational resources for teachers focused on safe and informed youth internet use) in Poland, as a partner of a Safer Internet Day conference. Marek Zagórski Minister of Digital Affairs, Adam Bodnar Commissioner for Human Rights, Krzysztof Silicki Head of NASK (national cyber security research institute), several NGOs as well as around 800 teachers were present. Over 2600 teachers and students watched the event online.
  - **Denmark: Digital Literacy Day for first-time voters.** In January and February, we have organised two debate events for final year high school students in the Danish cities, Copenhagen and Aarhus. The debates are centered on the challenges for democracy in the 21st century posed by social media and the internet. High school students will discuss matters related to filter-bubbles; freedom of speech; as well as misinformation and fake news. The goal of the events is to engage youths - many of whom will be first-time voters in the upcoming Danish

- election - in order for them to become better at navigating critically and safely as digital citizens.
- In addition, we are planning to partner with the **European Commission on the EC Media Literacy Week** in March and deliver on issues such as cyber-bullying, disinformation and elections
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## **Annex IV: Facebook overall approach to code implementation (Baseline report)**

### **1. Introduction**

This report provides an overview of Facebook's approach to implementing the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, including details of our relevant policies, products, services and actions we take to address the harms caused by disinformation online. It is important to note that our approach to disinformation is in continual development, for example through the evolution of the tools we use to identify potentially false stories, clickbait and spam, and this report provides a snapshot of our approach as at January 2019. The policies, products and services detailed in this report are available globally except where we give specific details of regional coverage.

The following sections set out our current approaches to each of the categories of commitments set out in the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation.

### **1. Scrutiny of Ad Placements**

#### **1.1 Policies for advertising appearing on Facebook**

Facebook's policies for advertising are publicly available at: <https://www.facebook.com/policies/ads/>. Facebook advertising policies ban the inclusion in advertising of sensational content, which we define as shocking, sensational, disrespectful or excessively violent content. We also ban the inclusion of misleading or false content: ads, landing pages, and business practices must not contain deceptive, false, or misleading content, including deceptive claims, offers, or methods.

We enforce compliance with these rules through an advertising approval process which examines the images, text, targeting, and positioning of the advertisement, in addition to the content on the advertisement's landing page. Advertisements may not be approved if the landing page content isn't fully functional, doesn't match the product/service promoted in the ad or doesn't fully comply with our Advertising Policies.

#### **1.2 Facebook [advertising network policies](#)**

Facebook's advertising network places ads on third-party sites and services, generating income for third-party publishers; Facebook policies for the advertising network also ban the inclusion of misleading, deceptive, sensational or excessively

violent content. This includes deceptive claims (such as false news), offers, or business practices.

### **1.3 Reducing the economic incentives for false news**

One of the most effective approaches to fighting false news is removing the economic incentives for traffickers of disinformation. We've found that a lot of fake news is financially motivated: spammers make money by masquerading as legitimate news publishers and posting hoaxes that get people to visit their sites, which are often mostly ads.

The steps we're taking to address the economic incentives for providers of false news include:

- Implementing multiple News Feed ranking changes to reduce the distribution and hence disincentivise financially-motivated tactics like the provision of [clickbait](#), [cloaking](#), [ad farms](#) and sharing of false or sensationalist content on the platform.
- Using signals, including feedback from people on Facebook, to predict potentially false stories for fact-checkers to review.
- Better identifying false news, drawing on feedback from our community and using third-party fact-checking organizations, so that we can limit its spread, which, in turn, makes it uneconomical. For example, when fact-checkers rate a story as false, we significantly reduce its distribution in News Feed. On average, this cuts future views by more than 80%.
- Taking action against entire Pages and websites that repeatedly share false news, reducing their overall News Feed distribution. And since we don't want to make money from misinformation or help those who create it profit, these publishers are not allowed to [run ads](#) or [use our monetization features](#) like Instant Articles.
- Applying machine learning to assist our response teams in detecting fraud and enforcing our policies against inauthentic spam accounts.
- Updating our detection of fake accounts on Facebook, which makes spamming at scale much harder.

### **1.4 Brand Safety**

Facebook already has brand safety measures in place for ad breaks (video), Instant Articles, and Audience Network. Every piece of monetizable content is reviewed and provided a severity label for our six categories. At this time, content labeled SEVERE is ineligible to have ads placed next it to. Categories capable of attracting a SEVERE label are

- Tragedy and Conflict
- Explicit Content
- Sexual and Suggestive
- Debated Social Issues
- Objectionable Activity
- Strong Language

## 2. Political advertising and issue-based advertising

At Facebook we are committed to making advertising more transparent. When you visit a Facebook page or see an ad on our platform it should be clear who it is coming from. We believe that increased transparency will lead to increased accountability and responsibility. We've focused our efforts in two main areas:

- **Page Transparency:** Everywhere in the world people can now go to any page and see the ads the page is currently running. People can also see the date the page was created, any name changes it has had and any other pages that have been merged into it. For pages with a larger following we also require the admins to authorize with us to prove they are who they say they are; we will also show the country location of those admins.
- **Political Ad Transparency:** In addition to the transparency mentioned above we also require political advertisers to take some additional steps. Anyone who wishes to run political ads must obtain authorization to do so by confirming their identity and location. They must also place a disclaimer on their ads so people know who has paid for them. Those ads go into an archive where people can see the range of impressions those ads got, the range of budget spent and the age, gender and location of who saw that ad. The ads remain in this archive for seven years. We also provide a weekly report with aggregated information about the ads in the archive.
  - **Launch Plan:** We have already launched these features in the United States, Brazil, United Kingdom and India. In the US these features cover political and issue ads. In the United Kingdom it covers political or electoral ads as well as legislation before Parliament and past referenda that are the subject of national debate, while in Brazil we only cover electoral ads. We will be launching the archive and the labelling feature, with authorisation based on an identity check, across the European Union in advance of the EU elections.
  - **News Organizations:** We have exempted news organizations from this process in the UK and plan on expanding that to other countries this year.

This transparency serves several purposes. People can see when ads are paid for by a candidate or another third-party group. It should now be more obvious when organizations are saying different things to different groups of people. In addition, journalists, watchdogs, academics, and others can use these tools to study ads on Facebook, report abuse, and hold political and issue advertisers accountable for the content they show.

## 3. Integrity of services

**Authenticity** is the cornerstone of our community and key to preserving the integrity of our services. We remove content that violates our [Community Standards](#) where we become aware of it, which are rules to ensure the safety and security of Facebook, and include explicit **requirements as to authenticity** and **prohibitions on**

**misrepresentation.** Our authenticity and misrepresentation policies are intended to create a safe environment where people can trust and hold one another accountable. Key aspects of these policies include prohibitions on:

- Maintaining multiple accounts
- Creating inauthentic profiles
- Sharing an account with any other person
- Creating another account after being banned from the site
- Evading the registration requirements outlined in our [Terms of Service](#)
- Creating a profile assuming the persona of or speaking for another person or entity
- Creating a Page assuming to be or speak for another person or entity for whom the user is not authorized to do so.
- Engaging in inauthentic behavior, which includes creating, managing, or otherwise perpetuating:
  - Accounts that are fake
  - Accounts that have fake names
  - Accounts that participate in, or claim to engage in, coordinated inauthentic behavior, meaning that multiple accounts are working together to do any of the following:
    - Mislead people in an attempt to encourage shares, likes, or clicks
    - Mislead people to conceal or enable the violation of other policies under the Community Standards

Our [prohibition of inauthentic accounts on Facebook](#) includes inauthentic accounts created by software (e.g., “bots”).

Areas covered by these policies that have been the focus of much scrutiny and concern are fake accounts and inauthentic behavior, details of which are set out below.

### **3.1 Removing Fake Accounts**

Fake account blocking, detection, and removal is an important aspect to preserving the integrity of Facebook’s products and services. Facebook employs dedicated teams around the world to develop advanced technical systems, relying on artificial intelligence, heuristic signals, machine learning, as well as human review, to detect, block, and remove fake accounts.

Our technology helps us to take action against millions of attempts, including by bots, to create fake accounts every day, and to detect and remove millions more, often within minutes after creation. Our progress in removing fake accounts is tracked through our [Community Standards Enforcement Report](#) and select highlights from Q2 and Q3 are provided below:

- We took down more fake accounts in Q2 and Q3 2018 than in previous quarters, 800 million and 754 million, respectively. Most of these fake accounts were the result of commercially motivated spam attacks trying to create fake accounts in bulk.

- In Q2 and Q3 2018, we found and flagged 99.6% of the accounts we subsequently took action on before users reported them. We acted on the other 0.4% because users reported them first. This number increased from 98.5% in Q1 2018.
  - Because we are able to remove most of these accounts within minutes of registration, the prevalence of fake accounts on Facebook remained steady at 3% to 4% of monthly active users as [reported](#) in our most recent (Q3 2018) earnings.
- This year we published our first Community Standards Enforcement reports, showing how much bad content we find and remove. We'll soon start releasing these reports every quarter along with conference calls, just like we do for earnings.

### 3.2 Prohibiting Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior

We continuously disrupt coordinated inauthentic behavior, which is when people or organizations create networks of fake accounts to mislead others about who they are, or what they're doing, to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal.

- **CIB is specifically about behavior — not content.** While we take action both against content that violates our policies and deceptive behavior, our CIB policy is designed to be behavior-based. What matters is whether the actors in question are using deceptive techniques and fake accounts. This type of content-agnostic enforcement is important, because it enables us to take action without evaluating content — or even when deceptive actors share content that would be otherwise permissible.
- Through **technical means we detect harmful activity and then flag it for manual review** by our threat intelligence and other investigative teams.
- We **take action** by having our security teams **investigate suspicious activity and take down accounts that violate our policies.**
- We **look ahead and work with external experts to understand the actors and risks involved.** Our partnerships include those with **governments and law enforcement, security researchers, tech industry peers, and civil society**, among other groups, and we belong to the Cybersecurity Tech Accord, a public commitment among more than 70 global companies to protect online security and defend the Internet against threats.
- Some *selected* global highlights from our takedowns for coordinated inauthentic behavior include:
  - **Belgium** – We took down 37 pages and 9 accounts around the time of the Belgian local elections, some of which were initially identified by Belgian media as potentially inauthentic and trying to manipulate political discourse, and our subsequent investigation further confirmed. Our investigation did not surface any links to foreign operators.
  - **Brazil** – We took down 68 pages and 43 accounts that were using sensationalized political content across the political spectrum to direct people to ad farms for financial gain during the Brazilian presidential election season.

- **France** - prior to the French presidential election in 2017, we removed more than 30,000 fake accounts that were engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior to spread spam, misinformation or other deceptive content. In removing these accounts, we identified patterns of activity, not content, that resulted in removal — for example, our systems detected repeated posting of the same content and anomalous spikes in messages sent.
- **Iran** – We took down 104 pages, 103 accounts, 6 groups, and 92 Instagram accounts where page administrators were concealing their location and posting content focused on the Middle East, as well as the UK, U.S., and Latin America, on politically-charged topics such as race relations, opposition to the U.S. president, and immigration. Despite attempts to hide true identity, a manual review of these accounts linked the activity to Iran.
- **Mexico** – We took down tens of thousands of fake likes, fake pages, and fake groups to promote authentic and trustworthy civic discourse.
- **United States** - We took down 8 pages, 17 accounts, and 7 Instagram accounts where bad actors used VPNs and internet phone services, and paid third parties to run ads on their behalf, and some of these bad actors created an event for a protest. Inauthentic page administrators interacted with administrators of legitimate pages to co-host this event. We disabled the event, reached out to the administrators of the legitimate pages, and informed the users who were interested in the event and those who said would attend.
- **Myanmar** - We took down 484 pages, 157 accounts, 17 groups, and 15 Instagram where we discovered that seemingly independent news, entertainment, beauty and lifestyle pages were linked to the Myanmar military.
- As these highlights indicate, we have been proactive in detecting and removing inauthentic behavior. To stay ahead, we will continue to work collaboratively to maintain and grow this successful track record.

#### 4. Empowering consumers

We empower people to decide for themselves what to read, trust, and share by informing them with more context in-product and promoting [news literacy](#). For example, with the [context button](#), we give people more details on articles and publishers. This new feature is now available to many European countries including Ireland, the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. It is designed to provide people with the tools they need to make a more informed decision about which stories to read, share, and trust. Research with our community and our academic and industry partners has identified some key information that helps people evaluate the credibility of an article and determine whether to trust the article’s source. Based on this research, we’re making it easy for people to view context about an article, including the publisher’s Wikipedia entry, related articles on the same topic, information about how many times the article has been shared on Facebook, where it has been shared, as well as an option to follow the publisher’s page. When a publisher does

not have a Wikipedia entry, we will indicate that the information is unavailable, which can also be helpful context. We'll be continuing to expand coverage of EU countries as the range of available contextual information for publishers expands

When third-party fact-checkers write articles about a news story, we show them in [Related Articles](#) immediately below the story in News Feed. We also send people and Page Admins notifications if they try to share a story or have shared one in the past that's been determined to be false.

#### **4.1 Fact-checking and false news**

Facebook's fact-checking program uses a [combination of technology and human review](#) to detect and demote false news stories, which would otherwise reduce the authenticity of our service:

- In many countries Facebook is partnering with [third-party fact-checkers](#) to review and rate the accuracy of articles and posts on Facebook. These fact-checkers are independent and [certified](#) through the non-partisan International Fact-Checking Network. We use signals, including feedback from people on Facebook, to predict potentially false stories for fact-checkers to review.
- As noted in the section on *Scrutiny of Ad Placements*, we significantly reduce the distribution of stories identified as false, and Pages and domains that repeatedly share false news also see their distribution reduced and their ability to monetize and advertise removed. We use the information from fact-checkers to train our machine learning model, so that we can catch more potentially false news stories and do so faster. Finally, to give people more control, we encourage them to tell us when they see false news. [Feedback](#) from our community is one of the various signals that we use to identify potential hoaxes.
- Third party fact-checking is now available in 24 countries globally, including Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden within the EU. We will continue to learn from academics, scaling our partnerships with third-party fact-checkers and talking to other bodies like civil society organizations and journalists about how we can work together to fight misinformation.
- Any Facebook user can give us [feedback](#) that a story they're seeing in their News Feed might be false news. Feedback from our community is one of the signals that powers our machine learning model and helps us take action against stories that may be false.

#### **4.2 Advertising transparency and consumers**

The advertisements a user sees on Facebook depend on

- Information a user shares on Facebook (example: posts or comments you make) and your activity on Facebook (such as liking a Page or a post, clicking on ads you see).
- Other information about a user from their Facebook account (example: your age, your gender, your location, the devices you use to access Facebook).

- Information advertisers and our marketing partners share with Facebook that they already have, like an email address.
- User activity on websites and apps off Facebook.

The **“Why am I seeing this ad”** service, which is an option on all Facebook advertisements, provides users with an explanation of the main reasons they are seeing an ad; the service also allows users to manage their advertising experience by changing the interests relating to which they receive advertising.

### **4.3 Prioritising trusted sources and reducing the distribution of misleading content**

In 2018, we changed News Feed to promote news from trusted sources in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. We survey diverse and representative samples of people using Facebook across the relevant markets to gauge their familiarity with, and trust in, different sources of news; and we use this data in the News Feed ranking process to promote news which is trusted by the community.

A second key pillar of our approach to prioritising trusted sources is to reduce the distribution of content which is likely to be misleading, in particular through the detection and down-ranking in News Feed of content which our users are likely to find inauthentic. As mentioned above, this reduces the economic incentives for providers of misinformation. You can learn all about how we reduce distribution of problematic content at the Facebook [“Inside Feed” blog](#), but a few examples include:

- [Clickbait](#): Clickbait headlines are designed to get attention and lure visitors into clicking on a link. Some headlines intentionally leave out crucial details or mislead people, forcing them to click to find out the answer. For example, “When She Looked Under Her Couch Cushions And Saw THIS...”. Other headlines exaggerate the details of a story with sensational language to make the story seem like a bigger deal than it really is. For example, “WOW! Ginger tea is the secret to everlasting youth. You’ve GOT to see this!”. We use AI tools to identify clickbait at the individual post level in addition to the domain and Page level; when we determine that a link is likely to be clickbait, we reduce its distribution in News Feed.
- [Cloaking](#): Some providers of misleading content use a technique known as “cloaking” to circumvent Facebook’s review processes and show content to people that violates Facebook’s [Community Standards](#) and [Advertising Policies](#). Here, bad actors disguise the true destination of an ad or post, or the real content of the destination page, in order to bypass Facebook’s review processes. For example, they will set up web pages so that when a Facebook reviewer clicks a link to check whether it’s consistent with our policies, they are taken to a different web page than when someone using the Facebook app clicks that same link. We utilize AI and human review processes to help us identify, capture, and verify cloaking - and we remove Pages that engage in cloaking.
- [Ad farms](#): We reviewed hundreds of thousands of web pages linked to from Facebook to identify those that contain little substantive content and have a large number of disruptive, shocking or malicious ads. We use AI to assess

whether new web pages shared on Facebook have similar characteristics. If we determine a post might link to these types of low-quality web pages, it will show up lower in people's News Feed and may also be determined to be ineligible to be an ad. We also downrank posts that link out to low-quality sites that predominantly copy and republish content from other sites without providing unique value.

#### **4.4 Providing advice to voters**

In addition to removing fake accounts, reducing the spread of false news and launching third party fact-checkers, we also work to provide relevant and timely information that empowers people to be informed voters in the lead up to an election. For example, in the past we've launched False News Public Service Announcements with tips on how to spot false news. We have also introduced Ballot, a voter information center that makes it easy for people to see who's running for office, follow candidate pages, and compare candidate perspectives on important issues. Candidate perspectives come directly from the candidates themselves or their staff. We provided Ballot for the recent German and Italian elections.

#### **4.5 News Feed transparency and Inside Feed blog**

We are continuing to invest in more transparency around our approach to misinformation. For example, our Inside Feed blog contains relevant, real-world examples of hoaxes that we caught and some that we didn't, as well as as well as detailed explanations of our approach to fighting false news and associated issues like clickbait. See, for example <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/10/inside-feed-hunt-false-news-october-2018/>.

#### **4.6 Supporting media literacy and digital skills**

We have worked to raise awareness of false news and boost media literacy across the EU, including a number of Member state-level projects. For example, in:

- **Germany: Media Literacy cooperation with Zeit für die Schule**
  - In 2017, we kicked off a 'school-year-long' cooperation with DIE ZEIT, aiming to increase media literacy with students 14+.
  - In Oct 2017 we launched a competition [#machdeinestory](#) – **Chefredakteure von morgen (#makeyourstory – editors in chief of tomorrow)**, which aims to motivate students to explore and tell stories, and at the same time helps them cope with the daily flood of information. We plan to give out the prizes in our very own [Digitales Lernzentrum Berlin from Facebook](#).
  - ZEIT für die Schule and Facebook will be supporting students, helping them identifying fake news and finding reliable information. This partnership runs Oct'17-Aug'18.
- **Germany: Media Literacy cooperation with Digibits**
  - In 2016 we started our cooperation with Digibits – an NGO founded by DsiN which is supported by the Ministry of the Interior with the aim to foster online safety.

- As part of our lasting footprint within Community Boost, in 2018 we expanded our cooperation and committed to provide funding for media literacy trainings to reach more than 100k students in Germany.
- **Italy: Media Literacy Campaign**
  - On the occasion of our launch of an educational tool to help people spot false news, we started a dialogue with the Ministry of Education, the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies and other players of the industry to work together on a media literacy campaign. On May 2nd 2017, the media literacy campaign was announced during the event "[#BastaBufale](#)" ([#StopHoaxes](#)) by the former Minister of Education, Valeria Fedeli and Laura Boldrini (former President of the Chamber of Deputies)].
- **United Kingdom: National Literacy Trust partnership**
  - Facebook provided funding for the [National Literacy Trust's Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills in Schools](#). This report looked at how youth understand news and information on the Internet, with a primary focus on those between ages 7-11 and 11-15. The report was released in June 2018 and as a result of some of the findings, Facebook further collaborated with National Literacy Trust to build a teacher's resource tool that would provide access to information on digital literacy support in the classroom.
- **Poland: False News Debates**
  - In 2018 we launched a media literacy campaign in Poland called "Learning to read in the false news era". We're doing this in co-operation with [Polityka Insight](#), and independent centre for analysis and [Press](#), a key trade print media outlet in Poland.

In addition, we offer a [Digital Literacy Library](#), which has been translated into over 30 languages, including many EU languages such as Dutch, French, German, Italian, Polish and Portuguese.

## 5. Empowering the research community

- In April 2018, we established an independent election research commission with the goal of allowing researchers to leverage Facebook data in a privacy preserving manner to understand the impacts of our platform on Elections and Democracy. <https://www.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10105865715850211>
- Since April, we have worked with co-chairs Nate Persily (Stanford) and Gary King (Harvard) to establish the entity Social Science One, and build out the foundational structure of the commission in partnership with the Social Science Research Council and our foundation Funders.
- In the European Union, we established a regional advisory committee, led by [Claes Holger de Vreese](#), Professor and Chair of Political Communication in The Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam. Professor de Vreese's role in the is to ensure the commission builds requests for proposals and awards research that will be valuable to the European Academic community. The European advisory commission also consists of 7 other academic representatives listed below.

- [Marco Bastos](#), Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology at City, University of London
- [Frank Esser](#), Professor of International & Comparative Media Research at the University of Zurich
- [Fabio Giglietto](#), Assistant Professor at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo
- [Sophie Lecheler](#), Professor of Political Communication at the University of Vienna, Austria
- [Barbara Pfetsch](#), Professor of Communication Theory and Media Effects Research at the Department of Media and Communication at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
- [Cornelius Puschmann](#), Senior Researcher at the Hans Bredow Institute for Media Research in Hamburg
- [Rebekah Tromble](#), Assistant Professor in the Institute of Political Science at Leiden University in the Netherlands
- In May, 2018 we hosted a series of dinners and workshops in Oxford, Paris, and Berlin to kick off the Election Research Commission work and ensure the European academic community had a voice in the foundation structure and first datasets the commission would release.
- On September 9, 2018, the Election Research Commission hosted the Social Science One European advisory committee at Facebook's office for a European summit. The goal of the summit was to bring together the European academic and regulatory community to introduce them to the Elections Research Commission work and understand their research goals leveraging Facebook data. The whole group participated in a series of panels on the state of current social science research; the Election Research Commission Project; Facebook's approach to Elections in Europe and the current and upcoming datasets that we will be releasing around elections. We also received valuable feedback on how we could shape future data sets and RFPs to help European researchers understand the effects of our platform on democracy.
- In July 2018, we announced the first request for proposals to the research community, which includes providing researchers monetary awards as well as a dataset focused on information and misinformation shared on Facebook. The dataset consists of web page addresses (URLs) that have been shared on Facebook in the past twelve months (the dataset may grow as time passes and more URLs are shared). URLs are included if shared by many unique accounts, and shared publicly within a privacy-preserving threshold. The goal of this dataset is to allow researchers to study misinformation on Facebook and its impact on elections and democracy.
- The awards for the July 2018 RFP will be announced in January 2019, and researchers will begin receiving access to datasets in February.
- The research commission has also announced two new RFPs:
  - **Crowdtangle API**. Crowdtangle is a platform used by many media companies around the world, allowing analysts to track the popularity of news items and other public postings across multiple platforms. The Crowdtangle API will allow researchers to access both Facebook and Instagram data.

**Ad Archive API**. Following the launch of the ad archive in the US, we added an API to facilitate researchers' access to to the data.