

Synopsis report of the public consultation on fake news and online disinformation

Executive summary

The public consultation aimed to help assess the scope of the problem, the effectiveness of current actions by stakeholders, and the need for new actions. Two questionnaires were available: one for the citizens and one for legal persons and journalists.

More than 97% of citizens claim to have been confronted to fake news, 38% of them on a daily basis and 32% on a weekly basis. A majority of respondents consider social media and messaging apps as the primary channels through which they come across fake news.

There is a common perception amongst all respondents that fake news in general are highly likely to cause harm to society, in particular in areas such as political affairs, immigration, minorities and security.

Fact-checking through independent news organisations and civil society organisations is considered the method that better contributes to counter the spread of disinformation online. However, a majority of citizens believe that social media platforms are not doing enough to help users to fact-check information before it is shared online.

With regard to possible future actions, a majority agreed that more should be done to reduce the spread of disinformation online. Regardless of the type of action proposed, all respondents unanimously agreed on the need to respect and guarantee overarching fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and to ensure that any approach used to tackle fake news should not promote any kind of direct or indirect censorship.

The consultation also showed a clear preference for a multi-stakeholder, multi-dimensional, self-regulatory approach, although some respondents complained about the lack of a level playing field between content producers and online social platforms and suggested some regulatory changes. Indeed, a large number of proposed principles and actions to tackle fake news focus on the role of online social platforms.

There was wide support to fact-checking as one of the ways to combat fake news, although the consultation also helped to understand that its efficiency is limited and that it should be accompanied by other measures. The consultation also provides some interesting information on possible tools to empower journalists and end-users, including the use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and block chain. As in the case of fact-checking, it appears that the efficiency of each tool largely depends on who uses it and for which purposes.

Strengthening efforts in increasing media literacy at all levels, from school pupils to adult audience, and among actors, from end-users to journalists, and ensuring support and access by the public to trusted journalism, given its critical role in sustaining a plural, strong public opinion, were also put forward as necessary actions.

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I. Introduction

The public consultation on fake news and online disinformation took place between 13 November 2017 and 23 February 2018.

The consultation collected views from all parties concerned by fake news across the EU as regard the scope of the problem and the effectiveness of voluntary measures already put in place by industry to prevent the spread of online disinformation. The objective was also to better understand the rationale and possible directions for action at EU and/or national level.

This synopsis report provides a detailed analysis of the contributions and complements the [summary report](#) published on 12 March 2018.

Two questionnaires were available: one for the citizens and one for legal persons and journalists reflecting their professional experience. Some questions were specific to each questionnaire and collected views either from citizens or from legal entities and journalists only. Other questions were used in both questionnaires.

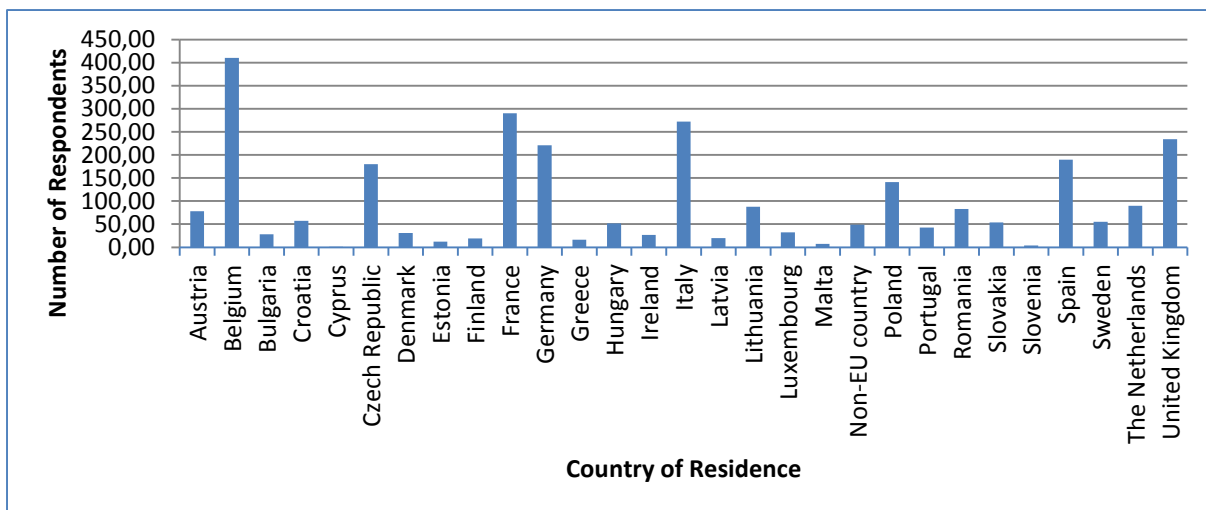
This analysis does not represent the official position of the Commission and its services, and does not bind the Commission in any way.

Together with Eurobarometer results, and the report of the High Level Group, the public consultation has feed into the Commission Communication on fake news and online disinformation adopted on 26th April 2018.

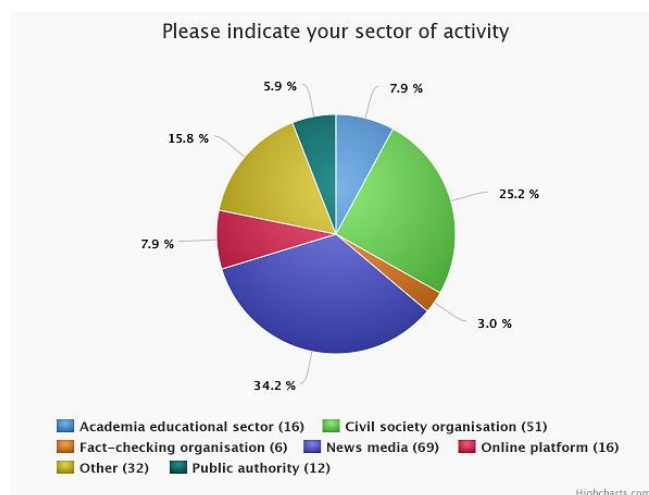
II. Overview of respondents

The public consultation received 2986 replies: 2784 from individuals and 202 from legal organisations and journalists. The largest number of replies came from Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain. It is worth noting a high participation in Lithuania, Slovakia and Romania.

It is important to mention these differences in national participation. Particular attention should be given to the participation of countries like France, United Kingdom, Italy and Spain, due to the specific political context, characterized by important, recent election and referendum campaigns, and the influence fake news may have had during these processes.



As regards replies from legal entities, the largest proportion of respondents represented private news media companies, followed by civil society organisations, other type of organisations, online platforms, research and academia and public authorities (national and local). Many respondents are active all around the world or in a large number of EU countries, including Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Germany and the UK. Sixty-nine news media organisations, fifty-one civil society organisations and sixteen online platforms replied.



III. Scoping of the problem

1- Citizens' use of information channels and topics followed

The information channels used slightly vary according to the age of the respondents. For instance, citizens above 50 have a lower use of social media for news (59%) than younger generations (72%) and a higher use of TV (59%) and radio (52%) against 30% and 30% respectively for people under 50. Over 40% of the respondents claim that they never or rarely use traditional print newspapers and magazines as information channel, which contrasts with the daily use from respondents in terms of traditional online newspapers and news magazines (62%) and the social media and messaging apps (70%).

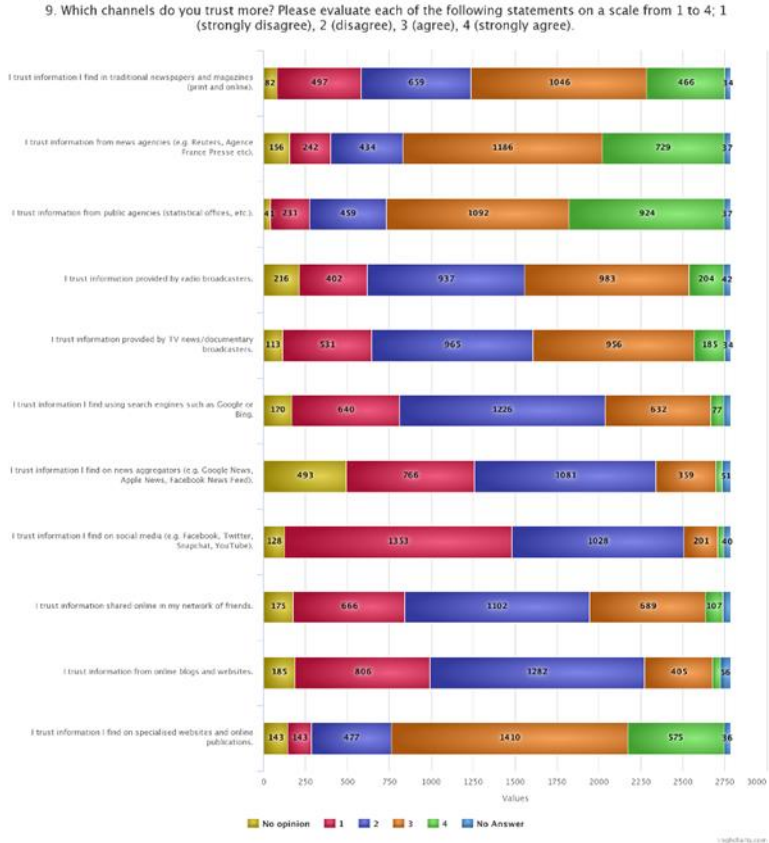
On average, 47% of people above 50 will read traditional press on a daily or weekly basis. This result drops to 35% for people aged 35 to 50, to 29% for people of less than 25 and to 23% for the 25 to 35 age group. News aggregators and news agencies follow similar trends as 46% of the respondents affirms that rarely or never follow information channels like Google News, Apple news, Yahoo news.

Social media and other types of online news distribution channels are widely used by all age groups: 88% weekly use of social media for people under 25, 85% for people 25-35 and 35-50, and 70% for people over 50.

Domestic policies and international affairs are the most read news topics (80% of respondents), followed by science and technology and economics and finance.

2- Citizens’ trust in information channels

The above results are likely to explain the different levels of trust of respondents in the various sources of information: the least trusted are social media, online news aggregators, online blogs and websites. By contrast, the most trusted are public agencies and specialised websites and online publications (both 72%), news agencies (69%) and traditional newspapers and magazines (55%). These results are also correlated to the way respondents mainly discern fake news from correct information: by comparing different sources of information (90%), searching the source of information (80%), relying on brand reputation (62%) or journalist reputation (57%), by confronting impressions with friends and peers (62%), checking what other people say online (57%) or consulting a fact checking website (54%).



3- Criteria to define fake news

Legal entities and journalists were asked to suggest several criteria to define fake news. Although responses highlighted a wide range of criteria, overall there was consensus that fake news could be defined by looking at 1) intent, the apparent objectives pursued by fake news; 2) the sources of such news and 3) the actual content of the news.

Respondents propose a definition of fake news based on the pursued objectives of the news. The concept would mainly cover the online news, although sometimes disseminated in traditional media too, intentionally created and distributed to mislead the readers and influence their thoughts and behaviour. Fake news would seek to polarise public opinion, opinion leaders and media by creating doubts about verifiable facts, eventually jeopardising the free and democratic opinion-forming process and undermining trust in democratic processes. Gaining political or other kind of influence, or money through online advertising (clickbait), or causing damage to an entity or a person can also be the main purpose of fake news. The existence of a clear intention behind the fake news would set the difference with misinformation, i.e. where wrong information is provided owing for instance to good faith mistakes or to a non-respect of basic journalism standards (verification of sources, investigation of facts, etc.).

The nature of the sources and the volume of false information attributable to each source could also be a way to identify fake news. News based on anonymous sources or just on one single, non-contrasted source, with no or little information on the context of the news, along with a lack of alternative arguments, would qualify as fake and would be a breach of journalism standards. There were divergent views on the nature of the source, with some respondents saying that if the source is a state institution the probability that the information is true would be higher than if the source was a private body. However, for other respondents it is exactly the opposite, as they think that governments are often the source of false and distorted news.

It was also suggested that fake news refer to any content (text, images, video) of propagandistic character, or focusing exclusively on alarmist news, based on emotions, or inciting to hatred and xenophobia —although this would qualify as illegal content.

Fake news would also refer, in a narrow sense, to any kind of false information, not supported by statistics, lies, untrue or manipulated facts or purposely wrong interpretation of events, usually in the form of viral news —even when its content has been debunked— and buzzwords, with an often hidden political interest or against the scientific consensus in the case of health-related news.

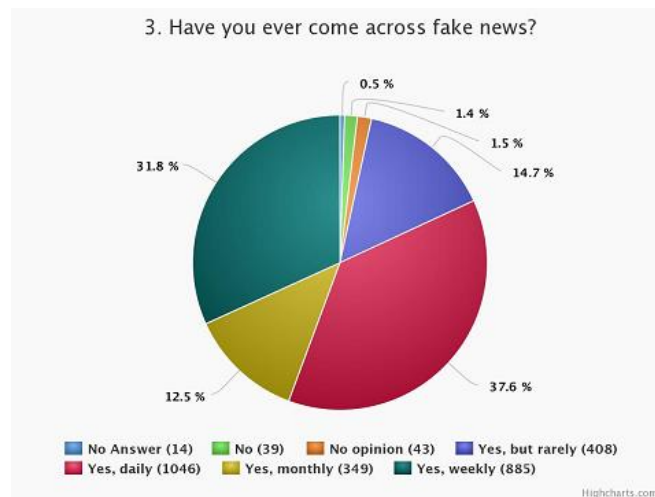
Fake news are often presented in a professional look to deceive more people. In short, from this perspective, fake news could be defined as “verifiably false news” that can be proven or rebutted. In most cases, it was clear to respondents that the term “fake news” is not about illegal content, as defined by EU or national laws, nor it is about satire or parody, which should be defended on grounds of freedom of expression and information and for which different legislation already exists.

The need to distinguish between information and opinion and/or propaganda in this debate as also stressed.

Civil society organisations and news media in particular criticised the term "fake news", which they see as misleading and with negative connotations, i.e. used by those who criticise the work of media or opposing political views. Thus, a clear definition is necessary. Fake news would rather be a symptom of a much wider problem —information disorder¹— and the use of "disinformation" was suggested as a more appropriate expression. In this sense, there was a call for a multidisciplinary approach for further research to better understand the phenomenon and its actual impact to ensure that any possible response is necessary, targeted and proportionate.

4- Fake news frequency and channels

More than 97% of the respondents to the citizens consultation claim to have been confronted to fake news, 38% of them on a daily basis and 32% on a weekly basis².



5- Media for circulation of fake news

A majority of respondents in both consultations consider social media and messaging apps as the primary channels through which they come across fake news. Online blogs and forums are mentioned in second place, although at varying levels (45% of citizens and 72% of legal entities). Media such as online-only newspapers and video-sharing platforms follow, along with the sharing of information by friends or family. News agencies and radio appear at the other extreme of the scale with the lowest number of responses.

In which media do you most commonly come across fake news?	
Citizens	Legal entities and journalists

¹ Several respondents said this term was coined in a report commissioned by the Council of Europe, "Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making", DGI(2017)09.

² These figures mirror the results of the [Flash Eurobarometer](#) on the same subject

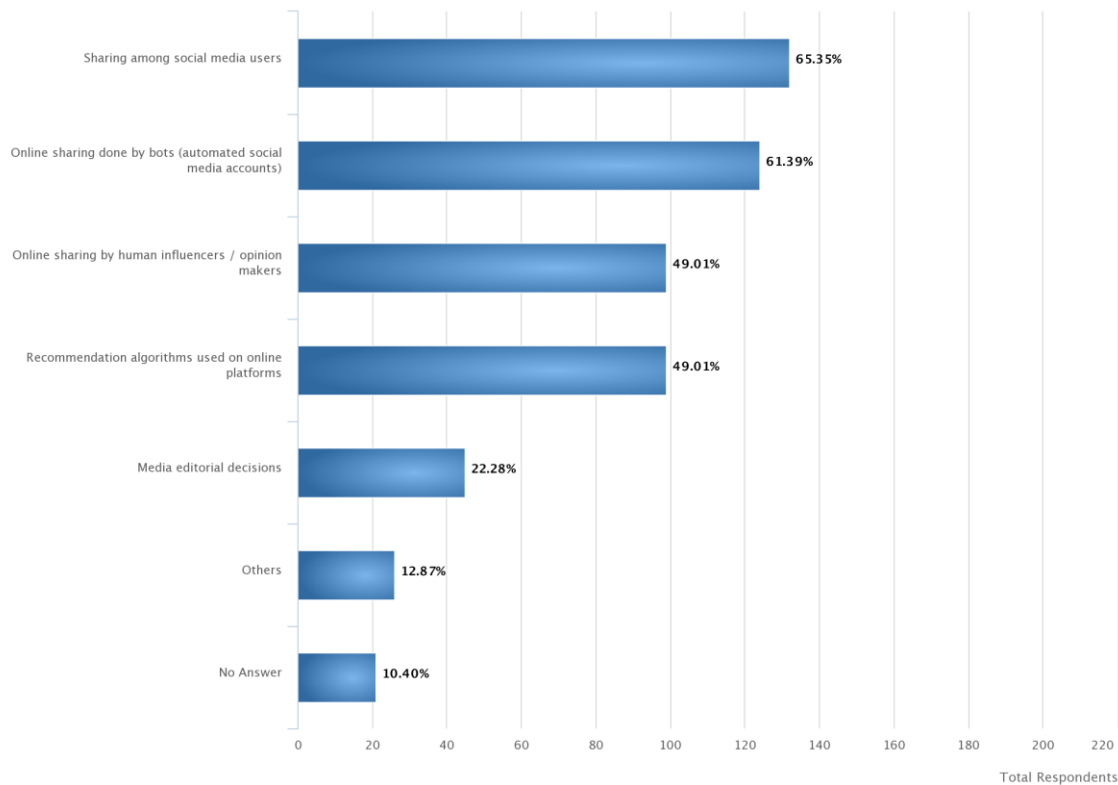
Social media and messaging apps – 74%	Social media and messaging apps – 78%
Online blogs/forums 45%	Online blogs/forums 73%
Online only newspapers 39%	Video sharing platforms 52%
Information shared by friends or family 36%	Information shared by friends or family 44%
Video sharing platforms 34%	Online only newspapers 37%
TV 34%	News aggregators 26%
Traditional online newspapers and news magazines 33%	TV 22%
Traditional print newspapers and news magazines 25%	Traditional online newspapers and news magazines 20%
News aggregators 14%	Traditional print newspapers and news magazines 16%
Radio 14%	Radio 12%
News agencies 9%	No opinion 10%
No opinion 2%	News agencies 9%
No answer 0.4%	No answer 6%

6- Dissemination mechanisms with the highest impact³

In line with the above results, two thirds of legal entities and journalists think that the dissemination mechanisms with the highest impact on the spread of fake news are the sharing of fake news among social media users and by automated social accounts. Almost half of legal entities and journalists also think that human influencers and algorithms used on online platforms are other mechanisms to spread fake news. Compared to these figures, only 22% of respondents think that media editorial decisions are behind the dissemination of fake news.

³ Question for legal entities and journalists only

6. Indicate which of the following dissemination mechanisms, in your opinion, have the highest impact on the spread of fake news in the EU? Select the most relevant options.



7- Causes of fake news spread via online media

The perception of the respondents to the citizens consultation is that the spread of fake news via social media is made easy because fake news appeal to readers' emotions (88%), are disseminated to orient the public debate (84%) and are conceived to generate revenues (65%). Moreover, respondents believe that news are shared without prior check (85%) or are not verified (80%) before being published.

When asked about other possible reasons, the most recurrent one is the lack of knowledge in terms of media literacy and the need for education and critical thinking. In most cases, respondents relate the need for more education and information with the fact that news are shared without being verified or read before.

In addition, respondents argue that information produced by traditional media channels using online platforms should also be confirmed. Many answers evidence distrust towards online media channels.

The vast majority of answers for this open question also include politically motivated discourses and strategies aiming at influencing and changing national or regional policies by influencing public opinion, particularly in the context of electoral processes and immigration policies. Some respondents believe that international interference by different actors, including state actors, is also a reason to the online spread of fake news. The prospects to achieve economic gains through "click-bait" content is also frequently mentioned.

There is also the perception that fake news are conceived and spread easily because there is no legal responsibility. In other words, the use of online platforms create a gap in terms of accountability and responsibility making an easy path where fake information can be created and shared without consequences.

Another factor is the speed at which a big number of users can share information online, as well as the low costs it represents when compared with traditional media. In connection to this, some mentioned the use of automated bots.

8- Main drivers that contribute to the spread of fake news⁴

Most legal entities and journalists see several intertwined factors behind the rapid spread of disinformation, with shared responsibilities between the different stakeholders. Some civil society organisations however noted that both the spread and the impact of disinformation are smaller than generally assumed and that more studies are needed to properly understand the phenomenon.

Digitisation of the media industry and the speed, easiness and low costs at which news can be produced —often anonymously—, transmitted, consumed and re-transmitted by both consumers and the media is mentioned as an important factor. Technology has positive effects in connecting with new audiences and in enabling access to new sources of information and different points of view. Yet, technology has also made possible to produce online material that appears professional and credible to the reader, requiring low production costs and skills compared with the costs incurred by traditional publishing in order to produce quality information. This includes websites that misrepresent their identity to trick users into believing they are legitimate sources of information. Digitisation has also had a disintermediation effect, whereby sources (like journalists, politicians and advertisers) can bypass news media and communicate directly with their audience, with obvious implications on the role and “visibility” of press publishers and news media.

The increasing number of consumers that access the news through social media as one of their primary and free sources of information acquisition was mentioned too. Social networks make the retransmission of fake news easy, instant and cheap, without the intervention of conventional accountable gatekeepers and thus without following any particular editorial line or standards, other than maximising time spent on the platform itself. This is compounded by the fact that more and more users, especially younger ones, access information through their mobile device in a quick manner, with no time for a critical reflection on the content – *Millennials ‘snack’ on small but frequent bits of news throughout the day* – and no willingness to pay for quality journalism. Newsfeeds in social media would create a mixture of established media news and "alternate" media, making it difficult for the reader to discern between the two. For some news organisations, social networks reinforce the eco-chamber effect as the close circle of friends or relations quite often replace the traditional editor as the trusted source.

⁴ Question for legal entities and journalists only

News organisations and civil society organisations stressed that trust would thus no longer derive from the source of the story (e.g. a reputable newspaper), but from an information filtering system controlled by closed corporate algorithms and indicators intrinsic to the online platforms, such as the number of shares/retweets or recommendations from social-media friends.

For academics, news organisations and other respondents, the fact that more and more consumers access information through social media puts pressure on traditional media, which have to compete with social networks and other media outlets on a lasting basis, with news disseminated quickly on a 24 hours basis. This does not give time for verification of the facts or in-depth and investigative research by journalists, making it difficult for readers to form an opinion. The pressure to be first brings a lack of quality with it and make the job more precarious, with growing numbers of freelance journalists. Eventually, traditional media end up by copying or quoting existing news and data without checking them for their credibility or authenticity, thus contributing to the spread of fake news in mainstream media.

Another driver would be the Internet advertising model, whose first objective is to promote traffic using algorithms in order to grow advertising revenue. Online advertising is often done without transparency and appropriate checks and controls, regardless of whether the displayed content is true or false. In short, it is a model where quantity prevails over quality and where revenues would have turned disinformation into hard currency. This has also had the effect of deepening the financial crisis of mainstream media, leading to falling advertising revenues, circulation and subscriptions, which was the basis of the traditional funding model. The advertising industry cautioned, however, that advertising or sponsored content does not represent the same issue as fake news: advertisements rules and standards cover 97% of all advertisement seen in the EU and generating advertising revenues should not be *per se* a defining criterion for fake news.

News organisation also say that the above factors create a lack of level playing field between the traditional media and the online platforms. Traditional media are subject to strict rules on editorial responsibility and transparency, having to apply customer due diligence, while intermediaries and aggregators in the online media market generally do not accept liability for the content that they curate and authors or sponsors can be impossible or difficult to identify, leaving consumers with lower levels of protection.

Low levels of media literacy is another driver particularly raised by civil society organisations, which say that Internet content is generally considered authoritative, irrespective of who wrote it. Although most citizens consider themselves digitally literate enough to identify false reports, many of them do not have sufficient critical skills to discriminate between trustable and fake information.

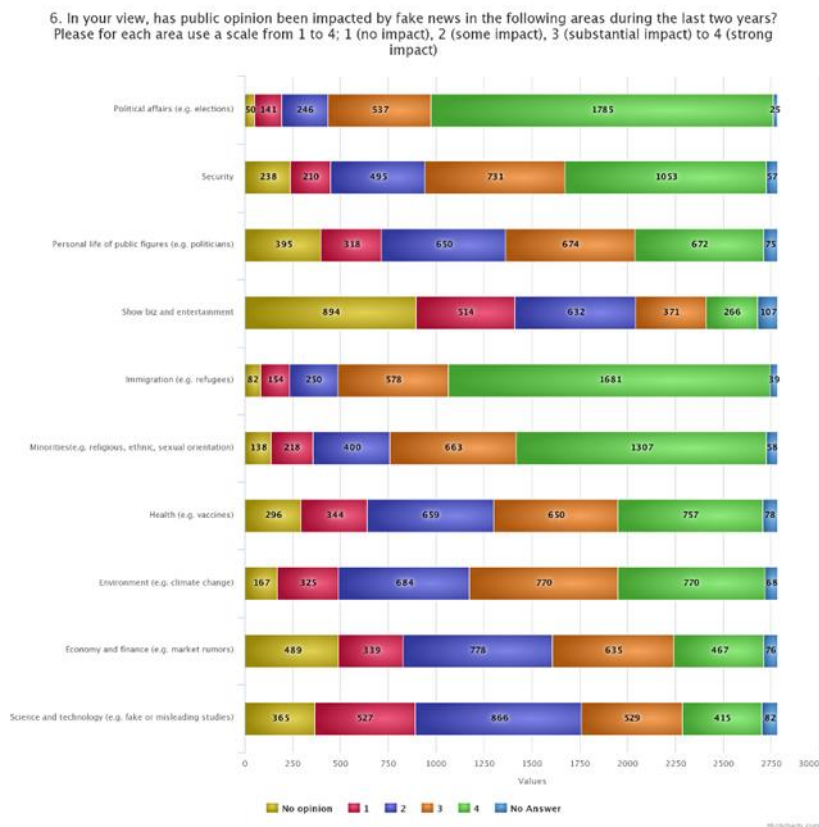
The general socio-economic situation would be another reason, with growing levels of poverty and inequality and an increasingly polarised political discourse (for example around issues like immigration, EU membership, terrorism). Some claim that even political organisations have accepted the use of misleading information to favour compliant media and disadvantage critical voices, undermining thereby democratic values.

9- Areas targeted by fake news

As regards to the areas mostly influenced by fake news, contributions received in both questionnaires point at political affairs (73% of citizens' responses), immigration (67%), minorities (52%) and security (42%). Consequently, respondents' answers affirm that most harm is done on voting decisions (73%) and influencing immigration policies (68%), undermining trust in public institutions (54%), followed by influencing environmental (53%) and health policies (51%), economy or finance (43%) and public security (43%).

10- Impact of fake news on public opinion

Citizens' replies show that half of them consider public opinion as heavily impacted by fake news. According to the results, fake news on political affairs (64%), on immigration issues (60%) and minorities (47%) impacted public opinion over the last two years. Replies by legal entities and journalists point to the same categories.

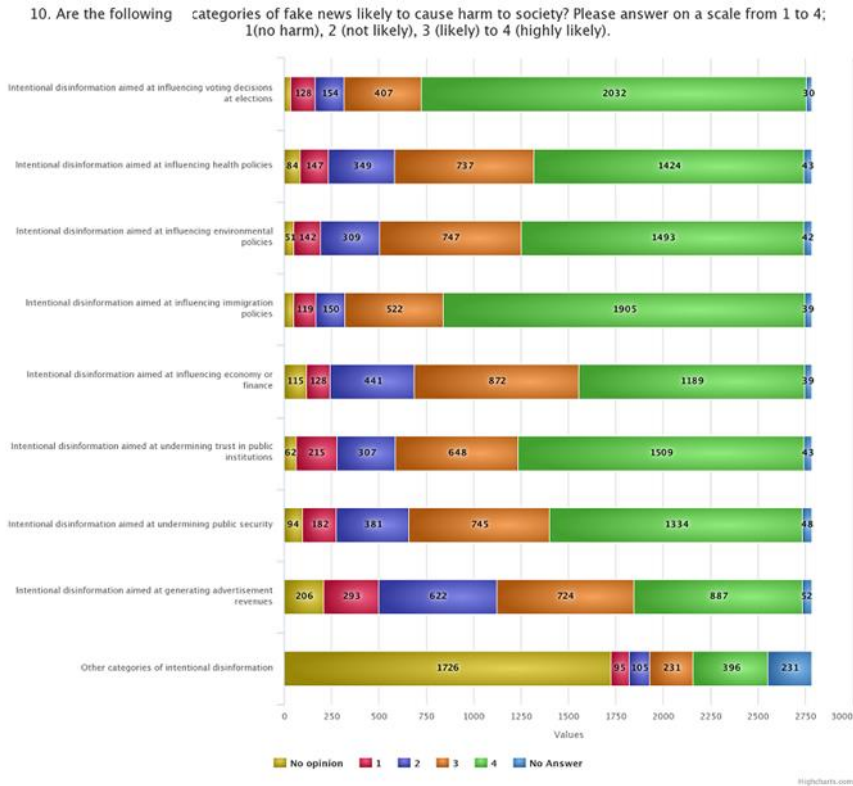


11- Impact of fake news on society

There is a common perception amongst the respondents to both questionnaires that fake news in general are highly likely to cause harm to society: intentional disinformation aimed at influencing voting decisions at elections and at influencing immigration policies are the categories of fake news, according to respondents, highly likely to cause harm to society.

The remaining answers demonstrate indeed concern on the influence of fake news in society. Respondents claim intentional disinformation aimed at undermining trust in public

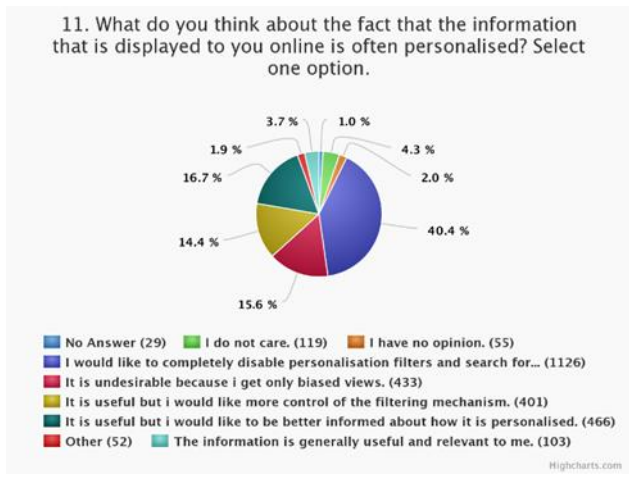
institutions and at influencing environmental or health policies, at undermining public security, at generating advertisement revenues or aimed at influencing economy or finance are highly likely to cause harm to society.



Among other categories of fake news that are also likely to cause harm to society, respondents identified disinformation aimed at misleading readers on international affairs and policies concerning the EU institutions. Respondents also added fake news on ethnic, civil rights, gender or religious issues, on social inclusion of specific or minority groups, aiming at creating polarisation in society. News about the interpretation of technological and scientific facts, with several comments on diet plans and vaccination policies, would be another category. A significant number of respondents also suggested news that aims at destroying reputation and undermining trust in established media. News on citizens, businesses, and consumers, including results of consumer surveys, could be another category. "Fake images" that may be used as evidence of past or ongoing fake news were also suggested.

12- Personalisation of information

Over 40% of the respondents to the citizens consultation stated that they would like to completely disable personalisation filters and search independently for information, and 16% stated that personalisation of information is undesirable as users receive only biased views. However, 15% of the respondents also affirmed that personalisation of information is useful, but they would like to have more control of the filtering mechanism. Finally, only 4% of the respondents indicated the personalisation of information as useful and relevant to them.



There is a common understanding amongst citizens that personalised online information categorizes users. The information each user accesses is inevitably different, limiting access to it and promoting biased information. This may be a problem when the information relates to sensitive political issues. There is thus a need to find a balance between the usefulness and the need to personalise information, and neutrality, transparency and privacy are key factors in this debate. Although some answers indicated that the personalisation of information is useful only for consumer purposes, the majority affirm the importance of granting users more control over filtering mechanisms. As referred by the respondents, it is unethical to collect, store and use private data as “one's browsing habits should not be monitored”.

13- Criteria used by online platforms and news organisations to rank news content

Content and the credibility of the sources are the two main criteria that news organisations and online platforms use to rank news content.

Broadcasters and media outlets select the most important news items by looking into how relevant the content is to the interests of their audience – timeliness, trends, importance in a country or region, with the general objective of sustaining informed citizenship and contributing to the public debate.

The reputation, credibility and established reliability of the sources of the information is the second criterion used by news media.

In applying these criteria, most news organisations refer to the use of professional journalistic standards and codes of conduct, aiming at publishing information only when it has been checked and confirmed.

Google explained that a series of algorithms behind the ranking systems analyse hundreds of different factors, from the freshness of the content, the number of times the search terms appear and whether the page has a good user experience. Trustworthiness is assessed by looking for sites that many users seem to value for similar queries. The fact that other prominent websites link to the page is another relevant criteria to give visibility to content.

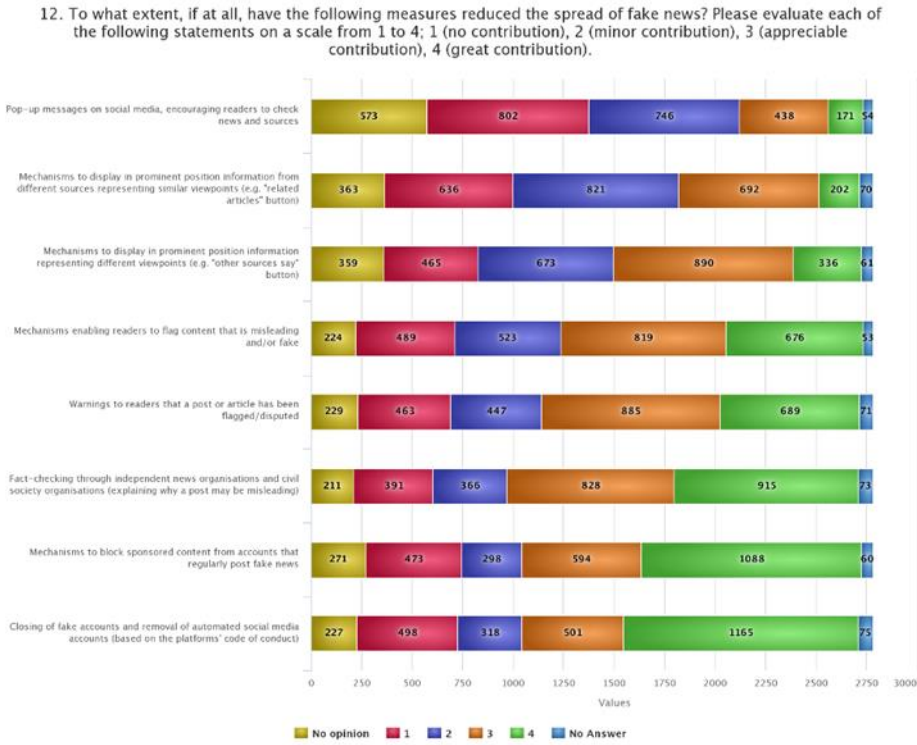
Algorithms can identify spam and remove sites that violate Google’s webmaster guidelines from their results. In the case of Google News, articles are selected and ranked by computers that evaluate, among other things, how often and on what sites a story appears online.

IV. Measures to reduce fake news

14- Efficiency of measures to reduce fake news

Almost 63% of citizens and 54% of legal entities perceive fact-checking through independent news organisations and civil society organisations as the method that better contributes to counter the spread of disinformation online, making a great or appreciable contribution. 60% of citizens and 50% of legal entities also think that the closing of fake accounts and the removal of automated social media accounts, based on the platforms' code of conduct, as well as mechanisms to block sponsored content from accounts that regularly post fake news have also helped to reduce the spread of fake news. Warnings to readers that a post or article has been flagged /disputed or mechanisms enabling readers to flag content that is misleading and/or fake are also positively seen by around four in ten respondents in the case of legal entities and more than half of citizens.

Pop-up messages on social media (22% of citizens and 19% of legal entities), mechanisms to display information from different sources presenting similar positions (32% -24%) and the display of information representing different viewpoints (44% - 30%) were seen as less efficient methods.



Respondents provided many arguments about the perceived low level of efficiency of some of the suggested measures.

Pop-up messages are perceived as the less effective tool because readers often ignore them; pop-up messages require an extra effort by the reader in a context of passive media consumption, with little attention and a superficial reading of the content –often just the title and headlines, with no time for extra messages. They may even have an opposite effect and provoke adverse reactions, i.e. pop-up messages could be seen as a way to limit freedom of speech and frustrate readers. There is also a widely spread idea that users easily block, ignore or avoid pop-ups, some also affirm that they have never seen any pop-up messages –browsers may block them- and, finally, pop-ups can rely on algorithms with specific interests or depend on people’s opinion and willingness.

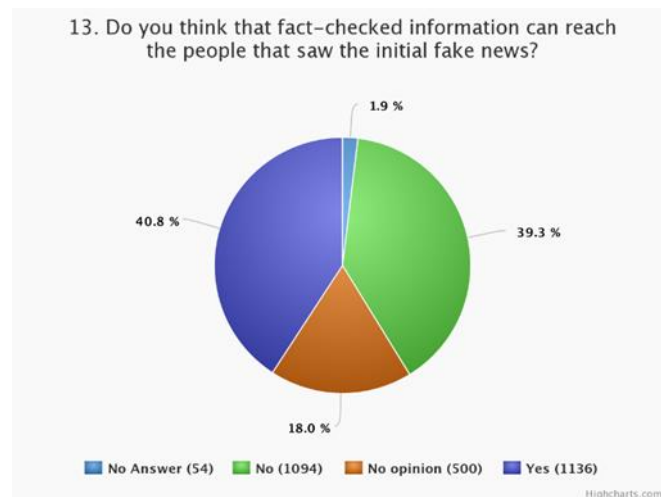
On mechanisms to display information from different sources presenting similar positions, there was a general view that this could result in strengthening the echo chamber effect. The “related articles” tool could thus do little to expand the perspectives at the disposal of audiences and would only increase exposure to fake news. It was therefore suggested that “related articles” should be promoted only if they include trusted sources.

Regardless of whether tools are used to display similar or opposite viewpoints, it was pointed out that they could also spread disinformation. For example, placing fake news posts alongside quality, accurate news may also have the effect of leading the reader to question the reliable, accurate news source.

Mechanisms enabling readers to flag content could be a double edge sword that could help readers in identifying misleading content but could also have the opposite effect, as this tool is open to abuse since anybody could flag anything. One example would be that of an interest group making true news into fake by flagging some information as not true in a coordinated manner. Another suggested effect is that readers could infer that non-flagged content could always be considered true. As with the previous information systems, flags can be helpful or harmful, depending on whether the (original) information is true or false. The bubble effect would also prompt users to flag content that does not reflect their viewpoint, irrespective of whether the content is fake or misleading.

While fact checking was identified as the preferred method to counter the spread of disinformation online, some issues around it were mentioned. One refers to the possible limited impact fact checking may have on many readers' beliefs and misconceptions. Fact checking is based on facts, while beliefs and emotions would have a stronger influence in the audience. In the same vein, some fact-checking initiatives could be unsuccessful in dismantling false news due to their very technical nature.

Indeed, when asked whether fact-checked information can reach the people that saw the initial news, 41% of citizens answered positively, whilst 39% believe that *post factum* fact-checking will not reach the intended audience. Respondents in the first group believe that fact-checking relies on people willingness and commitment, stressing, however, the need for an efficient and high visible fact-checking system. Those with a negative view think that often the first information presented to the reader or to the public sphere will persist, even when new information is provided, and therefore the damage caused by fake news will remain even after fact checking information.



Other possible issues on fact-checking refer to the sustainability of these tools – who would pay for independent fact checkers– and the potential risk of empowering private actors to assess what can be posted or not online.

Some doubts were expressed about the closing of fake and automated social media accounts. Although possibly effective, this tool may produce mistakes and does not eliminate the possibility that new accounts are open.

15- Measures taken by online platforms and news organisations

The unanimous message by news media organisations is that the most effective measure to counter the spread of disinformation is ensuring access by the public to quality, trusted journalism. Almost all news media referred thus to their adherence to both internal guidelines and codes of conducts as well as to professional journalism standards and self-regulation. This means using information from trusted sources only, and checking the veracity of the information in an impartial and independent way before it is published or broadcasted. In practice, this entails disregarding stories that come from non-reliable sources or where there are doubts about the trustworthiness of the source.

Linked to the above some respondents have focused on transparency measures about distribution channels. These efforts can lead to the creation of databases of the most important false news distribution networks, as well as to the identification of fake accounts in networks.

Many news media organisations also stressed the strengthening of fact checking as part of their business, acknowledging that this requires time and resources. They also use peer reviews and flagging by trusted flaggers. Several broadcasters have set up specialised teams to debunk fake news, counter targeted false information and verify the authenticity of user-generated content before it is used as a source for news. WAN-IFRA and AFP mentioned the "INVID" plug-in to debunk fake videos and pictures, currently funded by the EU Horizon 2020 R&D programme.

Companies have also engaged in training journalists on fact checking, in particular in checking online information, including the development of professional codes of practice to deal with information from social networks.

Several public service broadcasters underlined how making trusted quality information available on all technological platforms, including social networks, is also a very efficient method to combat disinformation and quote results from public opinion surveys showing that public broadcasters have the highest level of trust by citizens.

Broadcasters and other media organisations support activities to increasing media literacy, contribute to schools for journalists and promote actions in schools and to younger audiences to raise awareness among students on the risks of fake news⁵.

The independent advertising standards bodies referred to the use of self-regulation and ethical standards in commercial communications, aiming at ensuring that advertising is legal, decent, honest and truthful. This self-regulatory system covers 97% of all advertisements seen by the EU population.

Despite all of the above examples of measures adopted by online platforms, media and web sites, there was little information on the actual results.

16- Readers' awareness of the steps to verify the veracity of news⁶

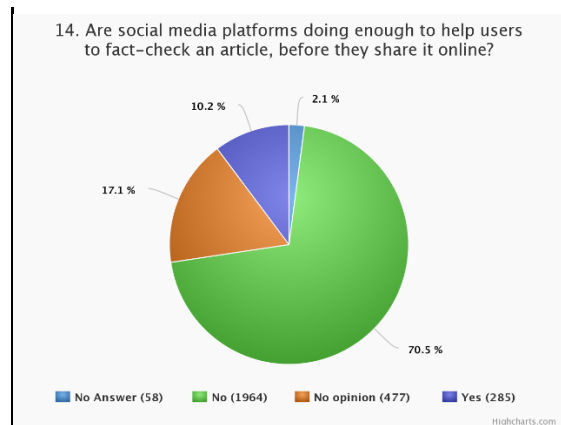
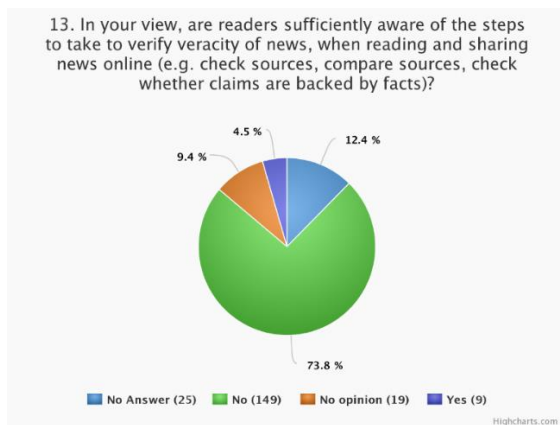
A large majority (74%) of legal entities and journalists think readers are not sufficiently aware of the steps needed to verify the veracity of news, when reading and sharing news online –e.g. check and compare sources, check whether claims are backed by facts–, a result that points to the need to increase media literacy levels. Only 5% responded positively to this question.

In contrast to the above replies, the majority of citizens – 70% – believe that social media platforms are not doing enough to help users fact-check articles before they are shared online.

Citizens' views on the role of social network platforms are mixed between those who think social media platforms do not have the legitimacy to decide whether an information is fake or not, as it might represent a breach to the right to freedom of speech, and those who believe that social media platforms should do more to present alternative information, check other sources, watchdog accounts and flag news with fake content. This argument came along with the idea that social media platforms are responsible for the content they make available.

⁵ ZDF: Schluss mit lustig! Wie erkennst du fake news', 'Tipps zum sicheren surfen'

⁶ Question for legal entities and journalists only



Almost all legal entities and journalists agree that low levels of media literacy, in particular of younger audiences but also of adults, is the biggest problem regarding readers’ awareness and critical thinking when reading and sharing news online. There is a general call to strengthen media literacy in order to increase general awareness of the issue and better understand the danger of fake news, as well as to include media literacy programmes in schools so that young readers learn how to apply a critical, educated and enlightened approach towards all information spread in the social media.

Media literacy should also help foster the ability to verify the veracity of news or online posts and to distinguish information from disinformation. Different research results were quoted about the lack of skills or competence to read and interpret complex texts, and to understand not just the difference between true and fake stories but also the difference between reporting, sponsored opinion pieces and advertising⁷.

While calling for stronger media literacy, many news media also suggested that the audience should be more proactive and critical when accessing online news, meaning that it should trust professional brands only, know the source of the information and the existence of possible conflicts of interest or take a sceptical approach vis a vis dubious content. Other recommendations include checking the sources of the information, looking for alternative sources, identifying the owners of the media, or checking whether the pictures or texts have been published before on the internet and to establish their origin.

Google, however, quoted research showing that consumers use Search to check facts that they have heard or seen in other media. Internet users consult an average of 4.5 different media and encounter diverse information across multiple media, often intentionally, that challenges their viewpoints. This as a useful tool in managing information online in a discerning way. “Die medienanstalten” –the umbrella brand of the 14 state media authorities in Germany also referred to research showing that the competence for source criticism varies in particular according to age: Almost one in two claims to check the facts presented in the message (45 percent). To identify alleged fake news, 14-24 year olds more often than not check the facts presented the author or the source link.

⁷ Guardian Media Group referred to Research by Ofcom showing that 28% of 8-11s and 27% of 12-15s assume that if Google lists a website then they can trust it and that 51% can’t identify sponsored links on Google as advertising.

17- How do online platforms and news organisations help readers to read and share news online

Online platforms and news organisation were asked about the actions they take to help readers. Strengthening media literacy appears to be the best way to inform readers when reading and sharing news online. News organisations, including broadcasters and some platforms, actively participate in school programmes to raise awareness amongst pupils on the issue of disinformation and to encourage a critical approach by readers.

Replies included examples of websites, blogs, articles and broadcast programs aiming at raising viewers' awareness on the precautions they should take when reading and sharing news online. Some information outlets regularly post information about disinformation content, publish several pieces on fake news and the response by the media or by comparing the editorial policy of traditional media and of disinformation outlets. Some of these actions are specifically aimed at children to help them develop the necessary understanding and skills to navigate through information.

In doing this, media organisations claim that the best way to tackle disinformation is by presenting quality news based on independent investigative journalism.

Besides media literacy, providers of online news declared that linking their stories to the original sources, documents or reports and facilitating access to additional sources of information was a very effective way to help readers assess the quality of news.

Other measures include the use of fact checking sites, the rating of information sources based on users' experience, doing case studies about particular disinformation activities, publishing books and guides about misinformation and the functioning of digital media.

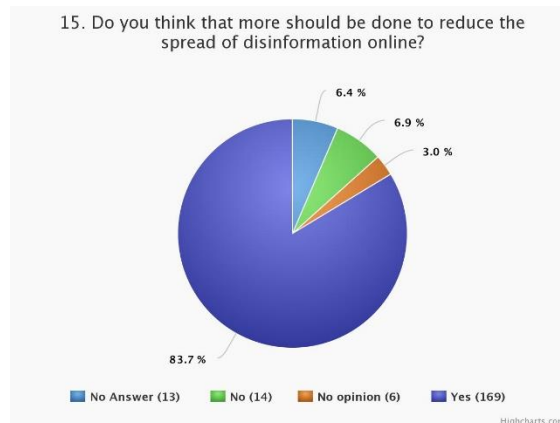
Google listed several measures: labelling the sources of news content and are rolling out tools that provide consumers with more information about those sources; a clear labelling to stories in Google News (e.g., opinion, local, highly cited, in depth); designing a user experience that highlights a variety of perspectives, showing multiple viewpoints from multiple sources, as well as other related articles. This should give users the possibility to fact check, see other relevant information, and get a more holistic understanding about a story.

V. Future actions

18- Should more be done? ⁸

With regard to possible future actions, an overwhelmingly majority of legal entities and journalists (84%) think that more should be done to reduce the spread of disinformation online.

⁸ Question for legal entities and journalists only



The open question on what should be done to reduce the spread of disinformation online showed a debate between those few legal entities and journalists that call for immediate legislative actions on online platforms and a majority that prefers a voluntary industry-led approach, but without excluding the use of regulation as a fall back option. In this model public authorities would act as backstop regulators in cases of non-compliance with industry self-regulation and step in if the system fails to work properly. Besides, many respondents supported media literacy and awareness raising actions.

There was support for a holistic, multidimensional approach to implement self-regulation, with the involvement and voluntary cooperation of all stakeholders and a combination of different measures. The ultimate aim of this action would be to tackle not just the fake news phenomenon, but also the wider issue of information disorder. Although respondents replied from their national perspective, another clear message was that action at European level would also guarantee greater legal certainty for the platforms by clarifying their obligations in all EU Member States. The proliferation of national initiatives creates the risk of a fragmentation of the European response to this issue.

Reasons to favour self-regulation instead of legislation include, firstly, the need to ensure that any direct legislative measure does not counter the freedom of information and stifles free speech, in particular measures that aim at limiting the spread of fake news. Any measures, whatever their nature, should be cautious and proportionate to avoid any suboptimal outcome, such as arbitrary censorship. Civil society organisations, online platforms and news organisations in particular said that a sufficiently objective definition of misinformation (or fake news) is a prerequisite to avoid this risk. They encourage the creation of independent research bodies or observatories on disinformation, with both public and private support, to understand the phenomenon better and in particular its social impact. This research should help define the right policies, making a clear distinction between news that may prompt legal actions based on existing rules, e.g. libel or slander, and news that, without being illegal, seek to influence or destabilise democratic institutions.

Another reason in favour of self-regulation is the idea that a positive approach aiming at developing a sound information ecosystem is more effective than working by regulations and legislative initiatives.

Supporters of self-regulation also consider that, in the short term, it is much more effective and workable in practice than regulation, and suggested different measures. Amongst these,

fact-checking measures are clearly favoured, with calls to promote a European community of fact-checkers, which would bring together representatives from the media, online platforms, NGOs, academics etc. Fact checking teams in newsrooms also exist and spread quickly. Fact-checkers could aim to develop "credibility indexes" or "kite-marking" for trusted providers as a recognised system of external regulation, which would establish a basis against which to evaluate a news source or a specific article. The mark would indicate whether content was produced following good journalistic standards. These systems would help to make kite-marked news providers more prominent in news feeds/search results to ensure that legitimate news sources are easily discoverable and not drowned out by fake news, which would have less prominence. The advertising industry, for instance, uses brand safety tools to prevent advertising being misplaced on websites that host illegal and legal but harmful content.

In parallel to fact checking, it was suggested that social media should empower their users and provide tools for marking and debunking fake news and allow users flag misleading and pseudoscientific content posted in social networks. A general perception is that the reaction to fake news should always be balanced and proportionate to its content and possible effects, otherwise the result may be a wider spread of fake news.

Despite the positive prospects of fact-checking and debunking websites, along with the promotion of access to alternative sources, it was argued, as already explained, that once the fake news is distributed efforts to fight this information come late, and that more proactive measures should be taken. In addition, flagging and rating as might produce counter effects such as limiting legal content.

The use of artificial intelligence on news dissemination platforms to improve the verification of sources and of facts and to prevent bots that artificially increase the volume and velocity of some news is another possibility. Block-chain technology to record verification/debunking claims around news content was also mentioned. When using these tools attention should be made to the possible negative effect of "machines" making decisions on removing or hampering access to content that could ultimately affect freedom of speech.

The limited number of proposals opting for regulating the activities of social platforms focus on several issues.

First, some news organisations, including broadcasters, argue there is a need for a level playing field between media service providers and platform operators. Under current EU and national rules, publishers have legal liability for the content that they publish, whilst intermediary platforms and search engines, as providers of storage of information services, are generally exempt from legal liability for the content published on their platforms, due to the safe harbour provisions of the E-commerce Directive. Rules should change, they argue, to recognise that these platforms also have an editorial responsibility since they decide, through algorithms, on the content provided to their users. A regulatory change would make platforms liable for the content they publish and large distributors of news/information online should be subject to the same defamation laws as media companies. As one respondent puts it, legislators should look for solutions to ensure that the public can expect

the same level of protection from harmful content/information no matter what medium they use to access content.

Some news organisations also say that legislative measures on transparency of algorithms would help to prevent unfair or discriminatory treatment of media service providers, and would facilitate the creation, distribution and findability of quality content. Transparency rules on algorithm policies used by platforms would let users know which factors determine the information they access through platforms. Rules on transparency could also include some limitations to make citizens less transparent to platforms and not so easily targeted.

Calls for transparency also refer to the ownership of the media through which people get informed as well as for to the need for accountability and transparency on the digital advertising model. Many news and civil society organisations criticize that the current business model of platforms seek to maximise traffic and audience regardless of the quality of the information. This not only drives advertising revenues away from the traditional media, but it also means that the disseminators of fake news – as well as the online platforms - profit from clicks and views of fake news stories. A policy against disinformation should aim at limiting the advertising revenues of those platforms that create and distribute fake news. One option would be to oblige platforms to monitor more carefully advertising and its sources of funding following established best practices. There should be an obligation for platforms to provide more information about the identity of the buyers of political ads on their platforms, as well as on the amount spent on advertisement.

Overall, many news and civil society organisations see the above measures in a wider context where public authorities should sustain and, where appropriate, reinforce the role of public service media. In this regard, there would be a need to review the current rules to create a favourable framework for quality media and journalism, ensuring truly independent public media. Actions should be taken to promote the sustainability and diversity of the European media landscape, including the financing of quality journalism and fostering its findability in order to restore the trust of people in media outlets that produce reliable and verified news.

Actions in this regard include support to research and innovation activities, providing incentives to develop free tools needed for professionals and the audience to fight fake news and to innovate while also creating a climate that positively promotes multiple approaches and initiatives by media start-ups.

Along with co-regulatory measures, media literacy and awareness raising campaigns appear as necessary condition to address the issue and the risks of fake news. Media literacy includes actions to empower the audience, in particular younger generations, teaching them how to recognise reliable sources of news and distinguish them from fake. Ultimately, it should foster critical thinking, giving citizens more control over the information that they decide to receive online.

Media literacy actions should also seek to empower journalists –training for journalists on e.g. data literacy, data narrative and data visualization and collection.

Finally, citizens' replies to open questions indicate a clear concern for censorship that would limit the freedom of expression, and a significant wish for greater transparency, school education and media literacy.

19- Actors best placed to take action

Citizens were asked to rank the three best options from a list of possible actors to take action to address disinformation online. Although media organisations appear to be the most favoured actor overall, public authorities had almost similar support and it was the category that more citizens ranked as the best option. Action by online platforms and citizens follow, with civil society organisations receiving less support. This result supports the approach preferred by respondents to the previous question, whereby a self-regulatory approach with the involvement of all stakeholders seems to be perceived as an efficient one provided it is backed by public authorities.

Citizens suggested other actors to take action to address disinformation online, such as for instance an independent mechanism –authority, agency or poll of experts, while expressing some concern toward censorship. Replies also suggested action by schools and researchers.

20- Measures by online platforms

Legal entities and journalists suggested many measures that online platforms could take to improve users' access to reliable information and prevent the spread of disinformation online. Many of these have already been presented, and range from general principles to very specific technical and regulatory measures for platforms.

There was support to the principle that any measures intended to improve users' access reliable information should not go against the right to freedom of expression and privacy and due process and should be subject to effective supervision. Measures should also be compatible with the principles of necessity and proportionality and should include correction mechanisms to address any impact on freedom of expression, media diversity or any possible counterproductive effects. Platforms should not censor content pre-emptively or decide what is true or not. Another proposed principle is that platforms through which citizens get their information should follow journalistic standards and ethics and take responsibility for not spreading disinformation campaigns. To do this they should adopt codes of good practice and provide full and transparent sets of principles for relations with producers of journalistic content.

In addition, many news media, and in particular broadcasters, said that online platforms should accept that they have editorial responsibilities and should be subject to both existing liability and obligations regimes and to online self-regulatory regimes, such as press codes. They should amongst other implement a general "duty of care" and be accountable for the content they share. However, it seems difficult to reconcile this with the previous request that platforms should not be put in charge of deciding what content is appropriate to be shared or not, as this would create the risk of private actors infringing on the right of free expression, particularly where a fake news cannot be considered illegal content.

Google, Mozilla and some industry organisations, while supporting the need to take actions against disinformation, cautioned against regulatory intervention aiming at changing the liability regime in the e-Commerce Directive or a “one size fits all” definition of platforms, as this would fail to acknowledge the different types and therefore the varied solutions to make meaningful progress. For these stakeholders a thorough understanding of the issue and a clear definition of the problem is a necessary pre-condition before adopting any measures.

The measures proposed at technical level mainly refer to management of news and information, transparency and media literacy.

On content, civil society organisations and news media requested that social platforms should be more pro-active in fact-checking and flagging fake news, combining human and automated solutions, and provide information on whether content has been generated by humans or machines⁹. They should also inform of the source and the promoter of content and verify where possible the reputation of the sources, while respecting data protection rules and anonymous speech. The setting up of an index of unreliable sources was suggested. Checking different sources before publishing any information would also help to improve users' access to reliable information. Connected to this is the proposal to allow users to both grade fake news, and possibly stop their dissemination with one click. Limitation or blocking of sources or online accounts which are known to have provided incorrect information was also proposed, although this kind of restrictive measures, in particular content deletion, gathered much less support than those intended at promoting the visibility of quality information.

In order to assess the effectiveness of fact checking, flagging and take-down measures, it was proposed to keep an archive of content deleted and also to set up prevention, complaint and appeal mechanisms, including the obligation to publish replies by concerned parties. Another suggestion was to add links to reliable public and private professional media sources, making this information more easily findable and perhaps giving it some priority. This would ensure that reliable information is not drowned out by fake news sites¹⁰.

The use of artificial intelligence solutions for the above measures was both praised and discouraged. An advantage of artificial intelligence is that it can deal with very high number of posts and news in a rapid manner. Yet some think it is not intelligent enough for delicate and sensitive issues such as public conversation. A news organisation proposed that providers of artificial intelligence work with news organisations in each market where they operate to train the artificial intelligence.

A second set of measures refer to transparency. In particular, many civil society organisations and news media said that online platforms should be more transparent on their activities and their algorithms, so that users know how these can affect the information

⁹ Some respondents said information coming from bots should not be published

¹⁰ In its response about other measures by online platforms in preventing the spread of disinformation, Google said that the company has “adjusted our signals to help surface more authoritative pages and demote low-quality content and continue to address this challenge”.

recommended to them. This transparency requirement could include changing the terms of access and use of platforms to offer the possibility for users to choose and size the algorithms without platforms being able to monitor their online behaviour using personal data. Another options is to design algorithms in a way that exposes users to a wide range of information and opinions (so-called 'exposure diversity' or 'serendipity effect').

Under this transparency policy, platforms could also cooperate and share data with independent researchers –respecting data protection principles, i.e. data should be anonymised– in order to assess the impact of current algorithms and the effectiveness of fact-checking and flagging initiatives. Taking such initiative would include the acceptance of a basic level of accountability and the need to publish transparency reports on the platforms' activities.

Another transparency option strongly supported by civil society organisations would be the adoption of effective measures to enable users to easily access and understand platforms' editorial and content policies and terms of service and how they are enforced, as well as to enforce these policies by removing content or disable accounts of those that do not respect the terms.

Civil Society organisations and news media argued that online platforms should review their advertising business strategies to ensure that they do not detrimentally affect the diversity of ideas and opinions. Content aiming at misinforming citizens should not be used to fuel advertising revenues. This review could even lead to a removal of financial incentives for creating 'fake news' and eventually to a reduction of advertisement revenues based on fake news. Sponsored content should be clearly marked as such and that the advertising-driven business model should be fully respectful of people's privacy, data or any preferences.

Online platforms, finally, should also support and finance global, independent media literacy initiatives and awareness raising campaigns and inform their users better about the danger of the spread fake news. They could also contribute to a public fund to finance public media and news literacy programs, as well as quality journalism.

When asked about the effectiveness of a closed list of measures by online platforms, almost half of the citizens share the opinion that investing in educating and empowering users (76%), informing users when certain content was generated or spread by a bot (76%)and further limit advertisement revenues flowing to websites publishing fake news (64%)would have a effective impact in preventing the spread of disinformation.

71% of responding legal entities and journalists share citizens' views on the need for further investment in educating and empowering users for better assessing and using online information. However, their views on other options differ. 69% of legal entities and journalists support the development of new forms of cooperation with media outlets, fact-checkers and civil society organisations to implement new approaches to counter fake news. 64% of respondents support the role of civil society organisations to improve monitoring and debunking of fake news, 61% supported ranking information from reliable sources higher and predominantly display it in search results or news feeds, as well as a limitation to advertisement revenues flowing to websites publishing fake news and 60% think a

transparency measure such as informing users about the criteria and/or algorithms used to display content could also be effective.

Interestingly, legal entities and journalists do not seem to think that a more active role of end-users of online platforms would have a significant impact in preventing the spread of fake news: 40% of respondents thought that allowing more control to users on how to personalise the display of content would have low or no impact at all. Allowing direct flagging of suspicious content between social media users is also not seen as a very promising action —36% expect low or no impact at all. These results are in line with the responses to the question about readers' awareness, where a large majority of legal entities and journalists said that readers are not sufficiently aware of the steps needed to verify the veracity of news.

21- Measures by news media organisations

On the question about possible measures by news media organisations, news media and civil society organisations stressed that the public should have access to trusted journalism and legitimate news stories in order to recover its confidence in 'quality journalism'. Some news media underlined in this context their support to the European dual system of quality public service media and commercial media, given their special role in supporting the democratic, cultural and societal needs of European countries. Giving higher visibility to quality journalism and ensuring the presence of news media organisations on all platforms to reach out to all segments of society, in particular of young people, would be critical to meet this objective. However, at the same time, responses acknowledged the limits of traditional news media to respond to the disinformation phenomenon, with falling advertising revenues that threaten to undermine investment in high quality journalism. This brings the sustainability of the business model to the discussion.

The most mentioned measure, especially by civil society organisations and news media organisations, is that journalists endorse, support and apply effective self-regulation and professional standards aimed at delivering reliable and accurate information, including a right of correction and/or reply to tackle false statements. As put by one professional organisation, journalists should just do their job. Such approach would include the verification and use of different information sources to have an objective and pluralistic presentation of the facts. Respondents also supported that media organisations use fact-checking tools, either through their own teams or by using independent bodies. They could also set up fact-checker teams within online platforms to identify and debunk fake news. Use of different labels depending on the reliability of the source was also suggested, as well as informing about the sources, the forms of research and the methods used by the news media for checking information, data and facts. The effects of fact-checking activities, by definition ex-post, could be supported by a more proactive coverage of 'fake news', propaganda and disinformation as part of their news services, including the offering of counter-narratives and/or corrections. One press agency proposed an EU/international database containing debunked fake news and pictures to avoid their re-use.

Another claim, especially by news media, is the need for more transparency and accountability of media organizations on their editorial policy and means of financing. News

media and civil society organisations said news media organisations should implement a code of practice for accountable journalism, reducing or limiting the use of "clickbait" headlines and searching for a balanced and unbiased way of reporting. Over-reliance on online advertising would be creating a perverse incentive to attract readers via sensationalist headlines. Changing this approach would possibly lead to rely more on subscription business models, moving away from a system where some view online platforms as gate keepers of the content produced by news media.

Many news media organisations requested financial support, i.e. long-term direct funding, subsidies or tax breaks to be able to support quality journalism, ensure media pluralism and the independence of newsrooms. There was also a call for a more balanced share of revenues between news media organisations and online platforms. On this Google referred to its flexible sampling system that allows publishers to decide how many, if any, free articles they want to provide to potential subscribers based on their own business strategies. In the medium term, others called for a European strategy for the media sector, to ensure that the value of the content created flows back to the news media industry. The shift in the business model from a clickbait model to a subscription one would enable a more thoughtful journalism due to loyalty and brand promotion, as well as a decrease in economic pressure. However, this could possibly create problems for some people to be able to access good quality information.

Media literacy is a recurrent topic in this discussion, with all respondents arguing for a large number of media literacy activities and programs for the public and schools to learn the difference between high-quality media and disinformation outlets. News media organisations insisted on the need to train professionals to understand innovation and new ways in which information is produced and transmitted.

Citizens and legal entities and journalists shared similar views about the effectiveness of a suggested list of measures by news media organisations in strengthening reliable information and tackling fake news both.

For instance, more than half of them believe that the most effective measure would be educational: focusing on helping readers to develop media literacy skills to approach critically online news (52% for citizens and legal entities).

Similarly, around 40% of the citizens and legal entities and journalists believe that helping readers to assess information and investing more in new forms of journalism (42% for citizens and 41% for legal entities) are effective measures in strengthening reliable information and tackling fake news. Both groups of respondents show a great level of interest towards the development of media oriented skills by readers/users.

22- Measures by civil society¹¹

On the possible measures that civil society could take, all respondents cite media literacy, awareness raising and fact checking.

¹¹ Question for legal entities and journalists only

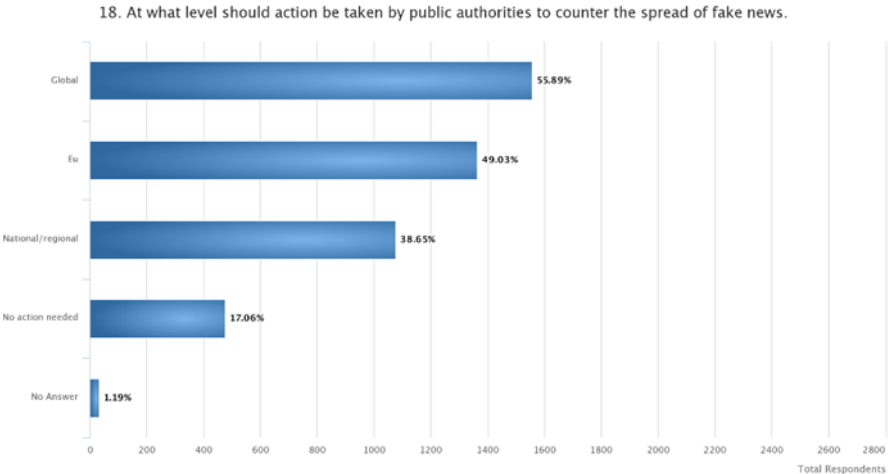
Civil society and news media organisations in particular mentioned support to media literacy, both for adults and school pupils. Civil society organisations can also raise awareness on the impact of disinformation on citizens, contribute to any research on this issue and help ensuring that citizens’ interests are represented when discussing measures on disinformation.

Fact checking was the second major measure proposed, with respondents referring either to existing fact-checking activities and national organisations active on this, in partnership with news media organisations, or acting on their own.

23- Measures by public authorities

Citizens' replies to this question confirm a concern over the fake news theme. Many focused on the need for more media literacy education as well as more research in the field. When asked about the level at which action public authorities should take action to counter the spread of fake news, 56% of the citizens affirm it should be global, 49% EU and 39% national/regional.

45% of the answers by citizens to this question reveal a negative tone, illustrating concerns about censorship and manipulation of information, and stressing the need for freedom of speech and respect over democratic values. Numerous respondents also referred concern about political issues namely with political parties campaigns, elections and influence from governments over these processes.



Legal entities’ views on the actions that public authorities could take focused first of all on support to the development of media literacy among readers and school pupils. Providing skills and knowledge should help to assess and review the sources and factual claims and to provide pupils with the necessary understanding for the effective and safe use of the media.

Providing an environment that supports, promotes and protects diverse media and quality information as well as citizens’ ability to access and disseminate ideas and information was another action supported by a majority of respondents. There was a clear support for self-regulation, with the adoption and use of codes of good practice, with many calls cautioning on the use of regulation on harmful but legal content. Overall, respondents stressed that it is

essential to have the appropriate toolkit to fight against fake news and safeguard quality and trusted information in today's information system and that, if public authorities consider any restrictive action to limit the spread of fake news, it should be targeted and proportionate and respect the fundamental freedoms of expression and information. It was mentioned how in recent years a number of countries have seen a reduction in these rights.

Similar to citizens' replies, there also was clear support by all types of legal entities and journalists for actions, whatever their nature, at EU level rather than at national or regional one, due to the global nature of the internet.

News media organisations called for supporting quality journalism, including financial support schemes and with a number of responses asking for an EU strategy for the media sector. They mentioned the role played by public service broadcasters in providing quality information and the need to support it.

In relation to the possibility to set up an independent body to monitor and enforce mechanisms to stop the dissemination of fake news, both within organizations and social media platforms, a few respondents suggested the possibility to set up penalties and eventually to ban those sites that have been identified as disseminators of fake news.

Finally, it was suggested that public authorities should also play a role in promoting research to better understand different elements, such the scope of the issue, its causes, its impact, the role of platforms in relation to media plurality or the effectiveness of the proposed technical solutions.

24- Added value of an independent observatory

The possible added value of an independent observatory (linking platforms, news media organisations and fact-checking organisations) depends on the specific scope of such body: 54% of respondents support an independent observatory that acts like a knowledge centre, gathering studies and providing general advice on how to tackle disinformation online. Support declines if the scope of the observatory is narrowed down to asking fact-checkers to provide warnings about popular social media posts that need to be flagged (46%) or if it had to develop counter narratives when necessary (42%). However, the idea of an observatory is overall not rejected, with only 13% declaring that it would not be useful for the public.