

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOUNDING BOARD ON DISINFORMATION LOOKS TO ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS SHORT-COMINGS OF SO-CALLED CODE OF PRACTICE

Brussels December 4 2018. Ahead of the publication of the Action Plan on Disinformation, Members of the Sounding Board of the Multistakeholder Forum¹ on disinformation online (representatives from media, civil society, journalists, consumer organisations and academia) expressed their expectations with regard to European commitments in this field.

The Sounding Board is particularly supportive of policies that would lead online Platforms and Social Networks to deliver remedies and real industry commitments to the rampant and ongoing spread of disinformation on their networks.

The Sounding Board would be reassured on the ambitions of the action plan if the Commission will be proven to have taken on board its request to put in place a process to assess whether or not the so-called code delivers against the goals as set out in the “Communication - Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach” released on 26th April 2018². The Sounding Board encourages the European Commission to closely monitor the situation and give its assessment in the first quarter of 2019.

This is particularly urgent in view of the upcoming European elections and the fragmented approach taken on by Member States. Europe and Europeans deserve a strong plan that delivers tangible results. As such, the Sounding Board trusts that the Action Plan will address the shortfalls of the so-called “Code of Practice” as outlined in the [Sounding Board’s Opinion](#) on this matter issued in September 2018.

As demonstrated in the Sounding Board’s detailed and written feedback and comments, the so-called “Code of practice” regrettably contains no common approach, no meaningful commitments, no measurable objectives or KPIs, no compliance or enforcement tools and hence no possibility to monitor the implementation process. The Sounding Board therefore trusts that the Action Plan will at least ensure Platforms and Social Networks deliver commitments within the accepted meaning of effective and accountable self-regulation³.

Sounding Board Signatories

- Grégoire Polad, Association of Commercial Television in Europe
- Vincent Sneed, Association of European Radios
- Oreste Pollicino, Bocconi University
- Monique Goyens, Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs
- Ravi Vatrapu, Copenhagen Business School
- Nicola Frank, European Broadcasting Union
- Ricardo Gutiérrez, European Federation of Journalists
- Angela Mills Wade, European Publishers' Council
- Wout van Wijk, News Media Europe
- Bilyana Petkova, Yale University

¹ The Multistakeholder Forum on Disinformation comprises two different and autonomous groups. On the one hand, major online platforms ad exchanges and their trade associations;, the advertisers and agencies’ associations and the European advertising self-regulatory body (“the working group”), and on the other hand representatives of the media, civil society, fact checkers and academia (“the Sounding Board”). Members of the Sounding Board of the Multistakeholder Forum on disinformation online hereby officially transmit their final opinion on the so-called “Code of practice” to the Commission. The Sounding Board Members entered the Multistakeholder process which was designed to address a number of key principles adopted by the High-Level Expert Group back in March of 2018.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-tackling-online-disinformation-european-approach>

³ The European Union considers self-regulation: Self-regulation constitutes a type of voluntary initiative which enables economic operators, social partners, non-governmental organisations and associations to adopt common guidelines amongst themselves and for themselves. They are responsible for developing, monitoring and enforcing compliance with those guidelines.”” (See AVMS D Recital 14).