

## **JOINT PRESS STATEMENT**

### **THE SOUNDING BOARD OF THE FORUM ON DISINFORMATION ISSUES THEIR UNANIMOUS FINAL OPINION ON THE SO-CALLED CODE OF PRACTICE**

**Brussels September 26 2018.** Today the Members of the Sounding Board of the Multistakeholder Forum<sup>1</sup> on disinformation online comprising representatives of the media, civil society, journalists, consumer organisations, fact-checkers and academia officially transmitted to Commissioner Gabriel their final Opinion on the so-called “Code of practice”. The Sounding Board thanked the Commission and Commissioner Mariya Gabriel for convening this Forum and for the opportunity to comment on the so-called Code of Practice drawn up by the working group.

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 considers that the Platforms, despite their best efforts, have not been able to deliver a Code of Practice within the accepted meaning of effective and accountable self-regulation<sup>2</sup>.

The Sounding Board has proposed that based on the work of independent fact-checkers and academic researchers, during a test period in the run-up to the forthcoming European elections, a regular evaluation of the situation should be carried out. Furthermore, the Sounding Board requested that the European Commission puts 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 April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018<sup>3</sup>. The Sounding Board encourages the European Commission to closely monitor the situation and give its assessment in the first quarter of 2019.

#### **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
- Marie de Cordier, European Magazine Media Association | European Newspaper Publishers' Association
- Angela Mills Wade, European Publishers' Council
- Alexios Mantzarlis, International Fact-Checking Network
- Wout van Wijk, News Media Europe
- Bilyana Petkova, Yale University

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The European Union considers self-regulation: “Self-regulation constitutes a type of voluntary initiative which enables economic operators, social partners, non-governmental organisations or associations to adopt common guidelines amongst themselves and for themselves. They are responsible for development, monitoring, compliance with and enforcement of those guidelines” (See AVMS D as adopted in CULT Committee, Recital 7a).

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-tackling-online-disinformation-european-approach>