



Topic of the National Selection Process 2017/2018

This article introduces the topic of this year's national selection process of the European Youth Parliament in Germany. Nonetheless, it was written in May and does not claim to be up to date until the application deadline. Thus, by the time you start to write your topic overview, please also have an eye on more recent information.

Topic

Believe it or not: Given the constant rise of “fake news” and with the establishment of the EU East StratCom Task Force of the European External Action Service (EEAS), what further steps can the EU take to combat misinformation on the Internet while protecting the freedom of information of its citizens?

Abstract

For the past few years, the increase in so called “fake news” has been exponential and has had an impact on political campaigning and events ranging from the Brexit referendum and the immigration crisis to the United States’ 2016 presidential elections and the Crimean conflict. The form “fake news” take are as various as the stories told and range from politically motivated stories to simple clickbait. They are often spread with a political narrative or agenda in mind and are spread to further fuel conflict. Distinguishing between what is published and what is true is not only hard for the individual but also for traditionally credible media outlets. They have become both active and passive accomplices in spreading false information through republishing and picking up biased stories to create traction and generate traffic in their channels of media.

Following the increase of strategic disinformation, especially coming from Russia’s ongoing campaigns, the EU East StratCom Task Force was set up to debunk “fake news”. The European Council tasked the High Representative in cooperation with the Member States to work on an action plan for strategic communication. The European Commission also developed a plan to facilitate extensive consultations with various stakeholders and citizens. Through this strategy, “fake news” were included in the Eurobarometer public opinion survey to get more data and measure concerns of European citizens as well as stakeholders. A colloquium was setup to find the boundaries of the issue and assess the effectiveness of implemented solutions. A High Level Group (HLG) of experts was active until March 2018 to advise on policy to counter disinformation online.

Even after those efforts were taken, strategic disinformation remains in abundance. “Fake news” are not just an issue of domestic affairs and integrity amongst journalists but pose a threat to both national security and the democratic principles our society is founded on. Social media has become a part of most people’s day to day lives and is part of the problem of spread and the solution in control. With more than half of the Member States of the EU holding elections in the upcoming year, discussing this issue and finding long-term solutions is more needed than ever.



Exemplary Questions

- What further action needs to be taken to combat fake news in its various forms?
- What are the various forms of fake news and online disinformation?
- Which institution or governmental level should be responsible to tackle such issues and hold different stakeholders accountable?
- How can the EU and its Member States work together to improve the situation without limiting the civil liberties of its citizens?
- With fake news often targeting social media channels, how can reliable journalism be highlighted and given more room on such platforms?

Helpful Links

Section of the European Commission website on Fake News: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/fake-news>

Final report of the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>

Study on fake news and disinformation from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/jrc111529.pdf>

Views of the European Commission on tackling online disinformation: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-tackling-online-disinformation-european-approach>

Fact sheet by the European Commission on tackling online disinformation: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/factsheet-tackling-online-disinformation>