

**Question for written answer E-002041/2018
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Violation of freedom of speech on the internet

Users of social media have drawn our attention to the problem of accounts being blocked and closed and comments being deleted by the administrators of these social media websites. However, what is deleted is not only the vulgar or aggressive posts, but also the comments made by people with strong views representing various ideological and philosophical opinions. Administrators' actions frequently violate freedom of speech whereas the criteria for deleting profiles are unclear.

The solutions adopted in individual countries are also a cause for concern.

Since the beginning of this year, a law has been in force in Germany that stipulates that social media administrators will have to pay high penalties for not reacting promptly to comments considered to be hate posts. What is or is not hate speech, and whether a given post has been deleted accordingly, is quickly decided upon by a group of officials. In the opinion of users of these portals, this means they are deprived of their right to express their mind, which is a drastic form of violating the freedom of speech and expression.

The law, which was supposed to contribute towards combating hate speech, may block the activity of participants who will deliberately refrain from expressing their mind for fear of reprisal.

- 1) Does the Commission see a need to address this issue?
- 2) Will any steps be taken and, if yes, when will they be taken, to develop detailed solutions to ensure greater transparency in how social networking sites operate?