

**Question for written answer E-003428/2022
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Large-scale pro-Russian disinformation operations online on Twitter and Facebook

Reports from the EU DisinfoLab¹ reveal large-scale operations to spread pro-Russian disinformation online in the EU. Fake versions of at least 17 news outlets, such as the Guardian and Bild, were created to spread pro-Russian disinformation. The fake sites were hosted at similar domain names to those of the news outlets and were then promoted through paid Facebook ads. Recommender systems and bot networks then amplified these fake sites on both Twitter and Facebook.

This is just one example of the scale of the infrastructure in place to undermine truth, trust and democracy; to polarise society; and to spread disinformation. The fact that Facebook was paid USD 105 000 for one campaign² reveals the financial incentives that have deeply skewed Facebook's priorities.

1. Does the Commission believe that such financial incentives encourage companies to comply with the non-binding EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, and can the Commission meaningfully adjust this balance of incentives?
2. How can the Commission act upon this clear breach of the companies' commitments under the Code, and how will the Digital Services Act allow the Commission to address manipulative practices?
3. How can the Commission intervene in these interaction-based recommender systems that are clearly susceptible to manipulation, polarise our societies, and are a direct threat to our democracies?

¹ <https://www.disinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Doppelganger.pdf>

² https://about.fb.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CIB-Report_China-Russia_Sept-2022-1-1.pdf, p 14.