Priority question for written answer P-002623/2024
to the Commission
Rule 144
Alexandra Geese (Verts/ALE), Birgit Sippel (S&D), Kim Van Sparrentak (Verts/ALE), David Cormand (Verts/ALE), Hannah Neumann (Verts/ALE), Erik Marquardt (Verts/ALE), Markéta Gregorová (Verts/ALE), Sergey Lagodinsky (Verts/ALE), Pierre Jouvet (S&D), Saskia Bricmont (Verts/ALE), Anna Cavazzini (Verts/ALE), Veronika Cifrová Ostrihoňová (Renew), Sara Matthieu (Verts/ALE), Diana Riba i Giner (Verts/ALE), Martin Schirdewan (The Left), Leila Chaibi (The Left), Majdouline Sbai (Verts/ALE), Axel Voss (PPE), Daniel Freund (Verts/ALE), Laura Ballarín Cereza (S&D), Alex Agius Saliba (S&D), Merja Kyllönen (The Left), Irene Tinagli (S&D), Sandro Ruotolo (S&D), Pierfrancesco Maran (S&D), Matjaž Nemec (S&D), Hannes Heide (S&D), Sabrina Repp (S&D), Francisco Assis (S&D), Elio Di Rupo (S&D), Tiemo Wölken (S&D), Evin Incir (S&D), Thijs Reuten (S&D), Murielle Laurent (S&D), Raphaël Glucksmann (S&D), Thomas Pellerin-Carlin (S&D), Alessandro Zan (S&D), Ana Catarina Mendes (S&D), Krzysztof Śmiszek (S&D), Nela Riehl (Verts/ALE), Catarina Martins (The Left), Damien Carême (The Left)

Subject: Change of algorithm on X before US election

A recent study[1] by researchers at Queensland University has found that since July, engagement with Elon Musk's X account saw a sudden and significant increase, with view counts for his posts increasing by 138 %, retweets by 238 % and likes by 186 %. The increase in views occurred at a much higher rate than for other prominent political accounts. Press reports indicate that in the past, Musk has influenced the algorithm to give his content preferential treatment, without making this transparent[2]. A report from the Center for Countering Digital Hate showed that Musk's political posts amassed 1.7 billion views since he endorsed Trump.

The increase in views also concerns Musk's posts on EU matters on X, such as pro-Kremlin propaganda on the war in Ukraine and antisemitic conspiracy theories. The algorithmic shift has clear effects on civic discourse and electoral processes, as well as public security in the EU, a risk to be assessed under Article 34 of the Digital Services Act.

Does the Commission plan to send X a request for information or open proceedings against it on this algorithmic change? If not, could the Commission detail why not, and what other tools at its disposal it will use to react?

Supporters[3]

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[1]

   https://github.com/timothyjgraham/AlgorithmicBiasX/blob/3f4ca90ac156d88bdaf398caa518ac86f69c5885/A%20computational%20analysis%20of%20potential%20algorithmic%20bias%20on%20platform%20X%20during%20the%202024%20US%20election-4.pdf.

[2]   https://www.theverge.com/2023/2/14/23600358/elon-musk-tweets-algorithm-changes-twitter.

[3]   This question is supported by Members other than the authors: Cristina Guarda (Verts/ALE), Sandro Gozi (Renew)