

[IT] AGCOM intervenes to block Russia Today content on YouTube and X

IRIS 2024-7:1/14

*Francesco Di Giorgi
Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni (AGCOM)*

Due to the recent Regulation on Video Sharing Platforms (VSP) (Resolution No. 298/23/CONS) (see IRIS 2024-1:1/13 and 2024-3:1/15), the Italian Communications Authority (AGCOM) swiftly intervened to remove several videos disseminated on YouTube and X.

Following Article 8 of the VSP Regulation and a report from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AGCOM requested YouTube and X (formerly Twitter) to remove multiple videos related to a documentary produced by the Russia Today TV channel, accessible from Italy.

The documentary in question offers a one-sided account of the events in the Donbass region over the past decade, portraying the Ukrainian population as ruthless Nazis intent on exterminating their own people with the complicity of NATO, the USA, and the European Union, depicted as the true orchestrators of massacres and the 2014 coup.

AGCOM's investigation revealed that the documentary's content was politically charged, aiming to incite racial hatred and violate human dignity, in breach of Article 4, paragraph 1 of the VSP Regulation. Specifically, the content was identified as Russian propaganda intended to spread distorted information and discredit Western countries and European institutions. The dissemination of this content was deemed particularly serious given the upcoming European elections on 8-9 June 2024, and the risk of influencing public opinion with a skewed representation of current events.

This urgency prompted AGCOM to protect citizens by initiating procedures against Google Ireland Limited for the YouTube service and Twitter International Unlimited Company for the X service, requesting them to limit the circulation of the documentary entitled "Donbass: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," produced by Russia Today, and related videos.

Google promptly announced the removal of the content and associated videos globally, also blocking the channel. Subsequently, Twitter complied with the request.

AGCOM also observed that European Council Regulation (EU) No. 833/2014 (Article 2f , paragraph 1) prohibits for operators "to broadcast or to enable,

facilitate or otherwise contribute to broadcast, any content by the legal persons, entities or bodies listed in Annex XV, including through transmission or distribution by any means such as cable, satellite, IP-TV, internet service providers, internet video-sharing platforms or applications, whether new or pre-installed." Russia Today is in Annex XV. (see IRIS 2022-7:1/2 and IRIS 2023-6:1/22).

AGCOM interviene per bloccare contenuti di russia today diffusi da YouTube e X

<https://www.agcom.it/comunicazione/comunicati-stampa/agcom-interviene-bloccare-contenuti-di-russia-today-diffusi-da>

AGCOM takes action to block Russia Today content spread by YouTube and X

