[FR] Combatting the manipulation of news - CSA adopts draft recommendation directed at platforms

IRIS 2019-6:1/14

Amélie Blocman
Légipresse

The Act of 22 December 2018 on combatting the manipulation of news imposed a duty of cooperation on the principle on-line platform operators in a bid to combat the circulation of “fake news”. Under the Act, the national audiovisual regulatory authority (Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel - CSA) may make recommendations to operators with a view to aiding them in implementing specific actions aimed at promoting the circulation of reliable news and combatting fake news that is “likely to disturb public order or compromise the integrity of any poll”. Following a series of hearings involving representatives of the main platforms, the CSA drew up a draft recommendation, which it adopted on 25 April 2019. It then launched a public consultation process regarding the text in order to ascertain the opinions of the parties involved; the consultation will remain open until 10 May.

The recommendation, in keeping with the logic of stepping up the level of responsibility incumbent on the platforms, also takes account of the relevant European Union initiatives. It recommends that operators implement several types of measures: first and foremost, an accessible and visible reporting system, with a conspicuous heading, to be placed in close proximity to the content or account which someone may wish to report. The CSA recommends that (i) platforms should be able to harmonise their respective arrangements, (ii) users should have to click on no more than three hyperlinks, and (iii) all possible reasons for lodging a report (hate content, fake news, etc.) should be listed in a single dialogue box. It recommends enabling users to follow the progress of their report and the attention that it receives.

The CSA is also calling for transparency in the algorithms governing the organisation, selection and arrangement of content offered. To achieve this, the CSA is encouraging platforms to make sure that each user is able to trace all of his/her personal data used in recommending and prioritising content, and to provide clear, precise information on changes made to the algorithms applied.

Content created by press companies and agencies and audiovisual communication services needs to be promoted. To achieve this, the CSA recommends giving priority to information from sources identified as being reliable (particularly “fact-checking” content) in the results provided by search engines and news threads.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

The CSA also recommends combatting accounts that propagate massive amounts of fake news by setting up appropriate procedures for detecting and blocking actions (such as warnings, deletions, quarantines, or restrictions on user rights,) initiated by such accounts. The CSA also recommends setting up appropriate arrangements to enable users to be informed of the nature, origin and broadcasting methods of sponsored news content (regardless of whether or not it is generated by automated means). This type of content should be clearly differentiated from other content. Similarly, the CSA urges that an obligation of transparency be incumbent on sponsors of news content that relates to a debate of general interest (the identity of the person or company responsible should be identified, together with - in the case of a company - its registered office and the nature of its business activity). Lastly, the CSA invites platform operators to increase users' awareness of the influence exerted by their own content (particularly over younger people). To achieve this, the CSA recommends that platforms develop suitable tools (video modules, guides, etc.) for analysing the reliability of sources of information and encourage partnerships with people involved in providing education on information and the media.

In the light of this recommendation, platforms will be required to send to the CSA an annual declaration, before 31 March of the following year, specifying the methods they have used to implement each of the measures listed under Article 11 of the Act of 22 December 2018. The CSA also reserves the right to request information of any kind in the event of any actual or attempted manipulation of information that is likely to disturb the public order or compromise the integrity of any voting. It also invites platform operators to inform their users promptly should any such incident occur. Lastly, the CSA invites platforms to send in the name of the legal representative whom they have authorised to act as their contact person in France; they are required to nominate this person under Article 13 of the Act.

Communiqué de presse du CSA, « Projet de recommandation sur la lutte contre la diffusion de fausses informations: lancement d'une consultation publique », 25 avril 2019

https://www.csa.fr/Informer/Espace-presse/Communiques-de-presse/Projet-de-recommandation-sur-la-lutte-contre-la-diffusion-de-fausses-informations-lancement-d-une-consultation-publique

CSA press release, "Draft recommendation on combatting the circulation of fake news: launch of a public consultation", 25 April 2019

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026