[IE] Report on tackling disinformation across digital platforms published

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Ingrid Cunningham
School of Law, National University of Ireland, Galway

On 28 April 2020, a new research report on tackling disinformation across digital platforms was published. The report, CodeCheck 2020: A Review of Platform Compliance with the EC Code of Practice on Disinformation, was commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) and undertaken by the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at Dublin City University, Ireland. The CodeCheck 2020 report examines and reviews the progress of the actions carried out by digital platforms Facebook, Twitter, Google and Microsoft in Ireland over a 12-month period to November 2019 in support of their commitments to the EC Code of Practice on Disinformation 2018 (EC Code).

The EC Code sets out a number of self-regulatory standards, including a wide range of commitments, ranging from transparency in political advertising and the closure of fake accounts to the demonetisation of purveyors of disinformation. Signatories to the EC Code have committed to addressing five key areas, including; a) scrutiny of advertising placements; b) political advertising and issue - based advertising; c) integrity of services; d) empowering consumers and e) empowering the research community. The CodeCheck 2020 report specifically reviewed Facebook, Twitter, Google and Microsoft's commitments and actions in the areas of "empowering consumers" and "empowering the research community."

The CodeCheck 2020 report found that Facebook, Twitter, Google and Microsoft had introduced various actions aimed at empowering Irish consumers, including "mechanisms to report fake news, providing greater information on the content visible on the platforms, greater control and transparency in relation to advertising and user preferences and the promotion of authentic and authoritative information sources." However, the report also indicated that the level at which Facebook, Twitter, Google and Microsoft had engaged in these actions was both "mixed and inconsistent." The CodeCheck 2020 report found, *inter alia,* that "although all four platforms provide tools for consumers to report or give feedback on content, it is unclear what the uptake of these tools is in Ireland and also what procedures are in place to address this content once a complaint has been received." Moreover, the report indicated that "the most significant shortcoming in the empowering of consumers" identified in the report was in relation to "the labelling of trustworthy content." The CodeCheck 2020

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report found that researchers “could not identify any news items across any of the four platforms which had been labelled as fact-checked with the corresponding verdict on its authenticity,” which “represents a substantial obstacle in assisting consumers to make informed decisions when they encounter news online.”

In relation to the area of “empowering the research community,” the CodeCheck 2020 report found that “specific organised events/discussions and partnerships with Irish research and academic institutions remain episodic and largely inadequate to support any rigorous analysis and monitoring of online disinformation trends in Ireland.” The report makes a number of recommendations to address all of the issues identified in it. Chief Executive of the BAI, Michael O’ Keefe stated that “the report is timely, considering the harmful effect that disinformation has had across society during the COVID-19 crisis,” adding that it has “brought into sharp focus the urgency at which digital platforms must engage more meaningfully with the Code.”

BAI, FuJo, 'CodeCheck 2020: A Review of Platform Compliance with the EC Code of Practice on Disinformation' 28 April 2020

http://www.bai.ie/en/download/134886/

BAI, 'New report highlights inconsistencies across digital platforms in tackling disinformation'

https://www.bai.ie/en/new-report-highlights-inconsistencies-across-digital-platforms-in-tackling-disinformation/

European Commission, 'Code of Practice on Disinformation'

https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=54454

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