[IT] Parliament considers establishing an ad-hoc parliamentary committee of inquiry on the massive dissemination of fake news

IRIS 2020-10:1/3

Ernesto Apa& Marco Bassini
Portolano Cavallo

The Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Senate of the Italian Republic is currently discussing a bill (No. 1900) aimed at establishing a parliamentary committee of inquiry to investigate the problem of disinformation and, more precisely, the dissemination on a massive scale of fake news. It is well known that Italian lawmakers and regulators have already attempted to introduce some measures to counter the spread of disinformation on the Internet; however, none of the initiatives undertaken so far have reached the approval stage, triggering a lot of criticism (see IRIS Special on media coverage of elections here). The bill currently under discussion does not per se establish any binding measure to counter the dissemination of fake news; rather, its purpose is to empower a committee with a variety of tasks, including: a) to investigate the massive dissemination of illegal, false, non-verified or intentionally misleading information and content, both via traditional and online media ("disinformation activities"); b) to ascertain if such activities are backed by subjects, groups or organisations which receive financial support, including from foreign actors, with the specific purpose of manipulating information and influencing the public opinion, including in the context of electoral or referenda campaigns; c) to assess the impact of disinformation on health and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; d) to assess whether disinformation activities pursue the goal of inciting hatred, discriminations and violence; e) to explore whether there exist any connections between disinformation and commercial activities, most notably pursued by websites and digital platforms; f) to verify the "status quo" from a legal standpoint, as well as the existence and adequacy of procedures implemented by media platforms and social media service providers for the removal of false pieces of information and illegal content; g) to assess the existence of social, educational and literacy measures and best practices or of initiatives aimed at raising the awareness of individuals regarding the importance of fact-checking and reliable sources of information; h) to determine if legal or administrative measures aimed at countering and preventing disinformation, as well as the commission of crimes via the media, are necessary, including having regard to the negative consequences of disinformation on the development of minors and their learning abilities.

The parliamentary committee of inquiry at hand is supposed to work for an 18-month period and to deliver a report to the Chambers covering the activities

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

carried out and the results achieved.The committee shall be vested with the same powers as the judicial authority for conducting investigations, but shall not, under any circumstances, take measures restricting freedom and confidentiality of communications or personal freedom. Furthermore, it shall not interfere with referenda or electoral campaigns, most notably in the course of the so-called election periods under the Par Condicio Law (Law No. 28 of 22 February 2000).

Atto Senato n. 1900 - Istituzione di una Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sulla diffusione massiva di informazioni false

http://www.senato.it/leg/18/BGT/Schede/Ddliter/53197.htm

Senate Act n. 1900 - Establishment of a parliamentary commission of inquiry into the massive dissemination of false information

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026