[NL] New government-wide strategy on disinformation

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On 23 December 2022, the Dutch government announced a significant new strategy on disinformation, which will involve three different government ministries. The new strategy on disinformation was contained in a Letter to Parliament on behalf of the Minister for Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations (Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties), the State Secretary on Kingdom Relations and Digitisation (Koninkrijksrelaties en Digitalisering), the Minister of Justice and Security (Justitie en Veiligheid), and the State Secretary for Culture and Media (Cultuur en Media). Crucially, the government emphasised that the overarching principle of its policy is that "identifying what is and what is not disinformation and fact-checking are primarily not government tasks".

The letter begins by stating that an effective approach to disinformation requires a government-wide strategy in which fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of the press, are paramount. In this regard, there are two main strands to the government's strategy on countering disinformation, namely (a) strengthening public debate, and (b) reducing the influence of disinformation. First, on strengthening the public debate, the letter notes that a diverse media landscape is important to limit the influence of disinformation; and the government is committed to maintaining confidence in and pluralism of Dutch media, as this "contributes to limiting the breeding ground for the negative effects of disinformation on society". As such, there have been recent government polices to strengthen local public broadcasting and investigative journalism (IRIS 2023-2/12). Further, the government is strengthening citizens' resilience to disinformation, with a number of new polices, including the Ministry of the Interior towards intensifying public communication about the existence of disinformation. While the State Secretary for Culture and Media is working with the Media Literacy Network on an awareness-raising process to increase knowledge and skills about the value of journalism in society.

Second, on reducing the influence of disinformation, there will be a number of new strategies, which are based on the view that every government ministry and State authority must be able to respond appropriately when disinformation affects their policy area. These include, for example, in the run-up to municipal elections and European Parliament elections, the organisation of exercises by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations with other ministries on how to respond quickly and proportionately to disinformation campaigns. Further, the National

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Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) will work to develop expertise in the field of communication in the event of disinformation in relation to national security crisis.

Finally, the letter states that at the end of 2023, the various ministries involved will inform Parliament about the progress of the implementation of the new strategy.

Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelatie, Kabinet pakt desinformatie aan, 23 december 2022

https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/regering/bewindspersonen/hanke-bruins-slot/nieuws/2022/12/23/kabinet-pakt-desinformatie-aan

Minister for Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations, Cabinet tackles disinformation, 23 December 2022

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