Conference

Virtual Insanity? The need to guarantee transparency in digital political advertising

Date: Thursday, 14 November 2019 (09h15 – 12h30)

Venue: L42 Conference Center, Rue de la Loi 42, Brussels

The phenomenon of digital political campaigning has caught global public attention with the twin shocks of the Brexit referendum and the US presidential election in 2016 (and the related Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal). Since then, the tension between the integrity of electoral systems and a vastly unregulated digital sphere have arguably become an inherent danger to democracies worldwide. It is clear that additional safeguards are needed that would allow regulators, and the public more generally, to understand who is funding what online. Accordingly, after her nomination, European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen announced her plans for a European Democracy Action Plan that should include legislative proposals to guarantee transparency in political advertising. In 2018 already, a self-regulatory Code of Practice was signed between the European Commission, major tech companies and advertisers, but its implementation has been called into question in several quarters.

Before the European Parliament elections of 2019, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) commissioned research to be conducted in three countries, the Czech Republic, Italy and the Netherlands, in order to monitor the level to which tech platforms comply with the Code of Practice against disinformation on matters related to digital political advertising. EPD kindly invites you to join a discussion with the researchers, civil society representatives and policy makers on this subject. The event will provide an overview of main achievements and shortcomings of the Code of Practice and explore what should be considered by policy makers at the European Union eyeing for regulatory solutions in the future.

Please register here. For questions, please contact ruthhenckes@epd.eu.

Programme

09h15   **Registration and coffee**

09h25   **Welcome and introduction**

> **Ken Godfrey**, Executive Director
> *European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)*

09h30   **Keynote speech**

> **Věra Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality
> and Vice-President-designate for Values and Transparency
> *European Commission*

10h00   **Presentation of research: What lessons to draw from the European Parliament elections?**

> **Leon Hemkemeyer**, Programmes Coordinator
> *European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)*
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> **Ruth-Marie Henckes**, Advocacy and Communications Officer
> *European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)*

10h30   **Coffee break**

10h50   **Panel: Developing a European approach to regulating digital political advertising?**

> **Alexandra Geese**, Member of the European Parliament
> *Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance*
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> **Marie-Hélène Boulanger**, Head of Unit
> *European Commission, DG JUST D3, Union Citizenship Rights and Free Movement*
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> **Paolo Cesarini**, Head of Unit
> *European Commission, DG CNECT I4, Media Convergence and Social Media*
>
> **Sam Jeffers,** Co-Founder
> *Who Targets Me*

> *Moderated by*
> **Jennifer Baker**, Journalist

12h30   **End of event**