



Joint Statement on Stakeholder Inclusion in the Code of Practice on Disinformation Revision Process

24 February 2022

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, were invited as third-party stakeholders to participate in the 1 February meeting to discuss the draft revised Code of Practice on Disinformation, which was organized by VVA Brussels and attended by representatives of the EU Commission, the Honest Broker Team, and several signatories.

While we appreciate in principle the opportunity to be consulted in the revision process, **it must be made clear that the meeting which occurred cannot and should not be characterized as a “stakeholder consultation” as was initially suggested by the meeting’s organizers.** That’s in part because draft sections of the new Code were only shared on very short notice ahead of the meeting, making it infeasible for most stakeholders to adequately review the texts or prepare meaningful feedback for discussion.

Third-party stakeholders were frankly blindsided during the meeting, which did not correspond with the agenda circulated in advance by its organizers. The agenda stated that the Signatories would give presentations on the revised draft sections of the Code, yet such presentations were not delivered. Instead, stakeholders were made to provide the substance of the meeting with their comments on the revised sections of the Code — and many of them found themselves unprepared to do so, since they had expected a prior presentation. This not only ran counter to the stated agenda, but it also led to an imbalanced exchange. It should also be mentioned that **stakeholders were not notified ahead of time about who among the Signatories would participate in the meeting,** reflecting a general opacity on the side of the Signatories.

Given the unfortunate failure of this meeting, and with the revised Code of Practice due to be finalized in March 2022, **the window for third-party stakeholders to properly consult on the revised Code is closing fast.** Stakeholders have to this point only been provided with selected portions of the draft text, and if they are to be shown additional draft sections before the deadline, then it seems unlikely that this would happen in a manner that is timely for providing, much less integrating substantive feedback.

We therefore ask that stakeholders be given the opportunity to review the revised draft of the Code in its entirety and be granted an adequate period of time to analyze the text and provide comprehensive feedback. Only then would stakeholders have a basis for providing meaningful consultation on the revised Code of Practice on Disinformation.

Signatories:

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