
COVID-19 Coronavirus: Jourova (EU), wave of fake news also from third countries. “Need to distinguish between illegal and harmful contents”

“Disinformation waves have hit Europe during the Coronavirus pandemic. They originated from within as well as outside the EU. To fight disinformation, we need to mobilise all relevant players from online platforms to public authorities, and support independent fact checkers and media”. This is according to European Commission Vice President Vera Jourová who, alongside High Representative Josep Borrell, presented the initiatives to counter misleading information around the sensitive issues of health and the fight against COVID-19. “While online platforms have taken positive steps during the pandemic, they need to step up their efforts. Our actions - she added - are strongly embedded in fundamental rights, in particular freedom of expression and information”. The “Communication” presented in Brussels today insists, first of all, on the need to “distinguish between illegal content and content that is harmful but not illegal”. Then, it is also necessary to understand the “blurred boundaries between the various forms of false or misleading content: from disinformation, which is defined as intentional, to misinformation, which can be unintentional”. The motivation can range from “targeted influence operations by foreign actors to purely economic motives”. Each of these challenges calls for “a calibrated response. Furthermore, there is a need to provide more data for public scrutiny and improve analytical capacities”.

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