

May 2024

PLATFORMS' POLICIES ON ELECTIONS MISINFORMATION

V2



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
DEFINITIONS AND ACTORS	4
TYPES OF ACTIONS	5
TYPE OF CONTENT	6
CROSS-PLATFORM COMPARISON	7
CONCLUDING REMARKS	8

Authors:

V1 (22 June 2023): **Nicolas Hénin**, EU DisinfoLab

V2 (30 May 2024): EU DisinfoLab

Reviewer:

Rasto Kuzel at MEMO 98

INTRODUCTION

- The present factsheet delves into platform policies on election misinformation, focusing on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X. All these platforms have been qualified as Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) by the European Union Digital Services Act. Therefore, they must comply with particularly stringent regulations and justify the means they deploy to combat false and misleading information. Moreover, as the 2024 election super year unfolds, these platforms will be particularly scrutinised.
- Although with different degrees of concern, all the platforms discussed here have identified electoral misinformation's potential for harm: reduction of trust in democratic institutions, not accepting the outcome of the vote, voter suppression, calls for violence or even the overthrow of the institutions, etc.
- As is often the case when investigating topic-specific misinformation, this document is hampered by the fact that election-related policies are sometimes confused with general policies to combat misinformation. However, this factsheet attempts to focus as much as possible on electoral misinformation and the policies against it.
- The paper summarises the state of the art at the time of writing and shows how five of the largest online platforms have addressed electoral misinformation. It presents the definitions of prohibited organic or advertising content, the actors involved and detection criteria. To address platform's responses to the threats posed by Artificial Intelligence – including in electoral misinformation – we compiled another [factsheet](#) on platforms' policies on AI-manipulated and generated misinformation.

DEFINITIONS AND ACTORS

Platform	Definition of election misinformation	Rationale for removing elections misinformation	Elections misinformation resources	Internal actors	External collaborators
Facebook	Content determined false by an authoritative third party, except for “political speeches” .	Preventing interference and empowering people to vote .	Meta’s “Our approach to elections” page.	Oversight Board; human content moderators; artificial intelligence .	Dedicated partnerships for major elections; third-party fact-checkers .
Instagram	Content determined false by an authoritative third party, except for “political speeches” .	Preventing interference and empowering people to vote .	Meta’s “Our approach to elections” page.	Oversight Board; human content moderators; artificial intelligence .	Dedicated partnerships for major elections; third-party fact-checkers .
YouTube	Certain types of misleading or deceptive content, including but not limited to voter suppression, candidate eligibility, incitement to interfere with democratic processes, distribution of hacked materials, and election integrity.	Serious risk of egregious harm . This includes certain types of misinformation that can cause real-world harm, like certain types of technically manipulated content and content interfering with democratic processes.	YouTube’s “Elections misinformation policies” .	Human content moderators triggered by users’ reports ; In the case of Google Ads (applying to YouTube): a combination of Google AI and human evaluation to ensure that ads comply with these policies.	Government agencies and non-governmental organisations in the framework of the “Priority Flagger Programme” ; occasional partnerships during high-stakes elections (e.g., USA, Germany, Brazil.).
TikTok	Misinformation “includes false or misleading information about how to vote, how to register to vote, the eligibility qualifications for candidates, and the procedures that govern the implementation of elections.” Election misinformation includes “attempts to influence or sway public opinion while misleading people or our platform’s systems about the identity, origin, operating location, popularity, or purpose of an account.”	“Keeping people safe, protecting the integrity of the TikTok platform.” It includes acting towards misleading AI-generated material and removing covert influence operations relying on deceptive behaviours to affect electoral outcomes or processes.	“Election Integrity” policy; a “local language Election Centre in-app for each of the 27 individual EU Member States” and similar country-specific resources for the UK 2024 elections .	European Safety Advisory Council ; Global Youth Council ; Mission Control space with specialist elections team for the EU elections; human content moderators (called “Integrity & Authenticity moderators”); automated detection; user reports.	Safety partners (i.e., industry experts, NGOs, and industry associations), including third-party fact-checkers, media literacy partners.
X	Currently lacking a definition of misinformation. References are made to “misleading information”, but no definition is provided either. Prohibition to manipulate or interfere in “elections or other civic processes”.	There is no indication of content removal in the “Civic integrity policy” , but simply of “removing the post from the For You and Following timelines”. Post removal in case of a severe enough violation of X Rules actually means that the platform requires the violator to remove the content before they can post again.	“Civic integrity policy” page in the Help Centre.	“X Safety team” relying on “automation and manual moderation tools to identify and remove harmful or inappropriate content and accounts”.	Volunteer content moderators via Community Notes ; automated and manual moderation ; collaborative approach with industry experts and organisations.

TYPES OF ACTIONS

	1. Labelling of election misinformation	2. Downranking of election misinformation	3. Demonetisation of elections misinformation	4. Strike policy	5. Removal of elections misinformation
Facebook	Informational labels based on fact-checkers' reviews and ratings.	Reducing the distribution of false information.	There is no specific demonetisation of election misinformation, but some related categories may face reduced or restricted monetisation: i.e., "Debated social issues" (such as personal, civil or political rights) and "Misinformation" (content that has been rated false by a third-party fact-checker).	Meta's strike policy for violating Community Standards.	Misinformation that is likely to contribute to interference with the functioning of political processes directly.
Instagram	Informational labels based on fact-checkers' reviews and ratings.	Reducing the distribution of false information.	There is no specific demonetisation of election misinformation, but some related categories may face reduced or restricted monetisation: i.e., "Debated social issues" (such as personal, civil or political rights) and "Misinformation" (content that has been rated false by a third-party fact-checker).	Meta's strike policy for violating Community Standards.	Misinformation that is likely to contribute to interference with the functioning of political processes directly.
YouTube	Election information panels that provide additional information from authoritative third-party sources; third-party fact-checker rating system .	Removing borderline content from recommendations ; reducing the spread of harmful election misinformation; prioritising information from authoritative sources in search results and recommendations; rewarding trusted creators via the YouTube Partner Program .	Withholding, limiting, or suspending channel revenue for violating guidelines , including preventing election misinformation.	" Community Guidelines strike basics on YouTube ".	Removing content that violates the platform's Community Guidelines , including election content and misinformation to suppress census participation .
TikTok	Labelling unverified content ; having creators label AI-generated election content.	Reducing content discoverability by making it ineligible to appear in the 'For You' feed; disabling accounts from posting content for 7-30 days , depending on the severity of the violation and associated risk; directing people to TikTok's in-app Election Centre and hashtags raising awareness on misinformation.	Prohibiting political ads ; prohibiting advertising, fundraising, or TikTok monetisation tools (i.e., 'Promote' or 'TikTok Shop') for accounts belonging to a government, politician, or political party.	Strike policy for violating the Community Guidelines contained in the "Content violations and bans".	Removing accounts and content for violating Community Guidelines (including attacks on elections integrity, mis- and disinformation); removing covert influence operations .
X	Labelling violative posts informing users that the content is misleading.	Excluding the post from search results, trends, recommended notifications, 'For you' and 'Following' timelines; restricting the post's discoverability, likes, replies, reposts, quotes, bookmarks, share, pin to profile, or edit post; downranking the post in replies.	" Political content " policy preventing advertisers from promoting false or misleading content; enforcement options specifying that posts violating platform rules are excluded from having ads adjacent to them.	Enforcement options do not specify the existence of a strike policy.	There is no indication of content removal in the " Civic integrity policy ", but simply of "removing the post from the For You and Following timelines"; when a violation of X Rules is deemed severe enough to warrant post removal , the platform will require the violator to remove it before they can post again.

TYPE OF CONTENT

Platform	Organic Content	Advertisement Content
Facebook	The general Meta policy on fighting misinformation applies. “ Meta’s approach to elections ” echoes the platform’s commitment to connecting people with reliable information, policy enforcement, and transparency and accountability.	The Advertising Standards consider that “advertisers can run ads about social issues, elections or politics, provided that the advertiser complies with all applicable laws and the authorisation process required by Meta. Meta may restrict issue, electoral or political ads. In addition, certain content related to elections may be prohibited by local law or removed in specific regions ahead of voting.” The page “ Meta’s approach to elections ” lists the criteria for running political ads, which are then included in the Ad Library .
Instagram	The general Meta policy on fighting misinformation applies. “ Meta’s approach to elections ” echoes the platform’s commitment to connecting people with reliable information, policy enforcement, and transparency and accountability.	The Advertising Standards consider that “advertisers can run ads about social issues, elections or politics, provided that the advertiser complies with all applicable laws and the authorisation process required by Meta. Meta may restrict issue, electoral or political ads. In addition, certain content related to elections may be prohibited by local law or removed in specific regions ahead of voting.” The page “ Meta’s approach to elections ” lists the criteria for running political ads, which are then included in the Ad Library .
YouTube	Detailed election misinformation policies , including voter suppression, candidate eligibility, incitement to interfere with democratic processes, distribution of hacked materials and election integrity. Election-related content is also subject to other Community Guidelines (i.e., harassment, hate speech, manipulated content, impersonation or spam policies, among others). AI-generated election misinformation is another concern: YouTube requires creators’ disclosure and labelling (with some exceptions).	YouTube ads must comply with Google Ads Policies , that “expect all political ads and destinations to comply with local legal requirements . This includes campaign and election laws and mandated election ‘silence periods’ for any geographic areas they target.” In some regions, election ads may run only if the advertiser is verified by Google. In other regions, there are restrictions on political ads.
TikTok	TikTok’s guidelines on “ Protecting the integrity of elections ” indicate that during electoral processes, the platform commits to removing or reducing misinformation, directing people to their in-app Election Centre, and encouraging users to think critically about the content encountered.	TikTok’s guidelines on “ Protecting the integrity of elections ” prohibit paid promotion of political content on the platform. Specifically, TikTok does not allow paid political promotion, political advertising, or fundraising by politicians and political parties, including traditional paid ads or creators receiving compensation to support or oppose a candidate for office.
X	The X Rules state that the platform cannot be used for the purpose of manipulating or interfering in elections or other civic processes. This includes posting or sharing content that may suppress participation or mislead people about when, where, or how to participate in a civic process.	It is unclear if election misinformation applies to inappropriate content (i.e., including events or topics with a “significant social or political impact”). Ads promoting false or misleading content are not allowed, including those on how to participate in an election, intended to intimidate or dissuade people from participating in an election, or intended to undermine or dissuade people from participating.

CROSS-PLATFORM COMPARISON

Common Traits	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	TikTok	X
Definition of elections misinformation based on false and/or misleading content	X *	X *	X	X	
Definition of elections misinformation based on third-party assessment	X	X	X		
Rationale for removing election misinformation based on the risk of harm	X	X	X	X	
Specific elections resources	X	X	X	X	
Human content moderators	X	X	X	X	X
Collaboration with local authorities and organisations	X	X	X	X	
Collaboration with fact-checkers	X	X	X	X	
Labelling of election misinformation	X	X	X	X	X
Downranking of election misinformation	X	X	X	X	X
Demonetisation of election misinformation	X	X	X	**	X
Strike policy	X	X	X	X	
Removal of election misinformation	X	X	X	X	***
Prohibition of election misinformation	X	X	X	X	X
Advertising standards for election misinformation	X	X	X	**	X

*Political speeches may be excluded from this policy under the principle of 'newsworthiness'. However, Meta does "not presume that any person's speech is inherently newsworthy, including politicians".

**Not applicable (no political ads).

***Broad definition of removal as removal from recommendations and requesting users to remove violating posts themselves.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This final section offers the opportunity to express some considerations that emerged from compiling this factsheet.

- The analysis of the election misinformation policies across major platforms reveals varied approaches but a common commitment to maintaining the integrity of elections and combating misinformation.
- Despite the challenge of distinguishing between general and election-specific misinformation, platforms show efforts to address electoral falsehoods specifically, reflecting a proactive stance towards safeguarding democracy. In some cases, special arrangements are made for high-stakes elections, such as the 2024 European Parliament elections.
- Meta (for which Facebook and Instagram’s policies align) relies heavily on third-party fact-checkers and an Oversight Board. Emphasis is placed on empowering voters and preventing interference, but there is no specific demonetisation of election misinformation.
- YouTube identifies and addresses several types of election misinformation, including voter suppression and content that threatens democratic integrity. In the run-up to the 2024 election super year, YouTube [clarified](#) that its electoral policy does not present major changes from the past. The most notable new feature is the mention of [AI-generated](#) election misinformation, which nevertheless allows for [exceptions](#) for “educational, documentary, scientific, or artistic content”.
- TikTok has reinforced its counter-misinformation measures for the 2024 election period. However, caution is needed regarding the platform’s requirement that users label AI-generated content by themselves. TikTok’s approach to minimise election-related misinformation includes not allowing political advertising. Yet, [Mozilla](#) revealed that the Chinese platform does not monitor influencer advertising and that influencers are not disclosing paid relationships with political groups.
- Many concerns rest with X, which progressively dismantled its policies against misinformation in general and election-related misinformation in particular. For instance, the [“How we address misinformation on Twitter”](#) page – which mentioned

misinformation and “external, subject-matter experts” – no longer exists, redirecting users to an introduction to Community Notes. The lack of a clear definition of misinformation and content moderation measures that overly rely on users rather than third-party experts evidence a rather unstructured policy that allows inaccurate information to thrive.

- Although platforms demonstrate a commitment to combatting election misinformation, the specifics of the policies, the definitions used for misinformation, and the enforcement mechanisms differ significantly. This reflects both the platforms’ diverse user bases and their varying operational philosophies despite being all bound to the DSA.