

# Facebook January 2019 Update on Implementation of the Code of Practice on Disinformation

## 1. Introduction

This report outlines recent progress made by Facebook in implementing the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation and in an Annex includes the implementation strategy set out in our earlier baseline report. Facebook's priority during the month of January has been in two areas: the development of our political ads authorization process, ad labelling, and the ad archive service; and the expansion of our elections integrity programme. We are in the process of developing performance indicators, but these depend on the launch of the ads archive outside the US and will therefore not be available until after that service launches. We also provide some details of recent actions taken under our Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour policy and on media literacy.

## 1. Development of political and issue advertising transparency tools

In preparation for the launch of the pan-EU advertising archive, currently planned for March 2019. The main workstreams under way in the development of the advertising archive are:

- **User research:**
  - In January, our Ads Business Integrity Research team interviewed political stakeholders in key markets across Europe to help us understand the political advertising landscape and get feedback on our ad transparency tools. We met with social media managers and campaign strategists of political parties, elected officials, government institutions, civic organisations and political ad agencies.
- **Development of a model for cross-border advertising:** In order to limit the risk of foreign interference in electoral processes, Facebook's general policy is not to permit cross-border advertising by authorised advertisers: authorisation relates to a single jurisdiction. Some EU institutions and bodies may wish to advertise across multiple jurisdictions. In order to facilitate such cross-border advertising, we need to secure external advice on who should be exempted from the restriction on cross-border advertisers. Facebook prefers not to be in the position of determining which institutions and bodies should be permitted to advertise across borders, and we have therefore requested the help of the Commission to develop a list of exempted advertisers in consultation with the Council and the European Parliament. We've requested that the list be delivered by February 22.
- **Development of an approach to issue-based advertising:** Facebook's ad archive will include political ads and issue ads, as in the US. We are currently working to determine what the scope of "issue-based advertising" should be across the EU. The EU doesn't have laws or agencies that list specific issues that are subject to

regulation. So, as we did in the US, we looked to the non-partisan Comparative Agendas Project (CAP). The Comparative Agendas Project is an independent, nonpartisan group of universities from around the globe that “assembles and codes information on the policy processes of governments from around the world.” In addition to the CAP list, we are looking at the Eurobarometer survey that the European Parliament published in May 2018 and have been engaging with stakeholders throughout the region. We’ll be using all of these inputs to develop our policy for issue ads in the EU that take a position with the goal of influencing public debate on topics, such as immigration.

- **Developing an enforcement model for political advertising:**

- Ad review relies on a mix of automated and human review, which is geared toward enforcing our Advertising Policies. We have developed machine learning models that can, in certain instances, help identify a particular kind of ad before it runs.
- For example, our machine-learning models can be used to help detect ads containing political content.
- When found, we will prevent the ad from running until the advertiser completes the authorisation process and applies the “Paid for by” disclaimer to the ad.
- We’re constantly working to improve our enforcement processes, both through improving our machine learning models and staffing and training our human review team.
- When the ad labelling service launches, people will be able to report ads to us that they believe should have a “Paid for by” disclaimer on them. To do so, tap the three dots at the top right of the ad if it's in your feed, or the bottom right if it's a Facebook or Instagram Story, and select “Report Ad”
- We'll review the ad reported, and if we determine it's an ad with political content, we will take it down until the advertiser completes the authorization process.

## **2. Elections integrity programme**

Our elections integrity programme is a central element of our fight against disinformation. Key elements of the programme currently under way include

- **User Research**

- Starting late January and continuing into February, our Civic Engagement Research team has been conducting user research in key markets across the EU, which consists of in-depth interviews and focus groups, plus elite interviews (e.g. political parties, civil society, journalists, academics) to

understand election integrity threats in the EU and how to best prepare our products, operations and processes for elections.

- **The establishment of elections operation centres.** In January, we announced our plans to expand on work we did in the Brazil and U.S. mid-term elections to set up two new regional operations centers, focused on election integrity, located in our Dublin and Singapore offices. This will allow our global teams to better work across regions in the final, critical weeks before an election, and will further strengthen our coordination and response time between staff in Menlo Park and in-country. These teams will add a layer of defense against fake news, hate speech and voter suppression, and will work cross-functionally with our threat intelligence, data science, engineering, research, community operations, legal and other teams.
  - In early February, 85 people representing different teams in the Facebook election taskforce convened in Brussels to review our work for the European Parliament elections.
- **Safety & security training.** We have provided and will continue to provide training to electoral stakeholders, such as political parties, political groups, elected representatives and their staff, government institutions and civic organisations, on how to safely and securely manage their political communications on Facebook. The training includes safety basics for page admins, a review of all the safety and security features, and how to report abusive content. We have already provided training to a large number of users in the EU institutions, including the European Parliament, Commission and Council; political parties across the EU (most recently in Belgium, Denmark, and Finland); civic organisations in Brussels; and EU influencers, such as political bloggers.
  - One of the easiest and most effective ways to secure an account is to set up two-factor authentication. Two-factor authentication is a security feature that helps protect your Facebook account in addition to your password. If you set up two-factor authentication, you'll be asked to enter a special login code or confirm your login attempt each time someone tries accessing Facebook from a computer or mobile device we don't recognize. You can also [get alerts](#) when someone tries logging in from a computer they don't recognize. We will be rolling out a Security Megaphone mid-February to remind people to turn on two-factor authentication for their account. The security megaphone is a unit that pops up on people's news feed and provides a [link to instructions](#) on how to set up two-factor authentication. The security megaphone is displayed for those who are affiliated to a political page, such as pages for political parties and candidates.
- **Journalists training.** The Facebook Journalism Project aims to collaborate with the news industry in support of a more informed community. Together, we work with news organizations to develop products, tools, and training for journalists and newsrooms around the world. As part of this programme, we provide tailored

training workshops that include safety and security basics for journalists; half-day bootcamps on how to use the Facebook and Instagram platforms; and news integrity and anti-false news education seminars. For the European Parliament elections, we are planning a series of training events across the EU, which will kick off late March.

- **Working with government authorities and experts.** In the run up to the elections, we partner with electoral bodies and other relevant government bodies and agencies on electoral integrity issues as well as to ensure our products are sensitive and appropriate to launch in each country. We also work with these bodies to ensure the tools we create - which help people to vote and to share information about voting processes - are accurate and informative. We have engaged with electoral bodies, cyber agencies and other relevant government bodies in many of the EU countries and will continue our outreach efforts to the rest of the EU countries. In addition, we are regularly engaging in public events and policy roundtables to discuss how to combat misinformation and election integrity issues, which then helps to inform our elections work.
  - We also organise an 'EU Conversation' roundtable series on election integrity - our next roundtable in February will look at cybersecurity and election interference.
- **Integrity & Security Initiative.** Protecting the integrity of elections and especially tackling 'Information Operations' is complex and needs the joint efforts of various stakeholders such as government authorities, companies as well as research scientists. Together with the German Office for Information Security (BSI), we are launching an initiative for a better and more comprehensive understanding of interference into elections. The initiative aims to create a better understanding of "Information Operations" and will develop policy guidance for decision makers in Germany and across the EU on how to combat election interference. This initiative will kick off mid-February.

### 3. Coordinated inauthentic behaviour

CIB takedowns over the last month include:

- **[Iran](#):** We removed 783 Pages, groups and accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behaviour tied to Iran. There were multiple sets of activity, each localized for a specific country or region, including Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, US, and Yemen. The Page administrators and account owners typically represented themselves as locals, often using fake accounts, and posted news stories on current events. This included commentary that repurposed Iranian state media's reporting on topics like Israel-Palestine relations and the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, including the role of the US, Saudi Arabia, and Russia. Some of the activity

dates back to 2010. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our manual review linked these accounts to Iran.

- **Indonesia:** We removed 207 Facebook Pages, 800 Facebook accounts, 546 Facebook Groups, and 208 Instagram accounts, for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behaviour on Facebook in Indonesia, misleading others about who they were and what they were doing. All of these Pages, accounts and groups were linked to the Saracen Group – an online syndicate in Indonesia.
- **Russia:** We removed 364 Facebook Pages and accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior as part of a network that originated in Russia and operated in the Baltics, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Central and Eastern European countries. The Page administrators and account owners primarily represented themselves as independent news Pages or general interest Pages on topics like weather, travel, sports, economics, or politicians in Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan. Despite their misrepresentations of their identities, we found that these Pages and accounts were linked to employees of Sputnik, a news agency based in Moscow, and that some of the Pages frequently posted about topics like anti-NATO sentiment, protest movements, and anti-corruption.

#### 4. Media Literacy & Fact Checking

Our approach to reduce false news on our platforms is not just focused on third party fact checkers. It is a multi-prong approach that also includes media education.

- **Fact-checking.** Reducing the spread of false news is a top concern for the European Parliament elections so we are looking at ways to scale our third party fact checking program across all 27 EU member states.
  - Currently, we have [fact-checking partners in 25 countries](#), covering 17 languages. This includes 8 countries in the EU - France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark and the UK - covering 7 official EU languages. We will continue to expand our partnerships as we prepare for the European Parliament elections in 2019 and beyond.
  - In February, we have expanded our fact-checking partnership with AFP to counter false news in Arabic, which includes verification of images.
  - We are also looking to expand our fact-checking partnership with pan-European news agencies to cover more EU countries.
- **Media Literacy.** There are limits to any fact-checking programmes - fact-checkers don't exist in all countries and different places have different standards of journalism as well as varying levels of press freedom. This is why we are investing in partnerships aimed at improving digital and media literacy across Europe. By helping people sharpen their media literacy skills, we can help society be more

resilient to misleading stories. For the past few years, we have launched media literacy programmes with partners in several European countries. In 2019, we have so far launched the following programmes:

- **Poland: Digital Literacy Library.** We have launched our [Digital Literacy Library](#) (a set of educational resources for teachers focused on safe and informed youth internet use) in Poland, as a partner of a Safer Internet Day conference. Marek Zagórski Minister of Digital Affairs, Adam Bodnar Commissioner for Human Rights, Krzysztof Silicki Head of NASK (national cyber security research institute), several NGOs as well as around 800 teachers were present. Over 2600 teachers and students watched the event online.
- **Denmark: Digital Literacy Day for first-time voters.** In January and February, we have organised two debate events for final year high school students in the Danish cities, Copenhagen and Aarhus. The debates are centered on the challenges for democracy in the 21st century posed by social media and the internet. High school students will discuss matters related to filter-bubbles; freedom of speech; as well as misinformation and fake news. The goal of the events is to engage youths - many of whom will be first-time voters in the upcoming Danish election - in order for them to become better at navigating critically and safely as digital citizens.
- In addition, we are planning to partner with the **European Commission on the EC Media Literacy Week** in March and deliver on issues such as cyber-bullying, disinformation and elections

# **Annex: Facebook baseline report on implementation of the Code**

## **1. Introduction**

This report provides an overview of Facebook's approach to implementing the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, including details of our relevant policies, products, services and actions we take to address the harms caused by disinformation online. It is important to note that our approach to disinformation is in continual development, for example through the evolution of the tools we use to identify potentially false stories, clickbait and spam, and this report provides a snapshot of our approach as at January 2019. The policies, products and services detailed in this report are available globally except where we give specific details of regional coverage.

The following sections set out our current approaches to each of the categories of commitments set out in the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation.

## **1. Scrutiny of Ad Placements**

### **1.1 Policies for advertising appearing on Facebook**

Facebook's policies for advertising are publicly available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/policies/ads/>. Facebook advertising policies ban the inclusion in advertising of sensational content, which we define as shocking, sensational, disrespectful or excessively violent content. We also ban the inclusion of misleading or false content: ads, landing pages, and business practices must not contain deceptive, false, or misleading content, including deceptive claims, offers, or methods.

We enforce compliance with these rules through an advertising approval process which examines the images, text, targeting, and positioning of the advertisement, in addition to the content on the advertisement's landing page. Advertisements may not be approved if the landing page content isn't fully functional, doesn't match the product/service promoted in the ad or doesn't fully comply with our Advertising Policies.

### **1.2 Facebook [advertising network policies](#)**

Facebook's advertising network places ads on third-party sites and services, generating income for third-party publishers; Facebook policies for the advertising network also ban the inclusion of misleading, deceptive, sensational or excessively violent content. This includes deceptive claims (such as false news), offers, or business practices.

### **1.3 Reducing the economic incentives for false news**

One of the most effective approaches to fighting false news is removing the economic incentives for traffickers of disinformation. We've found that a lot of fake news is financially motivated: spammers make money by masquerading as legitimate news publishers and posting hoaxes that get people to visit their sites, which are often mostly ads.

The steps we're taking to address the economic incentives for providers of false news include:

- Implementing multiple News Feed ranking changes to reduce the distribution and hence disincentivise financially-motivated tactics like the provision of [clickbait](#), [cloaking](#), [ad farms](#) and sharing of false or sensationalist content on the platform.
- Using signals, including feedback from people on Facebook, to predict potentially false stories for fact-checkers to review.
- Better identifying false news, drawing on feedback from our community and using third-party fact-checking organizations, so that we can limit its spread, which, in turn, makes it uneconomical. For example, when fact-checkers rate a story as false, we significantly reduce its distribution in News Feed. On average, this cuts future views by more than 80%.
- Taking action against entire Pages and websites that repeatedly share false news, reducing their overall News Feed distribution. And since we don't want to make money from misinformation or help those who create it profit, these publishers are not allowed to [run ads](#) or [use our monetization features](#) like Instant Articles.
- Applying machine learning to assist our response teams in detecting fraud and enforcing our policies against inauthentic spam accounts.
- Updating our detection of fake accounts on Facebook, which makes spamming at scale much harder.

#### 1.4 Brand Safety

Facebook already has brand safety measures in place for ad breaks (video), Instant Articles, and Audience Network. Every piece of monetizable content is reviewed and provided a severity label for our six categories. At this time, content labeled SEVERE is ineligible to have ads placed next to it. Categories capable of attracting a SEVERE label are

- Tragedy and Conflict
- Explicit Content
- Sexual and Suggestive
- Debated Social Issues
- Objectionable Activity
- Strong Language

## 2. Political advertising and issue-based advertising

At Facebook we are committed to making advertising more transparent. When you visit a Facebook page or see an ad on our platform it should be clear who it is coming from. We believe that increased transparency will lead to increased accountability and responsibility. We've focused our efforts in two main areas:

- **Page Transparency:** Everywhere in the world people can now go to any page and see the ads the page is currently running. People can also see the date the page was created, any name changes it has had and any other pages that have been merged

into it. For pages with a larger following we also require the admins to authorize with us to prove they are who they say they are; we will also show the country location of those admins.

- **Political Ad Transparency:** In addition to the transparency mentioned above we also require political advertisers to take some additional steps. Anyone who wishes to run political ads must obtain authorization to do so by confirming their identity and location. They must also place a disclaimer on their ads so people know who has paid for them. Those ads go into an archive where people can see the range of impressions those ads got, the range of budget spent and the age, gender and location of who saw that ad. The ads remain in this archive for seven years. We also provide a weekly report with aggregated information about the ads in the archive.
  - **Launch Plan:** We have already launched these features in the United States, Brazil, United Kingdom and India. In the US these features cover political and issue ads. In the United Kingdom it covers political or electoral ads as well as legislation before Parliament and past referenda that are the subject of national debate, while in Brazil we only cover electoral ads. We will be launching the archive and the labelling feature, with authorisation based on an identity check, across the European Union in advance of the EU elections.
  - **News Organizations:** We have exempted news organizations from this process in the UK and plan on expanding that to other countries this year.

This transparency serves several purposes. People can see when ads are paid for by a candidate or another third-party group. It should now be more obvious when organizations are saying different things to different groups of people. In addition, journalists, watchdogs, academics, and others can use these tools to study ads on Facebook, report abuse, and hold political and issue advertisers accountable for the content they show.

### 3. Integrity of services

**Authenticity** is the cornerstone of our community and key to preserving the integrity of our services. We remove content that violates our [Community Standards](#) where we become aware of it, which are rules to ensure the safety and security of Facebook, and include explicit **requirements as to authenticity** and **prohibitions on misrepresentation**. Our authenticity and misrepresentation policies are intended to create a safe environment where people can trust and hold one another accountable. Key aspects of these policies include prohibitions on:

- Maintaining multiple accounts
- Creating inauthentic profiles
- Sharing an account with any other person
- Creating another account after being banned from the site
- Evading the registration requirements outlined in our [Terms of Service](#)
- Creating a profile assuming the persona of or speaking for another person or entity
- Creating a Page assuming to be or speak for another person or entity for whom the user is not authorized to do so.

- Engaging in inauthentic behavior, which includes creating, managing, or otherwise perpetuating:
  - Accounts that are fake
  - Accounts that have fake names
  - Accounts that participate in, or claim to engage in, coordinated inauthentic behavior, meaning that multiple accounts are working together to do any of the following:
    - Mislead people in an attempt to encourage shares, likes, or clicks
    - Mislead people to conceal or enable the violation of other policies under the Community Standards

Our [prohibition of inauthentic accounts on Facebook](#) includes inauthentic accounts created by software (e.g., “bots”).

Areas covered by these policies that have been the focus of much scrutiny and concern are fake accounts and inauthentic behavior, details of which are set out below.

### **3.1 Removing Fake Accounts**

Fake account blocking, detection, and removal is an important aspect to preserving the integrity of Facebook's products and services. Facebook employs dedicated teams around the world to develop advanced technical systems, relying on artificial intelligence, heuristic signals, machine learning, as well as human review, to detect, block, and remove fake accounts.

Our technology helps us to take action against millions of attempts, including by bots, to create fake accounts every day, and to detect and remove millions more, often within minutes after creation. Our progress in removing fake accounts is tracked through our [Community Standards Enforcement Report](#) and select highlights from Q2 and Q3 are provided below:

- We took down more fake accounts in Q2 and Q3 2018 than in previous quarters, 800 million and 754 million, respectively. Most of these fake accounts were the result of commercially motivated spam attacks trying to create fake accounts in bulk.
  - In Q2 and Q3 2018, we found and flagged 99.6% of the accounts we subsequently took action on before users reported them. We acted on the other 0.4% because users reported them first. This number increased from 98.5% in Q1 2018.
  - Because we are able to remove most of these accounts within minutes of registration, the prevalence of fake accounts on Facebook remained steady at 3% to 4% of monthly active users as [reported](#) in our most recent (Q3 2018) earnings.
- This year we published our first Community Standards Enforcement reports, showing how much bad content we find and remove. We'll soon start releasing these reports every quarter along with conference calls, just like we do for earnings.

### 3.2 Prohibiting Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior

We continuously disrupt coordinated inauthentic behavior, which is when people or organizations create networks of fake accounts to mislead others about who they are, or what they're doing, to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal.

- **CIB is specifically about behavior — not content.** While we take action both against content that violates our policies and deceptive behavior, our CIB policy is designed to be behavior-based. What matters is whether the actors in question are using deceptive techniques and fake accounts. This type of content-agnostic enforcement is important, because it enables us to take action without evaluating content — or even when deceptive actors share content that would be otherwise permissible.
- Through **technical means we detect harmful activity and then flag it for manual review** by our threat intelligence and other investigative teams.
- We **take action** by having our security teams **investigate suspicious activity and take down accounts that violate our policies.**
- We **look ahead and work with external experts to understand the actors and risks involved.** Our partnerships include those with **governments and law enforcement, security researchers, tech industry peers, and civil society**, among other groups, and we belong to the Cybersecurity Tech Accord, a public commitment among more than 70 global companies to protect online security and defend the Internet against threats.
- Some *selected* global highlights from our takedowns for coordinated inauthentic behavior include:
  - **Belgium** – We took down 37 pages and 9 accounts around the time of the Belgian local elections, some of which were initially identified by Belgian media as potentially inauthentic and trying to manipulate political discourse, and our subsequent investigation further confirmed. Our investigation did not surface any links to foreign operators.
  - **Brazil** – We took down 68 pages and 43 accounts that were using sensationalized political content across the political spectrum to direct people to ad farms for financial gain during the Brazilian presidential election season.
  - **France** - prior to the French presidential election in 2017, we removed more than 30,000 fake accounts that were engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior to spread spam, misinformation or other deceptive content. In removing these accounts, we identified patterns of activity, not content, that resulted in removal — for example, our systems detected repeated posting of the same content and anomalous spikes in messages sent.
  - **Iran** – We took down 104 pages, 103 accounts, 6 groups, and 92 Instagram accounts where page administrators were concealing their location and posting content focused on the Middle East, as well as the UK, U.S., and Latin America, on politically-charged topics such as race relations, opposition to the U.S. president, and immigration. Despite attempts to hide their true identity, a manual review of these accounts linked the activity to Iran.

- **Mexico** – We took down tens of thousands of fake likes, fake pages, and fake groups to promote authentic and trustworthy civic discourse.
- **United States** - We took down 8 pages, 17 accounts, and 7 Instagram accounts where bad actors used VPNs and internet phone services, and paid third parties to run ads on their behalf, and some of these bad actors created an event for a protest. Inauthentic page administrators interacted with administrators of legitimate pages to co-host this event. We disabled the event, reached out to the administrators of the legitimate pages, and informed the users who were interested in the event and those who said would attend.
- **Myanmar** - We took down 484 pages, 157 accounts, 17 groups, and 15 Instagram where we discovered that seemingly independent news, entertainment, beauty and lifestyle pages were linked to the Myanmar military.
- As these highlights indicate, we have been proactive in detecting and removing inauthentic behavior. To stay ahead, we will continue to work collaboratively to maintain and grow this successful track record.

#### 4. Empowering consumers

We empower people to decide for themselves what to read, trust, and share by informing them with more context in-product and promoting [news literacy](#). For example, with the [context button](#), we give people more details on articles and publishers. This new feature is now available to many European countries including Ireland, the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. It is designed to provide people with the tools they need to make a more informed decision about which stories to read, share, and trust. Research with our community and our academic and industry partners has identified some key information that helps people evaluate the credibility of an article and determine whether to trust the article's source. Based on this research, we're making it easy for people to view context about an article, including the publisher's Wikipedia entry, related articles on the same topic, information about how many times the article has been shared on Facebook, where it is has been shared, as well as an option to follow the publisher's page. When a publisher does not have a Wikipedia entry, we will indicate that the information is unavailable, which can also be helpful context. We'll be continuing to expand coverage of EU countries as the range of available contextual information for publishers expands

When third-party fact-checkers write articles about a news story, we show them in [Related Articles](#) immediately below the story in News Feed. We also send people and Page Admins notifications if they try to share a story or have shared one in the past that's been determined to be false.

##### 4.1 Fact-checking and false news

Facebook's fact-checking program uses a [combination of technology and human review](#) to detect and demote false news stories, which would otherwise reduce the authenticity of our service:

- In many countries Facebook is partnering with [third-party fact-checkers](#) to review and rate the accuracy of articles and posts on Facebook. These fact-checkers are independent and [certified](#) through the non-partisan International Fact-Checking Network. We use signals, including feedback from people on Facebook, to predict potentially false stories for fact-checkers to review.
- As noted in the section on *Scrutiny of Ad Placements*, we significantly reduce the distribution of stories identified as false, and Pages and domains that repeatedly share false news also see their distribution reduced and their ability to monetize and advertise removed. We use the information from fact-checkers to train our machine learning model, so that we can catch more potentially false news stories and do so faster. Finally, to give people more control, we encourage them to tell us when they see false news. [Feedback](#) from our community is one of the various signals that we use to identify potential hoaxes.
- Third party fact-checking is now available in 24 countries globally, including Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden within the EU. We will continue to learn from academics, scaling our partnerships with third-party fact-checkers and talking to other bodies like civil society organizations and journalists about how we can work together to fight misinformation.
- Any Facebook user can give us [feedback](#) that a story they're seeing in their News Feed might be false news. Feedback from our community is one of the signals that powers our machine learning model and helps us take action against stories that may be false.

## 4.2 Advertising transparency and consumers

The advertisements a user sees on Facebook depend on

- Information a user shares on Facebook (example: posts or comments you make) and your activity on Facebook (such as liking a Page or a post, clicking on ads you see).
- Other information about a user from their Facebook account (example: your age, your gender, your location, the devices you use to access Facebook).
- Information advertisers and our marketing partners share with Facebook that they already have, like an email address.
- User activity on websites and apps off Facebook.

The “**Why am I seeing this ad**” service, which is an option on all Facebook advertisements, provides users with an explanation of the main reasons they are seeing an ad; the service also allows users to manage their advertising experience by changing the interests relating to which they receive advertising.

## 4.3 Prioritising trusted sources and reducing the distribution of misleading content

In 2018, we changed News Feed to promote news from trusted sources in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. We survey diverse and representative samples of people using Facebook across the relevant markets to gauge their familiarity with, and trust in, different sources of news; and we use this data in the News Feed ranking process to promote news which is trusted by the community.

A second key pillar of our approach to prioritising trusted sources is to reduce the distribution of content which is likely to be misleading, in particular through the detection and down-ranking in News Feed of content which our users are likely to find inauthentic. As mentioned above, this reduces the economic incentives for providers of misinformation. You can learn all about how we reduce distribution of problematic content at the Facebook [“Inside Feed” blog](#), but a few examples include:

- [Clickbait](#): Clickbait headlines are designed to get attention and lure visitors into clicking on a link. Some headlines intentionally leave out crucial details or mislead people, forcing them to click to find out the answer. For example, “When She Looked Under Her Couch Cushions And Saw THIS...”. Other headlines exaggerate the details of a story with sensational language to make the story seem like a bigger deal than it really is. For example, “WOW! Ginger tea is the secret to everlasting youth. You’ve GOT to see this!”. We use AI tools to identify clickbait at the individual post level in addition to the domain and Page level; when we determine that a link is likely to be clickbait, we reduce its distribution in News Feed.
- [Cloaking](#): Some providers of misleading content use a technique known as “cloaking” to circumvent Facebook’s review processes and show content to people that violates Facebook’s [Community Standards](#) and [Advertising Policies](#). Here, bad actors disguise the true destination of an ad or post, or the real content of the destination page, in order to bypass Facebook’s review processes. For example, they will set up web pages so that when a Facebook reviewer clicks a link to check whether it’s consistent with our policies, they are taken to a different web page than when someone using the Facebook app clicks that same link. We utilize AI and human review processes to help us identify, capture, and verify cloaking - and we remove Pages that engage in cloaking.
- [Ad farms](#): We reviewed hundreds of thousands of web pages linked to from Facebook to identify those that contain little substantive content and have a large number of disruptive, shocking or malicious ads. We use AI to assess whether new web pages shared on Facebook have similar characteristics. If we determine a post might link to these types of low-quality web pages, it will show up lower in people’s News Feed and may also be determined to be ineligible to be an ad. We also downrank posts that link out to low-quality sites that predominantly copy and republish content from other sites without providing unique value.

#### **4.4 Providing advice to voters**

In addition to removing fake accounts, reducing the spread of false news and launching third party fact-checkers, we also work to provide relevant and timely information that empowers people to be informed voters in the lead up to an election. For example, in the past we’ve launched False News Public Service Announcements with tips on how to spot false news. We have also introduced Ballot, a voter information center that makes it easy for people to see who’s running for office, follow candidate pages, and compare candidate perspectives on important issues. Candidate perspectives come directly from the candidates themselves or their staff. We provided Ballot for the recent German and Italian elections.

#### 4.5 News Feed transparency and Inside Feed blog

We are continuing to invest in more transparency around our approach to misinformation. For example, our Inside Feed blog contains relevant, real-world examples of hoaxes that we caught and some that we didn't, as well as detailed explanations of our approach to fighting false news and associated issues like clickbait. See, for example <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/10/inside-feed-hunt-false-news-october-2018/>.

#### 4.6 Supporting media literacy and digital skills

We have worked to raise awareness of false news and boost media literacy across the EU, including a number of Member state-level projects. For example, in:

- **Germany: Media Literacy cooperation with Zeit für die Schule**
  - In 2017, we kicked off a 'school-year-long' cooperation with DIE ZEIT, aiming to increase media literacy with students 14+.
  - In Oct 2017 we launched a competition [#machdeinestory](#) – **Chefredakteure von morgen (#makeyourstory – editors in chief of tomorrow)**, which aims to motivate students to explore and tell stories, and at the same time helps them cope with the daily flood of information. We plan to give out the prizes in our very own [Digitales Lernzentrum Berlin from Facebook](#).
  - ZEIT für die Schule and Facebook will be supporting students, helping them identifying fake news and finding reliable information. This partnership runs Oct'17-Aug'18.
- **Germany: Media Literacy cooperation with Digibits**
  - In 2016 we started our cooperation with Digibits – an NGO founded by DsiN which is supported by the Ministry of the Interior with the aim to foster online safety.
  - As part of our lasting footprint within Community Boost, in 2018 we expanded our cooperation and committed to provide funding for media literacy trainings to reach more than 100k students in Germany.
- **Italy: Media Literacy Campaign**
  - On the occasion of our launch of an educational tool to help people spot false news, we started a dialogue with the Ministry of Education, the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies and other players of the industry to work together on a media literacy campaign. On May 2nd 2017, the media literacy campaign was announced during the event "[#BastaBufale](#)" ([#StopHoaxes](#)) by the former Minister of Education, Valeria Fedeli and Laura Boldrini (former President of the Chamber of Deputies).
- **United Kingdom: National Literacy Trust partnership**
  - Facebook provided funding for the [National Literacy Trust's Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills in Schools](#). This report looked at how youth understand news and information on the Internet, with a primary focus on those between ages 7-11 and 11-15. The report was released in June 2018 and as a result of some of the findings, Facebook further collaborated with the National Literacy Trust to build a teachers'

resource tool that would provide access to information on digital literacy support in the classroom.

- **Poland: False News Debates**

- In 2018 we launched a media literacy campaign in Poland called “Learning to read in the false news era”. We're doing this in co-operation with [Polityka Insight](#), an independent centre for analysis and [Press](#), a key trade print media outlet in Poland.

In addition, we offer a [Digital Literacy Library](#), which has been translated into over 30 languages, including many EU languages such as Dutch, French, German, Italian, Polish and Portuguese.

## 5. Empowering the research community

- In April 2018, we established an independent election research commission with the goal of allowing researchers to leverage Facebook data in a privacy preserving manner to understand the impacts of our platform on Elections and Democracy. <https://www.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10105865715850211>
- Since April, we have worked with co-chairs Nate Persily (Stanford) and Gary King (Harvard) to establish the entity Social Science One, and build out the foundational structure of the commission in partnership with the Social Science Research Council and our foundation Funders.
- In the European Union, we established a regional advisory committee, led by [Claes Holger de Vreese](#), Professor and Chair of Political Communication in The Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam. Professor de Vreese's role in the is to ensure the commission builds requests for proposals and awards research that will be valuable to the European Academic community. The European advisory commission also consists of 7 other academic representatives listed below.
  - [Marco Bastos](#), Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology at City, University of London
  - [Frank Esser](#), Professor of International & Comparative Media Research at the University of Zurich
  - [Fabio Giglietto](#), Assistant Professor at the University of Urbino Carlo Bo
  - [Sophie Lecheler](#), Professor of Political Communication at the University of Vienna, Austria
  - [Barbara Pfetsch](#), Professor of Communication Theory and Media Effects Research at the Department of Media and Communication at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
  - [Cornelius Puschmann](#), Senior Researcher at the Hans Bredow Institute for Media Research in Hamburg
  - [Rebekah Tromble](#), Assistant Professor in the Institute of Political Science at Leiden University in the Netherlands

- In May 2018 we hosted a series of dinners and workshops in Oxford, Paris, and Berlin to kick off the Election Research Commission work and ensure the European academic community had a voice in the foundation structure and first datasets the commission would release.
- On September 9, 2018, the Election Research Commission hosted the Social Science One European advisory committee at Facebook's office for a European summit. The goal of the summit was to bring together the European academic and regulatory community to introduce them to the Elections Research Commission work and understand their research goals leveraging Facebook data. The whole group participated in a series of panels on the state of current social science research; the Election Research Commission Project; Facebook's approach to Elections in Europe and the current and upcoming datasets that we will be releasing around elections. We also received valuable feedback on how we could shape future data sets and RFPs to help European researchers understand the effects of our platform on democracy.
- In July 2018, we announced the first request for proposals to the research community, which includes providing researchers monetary awards as well as a dataset focused on information and misinformation shared on Facebook. The dataset consists of web page addresses (URLs) that have been shared on Facebook in the past twelve months (the dataset may grow as time passes and more URLs are shared). URLs are included if shared by many unique accounts, and shared publicly within a privacy-preserving threshold. The goal of this dataset is to allow researchers to study misinformation on Facebook and its impact on elections and democracy.
- The awards for the July 2018 RFP will be announced in February 2019, and researchers will begin receiving access to datasets in March.
- The research commission has also announced two new RFPs:
  - **Crowdtangle API**. Crowdtangle is a platform used by many media companies around the world, allowing analysts to track the popularity of news items and other public postings across multiple platforms. The Crowdtangle API will allow researchers to access both Facebook and Instagram data.
  - **Ad Archive API**. Following the launch of the ad archive in the US, we added an API to facilitate researchers' access to the data.