

## Facebook Will Flag And Filter Fake News In Germany

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In an effort to minimize the effect of false rumors on the social and political debate, Facebook will soon begin to test out a fake news filtering tool in Germany, just in time for the federal elections, which are scheduled to take place in the next months.

A timely move, which could have also been motivated by fear of a proposed law in Germany which would levy a €500,000 (\$523,320) fine for each single piece of misinformation published and not removed by the network within 24 hours.

With the new system, the Financial Times writes, in the coming weeks German users of the network will be able to report a story as "fake". It will then be sent to Correctiv, and independent, Berlin-based, fact-checking organization, which will examine it. If the fact-checkers deem the story as unreliable, it will be flagged as "disputed".

People will be able to share it on Facebook nonetheless, but they will receive a warning. The article will also be less visible, as will not be prioritized by the news feed algorithm.

In December, Facebook started to introduce a similar approach in the US, partnering with news organization like ABC News and the AP, plus fact-checking groups Politifact, Snopes and FactCheck to verify controversial stories.

The initiative was launched after repeated claims that the spread of viral misinformation may have affected the outcome of the recent US presidential elections, pushing Republican candidate Donald Trump to the White House.

In Germany politicians are worried that fake rumors concerning migrants and refugees might spur the rise of populist parties, stirring the hate against foreigners.

In January last year a story about the rape of a young German girl named Lisa by a group of migrants went viral, sparking outrage, but the teenager later admitted making up the allegations.

Recently the situation got even worse. The German government warned last week of an "unprecedented spread of fake news online". In an interview with the Guardian, Steffen Seibert, a government spokesman, said the authorities were dealing with a phenomenon of a dimension "not seen before" in Germany.

Fears that Russia could try to influence and guide the democratic process in the country through cyberwarfare operations and cyber propaganda are rampant, especially after, earlier this month, a declassified report by the US intelligence said president Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election.