



RESOLUTION

Social media as a model for democratically governed space

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Prague, 23.02.2019

Recognising that:

- Freedom is a founding right of the European Union – freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of belief, freedom of association, freedoms of markets, freedom of movement.
- Basic rights are protected by the authority of many different acts and treaties on national, bilateral and multinational level - The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, The European Convention on Human Rights, regulations and directives of the European Institutions.
- At the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw, the allies agreed¹ to name “cyber” as a fourth domain of operations, in addition to the traditional domains of land, air and sea. This is a start, but it is still insufficient.
- On May 25, 2018 the European Union is enacting the General Data Protection Regulation or GDPR, a new privacy law designed to make sure users know and understand the data companies collect about them and consent to sharing it. The law requires companies to be transparent with what information they’re gathering and why. Individuals get the right to access all their personal data, control access and use of it, and even have it deleted.
- There is a tendency within international social media platforms to adopt specific views and to implement them as policies which may infringe on basic rights of the European citizens such as freedom of speech and freedom of belief.
- The suppression of expression leads to a radicalization within certain groups, unable to vocally express their views on the popular social platforms.

¹ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/rules-business-and-organisations/principles-gdpr_en

Acknowledging that

- As the battle heats up over citizen`s data in all countries, we are told that in this digital age, data is now seen as the primary resource—just as oil was in the fossil-fueled Industrial Era. Three different models of the Internet are emerging: (1) the US model of free and open access for everyone, regardless of their political views; (2) the Chinese model of the government coordinating and managing domestic populations and activities, and (3) the Russian model of geopolitical use by the state in information warfare, superior and cheaper than kinetic
- The attacks on our elections are asymmetric because authoritarian regimes want and are able to control the communication media, while truly free governments have fewer resources to oppose the attacks on their own way of governance.
- The social platforms challenge the existing power structures due to the immediate effect they can have on the general population. A single tweet may lead to civil unrests.
- Social platforms collect valuable information about their users that they often sell in bulk quantities to third parties, which may sometimes even be authoritarian regimes that pose a threat to the Western world.

YEPP calls on:

- The European institutions to take action in order to guarantee that the policies of social media platforms do not limit the guaranteed freedom of speech of every individual as it is proclaimed in the Treaties of the European Union and The European Convention on Human Rights that has been a long-standing European policy for decades.
- Active measures against the use of bots need to be undertaken by the social media platforms. Bots, regardless of the content that they spread, need to be curtailed in order to reduce the manipulation of public opinion.
- The “bad content & bad actors algorithms³” should be publically available so that they do not become the so-called „black boxes” of personal user information. In order for this to happen the EU jurisdiction needs to require transparency from these companies about their methods of evaluating content.
- In order for this to happen the social media should give more control to the users. Social networks like Twitter and Facebook have little control over how those networks are governed, despite the great value they collectively create for platform owners. We have the positive example of the fourth biggest site,“ Reddit”, on the US internet and sixth most popular site worldwide, as measured by Alexa Internet, and is a daily destination for at least 250 million users. The site is organized into

³ <http://theconversation.com/regulate-social-media-platforms-before-its-too-late-86984>

thousands of “subreddits”, each managed by a team of uncompensated, volunteer moderators, who determine what content is allowable in each community. And in order for that to happen EU should add more requirements to the GDPR.

- Why the democratic model for governing social media is the best? Because the legislative experience in the EU has shown that it would be better to fight the spread of hate speech and fake news with pedagogy rather than censorship.
- The major companies and the EU to coordinate at all times in the struggle with the totalitarian regimes that strive to influence the European citizens via social media. We need to officially acknowledge that the Western world is in a state of a constant cyber war which aims to lead to the ideological subversion of its people. This aggression has not met enough resistance so-far and the EU needs to implement more adequate and organized means of defense against the common enemies. A league of democracies, as proposed by Estonian President⁴ and tech companies can counter the malicious foreign interferences - the EU needs to turn the social media giants into allies in order for democracy to prevail.

⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldpost/wp/2017/10/05/we-need-a-global-league-to-protect-against-cyberthreats-to-democracy/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3e674dc07755