



PRESS RELEASE

Informal Meeting of Telecommunications Ministers:

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EU Member States Call on Tech Firms to Ramp Up Action Against Online Disinformation

As part of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Cédric O, Minister of State for Digital Affairs and Electronic Communications, is hosting his European counterparts on 8 and 9 March 2022 in Paris and Nevers. Representatives from all 27 European Union Member States, joined by Norway and Switzerland, will be in attendance. In light of the current geopolitical situation, the French Presidency has decided to devote the informal meeting to the issues of online disinformation, the resilience of communications infrastructure and the security of European cyberspace.

During the first working meeting held on Tuesday, 8 March, with Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and representatives from online platforms and social media companies, EU Ministers discussed online disinformation and information manipulation. The aim of the meeting was to engage a conversation with tech players on what action they have taken since the start of the crisis in Ukraine – in addition to the sanctions adopted by the EU – to combat disinformation and foster access to reliable information.

Following the first working meeting, the 27 Ministers in charge of digital affairs and electronic communications unanimously called on tech firms (i.e. online platforms, internet service providers and social media companies) to take additional measures to combat online disinformation and information manipulation, such as:

- Stepping up the protection of citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms online
- Marshalling additional resources to oversee content moderation in conflict zones
- Adopting additional operational measures to ensure that the tools provided by these platforms do not become an aggravating factor in online hate speech and disinformation or in the spread of harmful content
- Immediately implementing the Code of Practice on Disinformation, which the European Commission presented in April 2018
- Prioritising reliable, authoritative sources of information
- Swiftly adapting content moderation and risk management policies in the event of a crisis situation
- Sharing information useful in the context of partnerships with higher education and research institutions, in real time

The 27 Ministers were able to reiterate the fact that platforms need to adopt a responsible approach in light of the current geopolitical situation. They also pledged to formulate new sanctions, if needed.

Cédric O: “Given current geopolitical events, we wanted to dedicate the first day of the informal meeting of European Ministers in charge of digital affairs, hosted on 8 and 9 March in Paris and Nevers, to the issues of online disinformation and information manipulation. On 8 March, the first working meeting, in which Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, took part alongside representatives from major social media companies, reaffirmed the importance of raising accountability standards for tech companies as France, in its role as the holder of the Presidency of the Council of the EU, is currently conducting negotiations on the future Digital Services Act. The meeting also provided an opportunity to engage in an honest, productive dialogue with major platforms, including on the immediate implementation of the sanctions the Commission adopted on 28 February. At this juncture, our fundamental rights and freedoms online, not to mention our access to reliable information, must be defended fervently.”

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