

National Counter Disinformation Strategy

Minutes

25 May 2023

Attendees:

Martina Chapman (Independent Chair)
Seamus Hempenstall (D/TCAGSM - Secretariat)
Paul Kilkenny (D/TCAGSM - Secretariat)
Conor Davitt (D/TCAGSM - Secretariat)
Eugene Farrelly (D/Taoiseach)
Anthony Kilcoyne (Digital Technologies, PDST)
Austin Dowling (Technology Ireland, Ibec)
Brendan Spillane (University College Dublin)
Cathal McCauley (Maynooth University)
Corah Caples (Department of Justice)
Deborah Molloy Bergin (Coimisiún na Meán)
Eileen Culloty (Dublin City University)
Elizabeth Harvey (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment)
Eunice Delaney (An Coimisiún Toghcháin)
Kirsty Park (Dublin City University)
Muiriosa Ryan (Health Service Executive)
Paul Gordon (National Youth Council of Ireland)
Cathal Digan (Department of Foreign Affairs)
Stephanie Comey (Coimisiún na Meán)

1. Presentations

Jurgis Vilcinskas from the European External Action Service presented to the Group on multi-layered disinformation campaigns and ways to counter them. These campaigns can be undertaken by both domestic and foreign bodies.

- A proactive approach should be taken regarding information manipulation attempts, including a focus on understanding the underlying narrative, content spread, manipulation techniques and building resilience into cross-border initiatives.
- The need to adapt to an ever-changing media and technology landscape, including the scale and speed at which manipulation attempts are made.
- The various approaches that civil society, regulatory bodies and governments may take in combating manipulation attempts. This includes interlinked partnerships, compliance monitoring and comprehensive regulation, international collaboration, engagement with independent media and a community of evidence based fact checking.

Dr Brendan Spillane from the VILIGANT Project presented to the Group on the EU funded project and outlined the following:

- The aim of the VILIGANT Project, including the aspects of the envisaged monitoring tool in allowing law enforcement authorities to respond to criminal aspects of disinformation campaigns.
- The Data sources and recognition patterns available, including concerns regarding freedom of expression and privacy concerns.
- The functionality of the VILIGANT Project, with its overall aim of being an EU wide service.

Deborah Molloy Bergin and Dr Kirsty Park presented to the Group on the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation including:

- The background to the Code and the context in which it operates, the measuring objectives companies must adhere to, the transparency requirements, and the promotion of media plurality, and;
- The interactions between the Code, the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Act, including the inbuilt comprehensive risk assessments by Very Large Online Platforms, which will be monitored by the new Digital Service Coordinator in Coimisiún na Meán.

2. Draft minutes of third meeting and matters arising

Draft minutes of the third meeting were agreed.

3. Draft Subgroup reports

The Chair thanked subgroup members for their contributions within the given timeframe. The Subgroups presented their papers for discussion.

Subgroup 2 noted the regulatory progress made, including the Digital Services Act, Digital Markets Act, and the proposed European Media Freedom Act.

Subgroup presented on existing countermeasures and proposed the use of case studies, including a disinformation directory or glossary.

Subgroup 3 set out a definition or description of public interest information and covered who consumes this media, the protection of journalists, and incentivising fact checking.

4. Individual Submissions from Working Group

The Chair shared a template for other Working Group members to make submissions for consideration in the same way that the sub group reports were being considered.

5. Draft principles for workshop on 9th June

Some possible indicative principles were raised and shared. It was agreed that there would be further work on them, and their underlying rationale, for circulation to the Working Group in advance of the Workshop.

- Human Rights
- Cooperation/Collaboration/Coordination
- Building Resilience
- Sustainability
- Evidence Base
- Building Expertise

6. Next meeting of Working Group

3 July from 3pm to 5pm in Dublin Castle

7. AOB

It was noted that a delegation of the EU Rapid Alert System would be visiting Dublin in early July and that there may be an opportunity for the Working Group to meet and network with them. Secretariat will follow up with Department of Foreign Affairs.

NCDS Secretariat

25/05/2023