

Code of Practice on
Disinformation – Report of
Avaaz for the period
between 16th June and 16th
January 2023

Table of Content

Executive summary	3
V. Empowering Users	1
Commitment 17	1
Measure 17.2	1
QRE 17.2.1	1
SLI 17.2.1 - actions enforcing policies above	2
Data	2
Commitment 29	2
Measure 29.1	2
Commitment 36	3
Measure 36.2	4
Measure 36.3	4
IX. Permanent Task-Force	4
Commitment 37	4
Measure 37.1	4
Measure 37.2	4
Measure 37.3	4
Measure 37.4	4
Measure 37.5	4
Measure 37.6	4

Executive summary

For the last 4 years Avaaz has been at the forefront of the fight against disinformation in the EU and all around the world. Our focus has shifted over time: from working with experts, academics and platforms to develop solutions they could directly implement, to investing in research on disinformation and its impact on democracies and on public health.

For 2022, our focus shifted towards supporting EU policy-makers in their work on two key initiatives: the Digital Services Act and the Code of Practice on Disinformation. We also focused on creating literacy among the general public about those initiatives.

Since June 16th 2022, one of Avaaz's priorities has been its participation in the Code of Practice Task Force. As part of this effort, we have co-chaired two working groups (Structural Indicators and Transparency Centre) and are active members of three others.

Regarding media literacy, our focus this year in Europe has been on informing citizens, media, stakeholders, and decision-makers about how new digital regulations will impact their rights and the scale and scope of disinformation. This was done by providing trainings, through communication and awareness campaigns, and through Avaaz participation in public fora.

And although research has not been as central to our focus, as part of our research commitments aimed at creating trust between platforms and the research community, we published our Ethical Research Standards at the beginning of 2023. We also produced new research about health misinformation in the EU, to illustrate the progress, or lack thereof, of large social media platforms to tackle major disinformation events.

V. Empowering Users

Commitment 17

In light of the European Commission's initiatives in the area of media literacy, including the new Digital Education Action Plan, Relevant Signatories commit to continue and strengthen their efforts in the area of media literacy and critical thinking, also with the aim to include vulnerable groups.

Measure 17.2

QRE 17.2.1

In the second half of 2022 Avaaz media literacy activities have focused on 4 main areas:

- **Training.** At the end of June 2022, Avaaz organised trainings in collaboration with Greenpeace International for members in the EU (and beyond) to teach participants about disinformation and the relevance of understanding it. The content of the training included basic definitions of disinformation, its development, the key tactics that disinformation networks utilise, tools used to identify and detect disinformation content, counter-disinformation responses and advocacy and campaign strategies. The learnings from these trainings are being replicated by those who attended in their own trainings to a diverse public around the world.
- **Policy literacy.** In July 2022, at the moment of the final vote of the Digital Services Act in the Parliament's plenary, Avaaz sent its members worldwide a communication about the work led by the organisation to counter disinformation since 2018, which culminated with the approval of the DSA. This communication had the goal of educating millions of Avaaz members about the content of the new regulation and the new demands on social media platforms. The full analysis can be [read in this link](#)..
- **Participation in multi-stakeholder efforts.** Avaaz was a participant in the forum for tackling misinformation on health and non-communicable diseases organised by the World Health Organisation - European Region, and contributed to the drafting of the "[Toolkit for tackling misinformation on noncommunicable disease](#)", launched in October 2022. The toolkit is the product of an intense iterative process, of arguments between competing views and interests, and of constant upgrades in available knowledge. In September 2022, Avaaz also participated in an [online debate](#) organised by the think tank "Friends of Europe" and co-funded by the European Union on the topic of far-right radicalisation and disinformation.
- **Survivors of Disinformation.** Avaaz has been elevating the voices of survivors of social media harm, including mis- and disinformation, and bringing them to decision-makers since 2019. Their stories are compiled on a [page](#) to raise awareness around the issue among Avaaz members, media and the public. On this page, people can also choose to share their stories with Avaaz as a survivor, or as a whistleblower from a tech company.

SLI 17.2.1 – actions enforcing policies above	<p>1) Nr of media literacy/awareness raising activities: number trainings that were (co-) organised by Avaaz, the communication to members, Avaaz participation in WHO’s Toolkit and Friends of Europe’s debate, and the survivors of tech harms page.</p> <p>2) Reach of campaigns: the number of members who have received our communication on the DSA vote (globally and at the EU level) per e-mail and number of views of the respective page and number of views of the Survivors of Tech Harm page</p> <p>3) Nr of participants: participants in the trainings (co-) organised by Avaaz,</p> <p>4) Nr of interactions with online assets: number of interactions on Avaaz’s social media channels with disinformation-related posts, number of views of the Friends of Europe debate</p>				
	Nr of media literacy/ awareness raising activities organised/ participated in	Reach of campaigns	Nr of participants	Nr of interactions with online assets	
Data	5	14 million (global), 5,39 million (EU) 982,023 (Poland) 875,755 (France) 680,387 (Germany) 580,823 (Italy) 462,915 (Spain) 28,131 views	100	2.471 views 7,394 interactions	

VI. Empowering the research community

Commitment 29

Relevant Signatories commit to conduct research based on transparent methodology and ethical standards, as well as to share datasets, research findings and methodologies with relevant audiences.

Measure 29.1	
QRE 29.1.1	<p>Avaaz has published its Ethical Research Standards that can be found at this link: https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/ethical_research_standards/. They can also be found on its disinformation hub, where they are publicly accessible to a wide audience. The principles are the following: Contribute to Human and Planetary Well-being, Privacy & Safety, Cultural Competence, Integrity & Transparency, and Accountability. This set of principles is to be observed by everyone conducting research at Avaaz, and internal compliance is ensured through training and signed commitments.</p> <p>In 2022, Avaaz focused on investigating Russian disinformation around the war in Ukraine. We conducted research about how the reach of content produced by RT and Sputnik increased outside of Europe after they were banned in the EU. We shared the findings with Meta early in 2022, after which the Washington Post covered the story. More recently, the findings were featured in the New York Times, informing a global readership about how Russian propaganda is reaching beyond English speakers and the borders of the EU.</p> <p>Between November 2022 and January 2023 Avaaz conducted new research on health misinformation, more specifically on anti-vaccine content. We investigated whether major platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok, and Twitter, have stepped up their content moderation of major disinformation events, using the release of the anti-vaccine disinformation documentary <i>Died Suddenly</i> as a case study. In terms of methodology, we focused on analysing public content published on such platforms that has been debunked by third-party and independent fact-checkers. Remarkably, our research seems to indicate that for most of the platforms the percentage of disinformation content they are able to detect is still remarkably small, and in many cases, their algorithms still significantly amplify such disinformation. For full details, you can find our report here: https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/big_tech_little_action/.</p>
QRE 29.1.2	Avaaz will update the relevant section in the Transparency Centre as soon as it is made available
QRE 29.1.3	Avaaz has been focusing on researching mis- and disinformation created around relevant global events with the goal of analysing both their impact on our societies and the effectiveness of platforms' policies in stopping their spread. Since 2019 these research pieces have informed Avaaz's policy solutions and advocacy actions. The methodology of each report Avaaz has produced is publicly available within the reports, on our Disinformation Hub .
SLI 29.1.1 - reach of stakeholders or citizens informed about the outcome of research projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Reaching citizens: page views of the Disinformation Hub 2) Media coverage: interactions in social media of the New York Times article 3) For our most recent research piece, the numbers won't be available until after the publication of this report

	Reach of stakeholders or citizens informed about the project
Data	16,063 views 2400 interactions

VIII. Transparency Centre

Commitment 36

Signatories commit to updating the relevant information contained in the Transparency Centre in a timely and complete manner.

Measure 36.2	
Measure 36.3	
QRE 36.1.1 (for the Commitments 34-36)	We are pleased to confirm that we have been an active participant in the subgroup that has successfully launched the common Transparency Centre this year. We have assisted with establishing the website's requirements, selecting a vendor to build the website and overseeing the development of the website's key functionalities and interface. We have ensured that the Center will allow the general public to access general information about the Code as well as the underlying reports (and for the Center to be navigated both by commitment and signatory). Each signatory will be responsible for ensuring that the information they upload to the website is correct and accurate. Entities interested in joining the Code's task-force will be able to sign up through a dedicated online application form on the website.
QRE 36.1.2 (for the Commitments 34-36)	N/A. This will only be possible after the first reports
SLI 36.1.1 - (for Measures 34 and 36) meaningful quantitative information on the usage of the Transparency Centre, such as the average monthly visits of the webpage	N/A. This will only be possible once the Transparency Centre is live
Data	N/A. This will only be possible once the Transparency Centre is live

IX. Permanent Task-Force

Commitment 37

Signatories commit to participate in the permanent Task-force. The Task-force includes the Signatories of the Code and representatives from EDMO and ERGA. It is chaired by the European Commission, and includes representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The Task-force can also invite relevant experts as observers to support its work. Decisions of the Task-force are made by consensus. [change wording if adapted]

Measure 37.1	
Measure 37.2	
Measure 37.3	
Measure 37.4	
Measure 37.5	
Measure 37.6	
QRE 37.6.1	<p>Avaaz has been an active member of 4 subgroups in the Task Force and one Working Group.</p> <p>Avaaz is a participant in the following subgroups: Transparency Centre, Monitoring and Reporting, Crisis Response and Outreach, and Integration of New Signatories.</p> <p>Within the Monitoring and Reporting subgroup, Avaaz has co-coordinated together with ERGA the Working Group developing the Structural Indicators, one of the essential goals of the Task Force.</p> <p>Avaaz is also co-coordinating the Transparency Centre subgroup, responsible for delivering the Centre that will publish all the reports from signatories. Together with the other members of the Subgroup, Avaaz worked with an external contractor to ensure the Transparency Centre follows all the specifications determined in the Code and is user-friendly, accessible, easy to navigate and understand, and allows the public to scrutinise the results presented by the signatories.</p>