



European Commission's drive to tackle Fake News and Digital Disinformation needs fast action on education and independent funding guarantees

The European Commission's warm words on boosting media and information literacy in the fight against online disinformation must be backed by fast action and independent, non-partisan funding, said a grouping of European education and fact-checking campaigns.

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Experts participating in the **European Commission's High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation** urged the European Commission on Monday to deliver on recommendations to designate media and information literacy as a core skill of children and citizens, and urged the European Commission and EU governments to safeguard media and information literacy education against exposure to powerful commercial and political interests.

"Every child needs a basic driver's license to navigate this ever more complex digital information universe," said Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck, founder and director of Lie Detectors. "We've urged the Commission to push for critical media literacy to be part of the gauges that set European school ratings, such as the OECD Pisa rankings. If every teacher in the European Union – whether they teach maths, art or ethics – can transmit critical media and information literacy in their classrooms, then we can beat the threat that disinformation poses to us all."

Mikko Salo, a member of the High Level Expert Group and founder of Faktabaari, said, "European elections will also be the next major test for European level resilience to disinformation and European level actions defined in the report. 2019 will be a great chance to mobilise European networks on all fronts and learn. HLEG media and information literacy members are planning to do their preventive share to empower especially future voters and teachers for fact-based public election debate."

Media and information literacy (MIL) practitioners urged the European Commission to meet the High Level Group's recommendation for **securing the independence of media and information literacy from undue political and commercial influence**.

MIL groups agree that initiatives tackling online disinformation – be they journalist projects, fact-checking drives or media and information literacy campaigns – have a critical need for funding. That funding must be managed in a way that guarantees its independence of any political or commercial interests, and to guard against any real or perceived conflict of interest.

"MIL governance is about keeping all actors "in their respective roles", as stated by the Working Group on Internet Governance at the World Summit on Information Society in 2005. Measures to preserve the independence and public educational basis of MIL should be maintained for the sake of social justice, the well-being of young people and the lifelong learning of all citizens in Europe," said Divina Frau-Meigs, professor of media sociology at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, France.

The European Commission must make good on the HLG's recommendation for a **private-public-civic fund**, run as a **European clearing-house** by a trusted independent body along strict criteria, to safeguard the independence and sustainability of these important initiatives as they are rolled out on the massive scale that's needed to tackle disinformation online.

Context:

The European Commission on Monday unveiled a [report](#) by the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Disinformation, spelling out recommendations for the European Union to tackle a crisis of digital disinformation across the EU bloc. The report is based on input from 39 experts from the fields of academia, civil society, media and major tech platforms. See the report here: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>

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All three are members of the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation.