

## **R8 Addressing the Structural Issues Underlying the Tide of Disinformation**

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Agenda item: 1. Resolutions

### **Motion text**

#### 1 **What is Disinformation?**

2 Disinformation is false or misleading information spread intentionally in order  
3 to advance political or ideological goals, make profit, or create harm. It is  
4 different to misinformation, which is false information shared unintentionally.  
5 This resolution focusses on disinformation as it entails a motive to deceive,  
6 therefore perpetrators are more culpable for its consequences. Further, tackling  
7 disinformation reduces opportunities for misinformation to spread.

#### 8 **Why Should It Be Reduced?**

##### 9 *Damage to Democracy*

10 Disinformation undermines the democratic process by undermining access to  
11 truthful and reliable information. For example, the outcome of the UK's 2016  
12 referendum on EU membership is thought to have been influenced by false and  
13 misleading information spread intentionally through traditional and social  
14 media.

##### 15 *Undermining Trust*

16 Disinformation both propagates general societal distrust and thrives when social  
17 distrust is high, creating a vicious circle. This was illustrated during the  
18 COVID-19 pandemic, when disinformation about the virus led to distrust in health  
19 messaging from governments and health organisations, reducing vaccine uptake and  
20 health protective behaviour.

##### 21 *Impact on Marginalised Groups*

22 Disinformation frequently entails the repetition of prejudiced and hateful  
23 narratives and tropes designed to reinforce existing power hierarchies that  
24 propagate racism, misogyny, xenophobia and transphobia. Further, marginalisation  
25 leads to institutional distrust which increases vulnerability to disinformation.  
26 For example, a disproportionate number of COVID-19 deaths among minority ethnic  
27 groups throughout Europe was compounded by the proliferation of disinformation  
28 in these communities' media ecosystems.

### 29 *Warfare*

30 Disinformation forms part of information warfare: the use, control and  
31 manipulation of information to advance a belligerents' goals in a military  
32 conflict. For example, false narratives about the war were actively spread by  
33 Russian state-controlled media and social media as part of the 2022 invasion of  
34 Ukraine.

### 35 *Environmental Impact*

36 Disinformation has deeply worrying implications for the vital transition away  
37 from fossil fuel dependency and unsustainable growth capitalism. Evidence shows  
38 that oil and gas companies have long been aware of the risks their industry  
39 poses to the climate, yet they have spread false information to instil doubt  
40 about it, enabling them to continue business as usual.

41 For the health of our societies, our communities and our planet, it is essential  
42 that we act to reduce, regulate and build resilience to disinformation. Our  
43 calls are broken into three areas of action: traditional media, social media and  
44 resilient societies.

### 45 **1. Traditional Media**

46 Limited ownership and control of traditional media creates the motive and  
47 opportunity for a powerful minority to spread disinformation to consolidate  
48 their power and grow their profit. To reduce disinformation, it is vital that  
49 traditional media ownership is diverse and independent, and that free speech and  
50 high quality journalism that holds power to account is not only preserved, but  
51 incentivised.

### 52 **FYEG calls for:**

- 53 • Recognition that media organisations are part of the infrastructure of  
54 democracy and should be run for the benefit of society, not for limited  
55 private and personal gain

- 56 • Legislation to dismantle and prevent media monopolies (for example,  
57 antitrust laws), so the power to create information and knowledge is not  
58 held by a powerful minority
  
- 59 • Greater protection and facilitation of high quality independent journalism
  
- 60 • The formation of independent oversight bodies (or something similar to  
61 suit the political and media ecosystems of different countries), separate  
62 from both the state and private interests, to monitor, call out and  
63 address disinformation
  
- 64 • The EU to stand by its commitment to free press, prioritising it as a  
65 central requirement to EU membership for both existing and candidate  
66 members

### 67 **2. Social Media**

68 The advent of social media and algorithmically-driven news feeds have provided  
69 new and powerful ways of disseminating disinformation, in a targeted fashion, to  
70 enormous audiences, at once-inconceivable speeds. As a consequence,  
71 disinformation has overwhelmed and infiltrated our lives, sowing distrust,  
72 undermining democracy and threatening the health of our planet.

#### 73 **FYEG calls for:**

- 74 • Action to restrict social media companies' use of algorithms that  
75 prioritise engagement over content veracity and quality
  
- 76 • Recognition of the damage caused and dangers posed to democracy by  
77 analytics services that run social media disinformation campaigns for  
78 clients
  
- 79 • Collaboration with social media companies and governments to end social  
80 media disinformation campaigns, both by analytics companies and state  
81 actors
  
- 82 • Recognition of the potential for disinformation posed by developments in

83 large language model artificial intelligence, and advocate for the pace of  
84 progress in this field to be consistent with safeguarding the ethical  
85 implications inherent within it

### 86 **3. Fostering a society with greater resilience to disinformation**

87 Increased uncertainty, such as housing insecurity, the cost of living crisis and  
88 the climate emergency, and decreased trust in institutions, fostered by  
89 structural oppression and negligent governance, makes people more susceptible to  
90 the easy answers provided by disinformation. Tackling disinformation is a social  
91 issue; disinformation-resilient societies require trust to be restored in the  
92 social contract.

#### 93 **FYEG calls for:**

- 94 • Recognition that resilience to disinformation is a social issue, it is not  
95 the responsibility of individuals alone to inoculate themselves against  
96 disinformation
  
- 97 • Efforts to be taken to reduce uncertainty and insecurity in citizen's  
98 lives to be part of disinformation interventions
  
- 99 • Efforts to be taken to build and maintain a genuine basis for trust  
100 between individuals and the social institutions that govern and influence  
101 their lives to be part of disinformation interventions
  
- 102 • Recognition that marginalised groups are both more often the targets of  
103 disinformation and more vulnerable to the effects of disinformation, and  
104 for addressing marginalisation and seeking the active participation of  
105 marginalised groups to be part of any disinformation interventions
  
- 106 • The development of media literacy education to increase understanding of  
107 what disinformation is, how it is spread, how to spot it, and how to talk  
108 about it with others, with a particular focus on social media