

CHARTER FOR A FREE, OPEN AND SAFE INTERNET

The Internet, one of the most significant technological developments in recent years, is a vector of progress for humanity. It has empowered individuals and communities, giving a voice to those who could not speak up before, bringing people together to live richer and more connected lives, enabling them to exercise human rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association and communication more fully, as well as fostering democracy, innovation and creativity.

However, these positive effects are sometimes accompanied by dangerous and illegal content and activity, whose victims are citizens, society, enterprises and, sometimes, digital platforms and social networks themselves. Misuse of technology can fuel various forms of violence and put our social cohesion and democratic values at risk. The prevalence of illegal content online threatens to undermine our commitment to protect human rights, our shared democratic values and threatens the safety of our citizens.

While protecting the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and communication, democratic governments must act, together with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, digital platforms and social networks, consistent with international and domestic law and in compliance with the fundamental rights, to address illegal online content, especially terrorist and violent extremist content, child sexual abuse material, illegal hate speech based on gender, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation, and harassment.

Building on the Christchurch Call launched in Paris on the 15th of May 2019, we, all stakeholders supporting this charter, commit to counter illegal content online to the best of our capabilities, in a proportionate manner, while promoting a free, open and safe Internet. We intend to review the progress made on a regular basis.

OBJECTIVE 1

Upholding human rights online

We commit to uphold our human rights online, based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law, such as human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity.

OBJECTIVE 2

Defending media freedom

Building on the objectives of the Partnership on Information and Democracy, we commit to uphold media freedom and pluralism, both offline and online. A vibrant, independent, plural and free media that is able to hold the powerful to account is essential for democracy and we commit to protect editorial independence online. To counter disinformation and misinformation, we commit to maintain an open environment where reliable information and high quality journalism is enabled, e.g. by supporting fact checking, promoting non-discrimination, tolerance and respect, and encouraging efforts to prevent the abuse of automated dissemination of content.

OBJECTIVE 3

Protecting targeted groups

We commit to protect individuals and groups that are targeted by online hate and cyber-bullying, and to pay particular attention to the specific challenges faced online by certain groups, including but not limited to those distinguished by colour, race, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or mental or physical disability.

OBJECTIVE 4

Improving safety

The signing digital platforms and social networks commit to provide simple, easily accessible, transparent and effective processes for tackling and notifying illegal content, where appropriate, in collaboration with governments.

The signing digital platforms and social networks commit to review expeditiously such notifications and to swiftly take appropriate measures.

Given the particular risks posed by terrorist and violent extremist content, the signing digital platforms and social networks commit to take transparent, specific measures seeking to prevent the upload of terrorist and violent extremist content and to prevent its dissemination on social media and similar content-sharing services, including its immediate and permanent

removal, without prejudice to law enforcement and user appeals requirements, in a manner consistent with human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The signing digital platforms and social networks commit to provide timely and effective appeal mechanisms for removed or disabled content and appropriate safeguards to protect freedom of expression, including transparency for users on deleted content, and, where appropriate, the reinstatement of content removed due to erroneous decisions. Nothing shall hinder access to other remedies, including judicial remedies.

We recognise that technology can also play an important role in keeping users safe online. Through fostering innovation amongst businesses, technology companies should ensure they design safe and secure online products and services from the outset, equipping users with better tools to stay safe online.

OBJECTIVE 5

Increasing transparency

The signing digital platforms and social networks commit to continue to increase the transparency and accountability of their actions, including in their actions taken to address illegal content.

Community guidelines and terms of services should be human rights based, clear and easily understandable and contain sufficiently detailed explanations of the activities and behaviours that are not acceptable on their platforms and how company standards are upheld when acceptable use is violated.

The signing digital platforms and social networks commit to publish at least annual transparency reports, on their activities relating to the removal and the disabling of content. Those reports could include, but not limited to, providing in particular, clear information on the amount and type of content removed, on the number of notices, on the appeals processes and resources used.

The signing digital platforms and social networks commit to make content moderation rules and processes transparent towards public authorities and civil society where appropriate, and should report regularly on the implementation of their terms of service and community guidelines.

The signing digital platforms and social networks commit to continue dialogue with governments, public researchers and civil society to enable a better design and understanding of their users' safety on their platforms and the processes used to ensure it, such as content moderation practices.

OBJECTIVE 6

Improving cooperation

The signing digital platforms and social networks commit to maintain efficient communication channels with public authorities, both in the instance of crisis and in day-to-day workings. They cooperate with legitimate law enforcement investigations related to all illegal content, including terrorist, violent extremist and child sexual exploitation and abuse contents, in a manner consistent with international and domestic law and in compliance with the fundamental rights of the persons involved, including the protection of personal data.

Supporting governments and parties commit to uphold a multi-stakeholder discussion with digital platforms and social networks, civil society and academics on online and harmful content, in order to share reciprocal knowledge, to report private and public actions to tackle this issue, and to cooperate further. We welcome the role of cooperative forums such as the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) and look forward to further progress being made to tackle online terrorist content.

OBJECTIVE 7

Enhancing education and information

We commit to enhance education, prevention and information regarding illegal content.

As far as disinformation is concerned, fact-checking should be supported, citizens should be empowered with media and information literacy, which encourage critical thinking, and independent and fact-based content should be promoted.

OBJECTIVE 8

Supporting victims

The victims of illegal content should not be left isolated or uninformed.

Supporting governments and parties commit to providing and, where appropriate, reinforcing legal recourses for victims of illegal content.

We commit to make information on assistance and on legal recourses and other available support easily accessible and adapted to local circumstances.