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**SOMA: Social Observatory for Disinformation and Social Media Analysis**



## D4.1 EU Platform for Social Media Innovators

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<b>Contributor(s)</b>	Giovanni Zagni/Pagella Politica; Marina Klitsi/ATC
<b>Reviewer(s)</b>	T6ECO
<b>Document description</b>	This report describes the EU Platform for Social Media Innovators: its accessibility, usage and editorial policies, as well as its current membership status.

## Document Revision History

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## **Executive Summary**

SOMA is making available a Platform for collaborative verification, called the EU Platform for Social Media Innovators, where experts, researchers and media professionals are able to work together for carrying out investigations against disinformation. This report presents a detailed description of the Platform, including its admission standards, usage and editorial policy, as well as an illustration of the current membership status.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose and Scope of D4.1

Deliverable 4.1 entitled “EU Platform for Social Media Innovators” is part of Work Package number 4 (WP4).

The main goal of WP4, which is entitled “Stakeholder engagement and Media Literacy”, is to organize workshops and events to foster the debate on media literacy. Its specific objectives include:

- creating a common platform for sharing information between European fact-checkers;
- establishing two Centers for excellence studies on online disinformation;
- organizing a comprehensive, Europe-wide and inclusive set of activities to share best practices in the misinformation/disinformation field.

Deliverable 4.1 mainly reflects the first objective. Its purpose has been that of organizing, proposing and implementing practical instruments to bring together European fact-checking projects, and create a Platform for European Social Media Innovators to share news, ideas and projects.

The Platform for European Social Media innovators is made by virtual tools like mailing lists and team communication software to allow and facilitate a constant exchange of information, but also by practical initiatives like periodic meetings between the projects, building into the Observatory something similar to what the International Fact-Checking Network’s activities are at the global level.

## 1.2 Structure of this report

This document comprises the following chapters:

- Chapter 2 features a general description of the European Platform for Social Media Innovators;
- Chapter 3 describes applicants’ admission to the Platform;
  - 3.1 First admission questionnaire
  - 3.2 Admission terms
  - 3.3 Admission standards
- Chapter 4 features the Usage and Editorial Policy of the Platform;
- Chapter 5 briefly illustrates the *status quo* of membership to the Platform.

## 2 The EU Platform for Social Media Innovators

SOMA (Social Observatory for Disinformation and Social Media Analysis) has been launched to provide support to a European community that will jointly fight disinformation. This community is currently named as the “European Observatory against Disinformation”. The Observatory represents one of the key goals of the SOMA project. Its aim is to support experts in their work against disinformation providing them with useful infrastructure and connections to a wide community to collaborate with.

To initiate the operation of the observatory, SOMA is making available a Platform for collaborative verification, called the EU Platform for Social Media Innovators, where all experts are able to work together for carrying out investigations against disinformation.

The Platform:

- is based on Truly Media ([www.truly.media](http://www.truly.media)), co-developed by ATC and Deutsche Welle;
- also connects to existing verification tools such as TruthNest ([www.truthnest.com](http://www.truthnest.com));
- is expected to connect to many other tools that are being developed by relevant R&D projects;
- includes functionalities that provide an easy communication channel with official sources as the European Parliament, the European Commission and Eurostat for requesting their official position in ongoing investigations;
- will include additional data sources as the ones analyzed by the European Media Monitoring platform.

Furthermore, SOMA is in negotiations with major social networks to gain better access to their content and data.

The European Observatory against Disinformation welcomes fact-checkers, media organizations, researchers, social media innovators and non-governmental policy makers who show or plan relevant activity in the disinformation/fact-checking field.

Governmental organization can also be accepted, but are granted access to a gov-specific workspace (SOMA-gov). SOMA-gov workspace is totally independent from the SOMA workspace, as organizations in one section are unable to see activities in the other section. However, it is possible for members of both workspaces to initiate common investigations which will be visible to both groups.

### 3 Admission to the Platform

The SOMA website represents the main gateway for admission to the EU Platform for Social Media Innovators. The website features the questionnaire for admission (see 3.1.below), as well as all relevant information on admission Terms (3.2 below).

After an application submitted through the online questionnaire has been deemed receivable by the SOMA Consortium, applicants are also required to provide additional information regarding their policies and standards of their organization (see 3.3 below).

#### 3.1 Admission questionnaire

In order to evaluate applications, the SOMA Consortium requires applicants to fill in an online questionnaire for the purpose of their request of admission to the Platform. The questionnaire is available online at the SOMA website, under the “Become a member section”: <https://www.disinforepository.org/become-a-member/>, and it is composed of the following parts:

- A. Applicant's data
  - a. Full name:
  - b. Title:
  - c. Email:
  
- B. Organization's data
  - a. Organization name:
  - b. Web site:
  - c. Description:
  
- C. Activities
  - a. Brief description of activities related to disinformation/fact-checking already carried out by your organization and/or planned for the future (in the latter case, please include tentative timeline)
  - b. Brief description about the activity your organization intends to carry out through the access to the platform
  
- D. Team's data – Other team members to grant access to? [up to 3]

#### 3.2 Admission terms

Access to the platform is first granted for a trial period of 2 months. After 2 months, if participants are not directly contacted by the observatory managers, their acceptance is automatically confirmed and granted for the whole duration of the SOMA project (until May 2021) unless they later violate the terms of the Usage and Editorial Policy (see Chapter 4 below).

The names of admitted organizations are made publicly available on SOMA website after the end of trial period, unless they state that they do not wish to be included in this public list. Organizations can have up to three personnel join the platform and participate to its activities.

### 3.3 Admission standards

The SOMA consortium produced also a more specific questionnaire regarding the policies and standards in place in the applicant organization. This questionnaire will be integrated with the admission questionnaire described at 3.1. Future applicants will therefore be asked to fill in a longer version of the admission questionnaire which will include the questions below.

#### **Governance:**

Is governance and sources of funding public and transparent in your organization? YES - NO

If yes, please provide link to relevant info: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your organization benefit from public funding?

YES - NO

If yes, please, please specify percentage: \_\_\_\_\_

If there exists an editorial board, please specify composition or provide link to relevant info:

\_\_\_\_\_

If it is a small organization with no editorial board, please provide info or relevant link on who the members are and to whom they are accountable: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Editorial policy:**

Is all the material produced published on the organization's website? YES - NO

Please provide relevant link to website: \_\_\_\_\_

If the material produced is not published on the organization's website, where is it published? Please provide link: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Ethical responsibility:**

My organization does not contribute to the circulation and spread of false information.

TRUE - UNTRUE

My organization takes care about publicly correcting errors though the publishing of corrections and clarification.

TRUE - UNTRUE

My organization protects the identity and dignity of all individuals involved, including that of those who have been misidentified or falsely accused.

TRUE - UNTRUE

## 4 Usage and Editorial Policy

### **Usage**

The members the EU Observatory against disinformation enjoy access to powerful technological infrastructure based on the SOMA collaborative verification platform, Truly Media, assisting them in the laborious task of fact-checking online content.

Participants are able to:

- Proactively select stories, declarations, rumors or user-generated content to be investigated;
- Launch an investigation and directly invite specific participants to collaborate;
- Use available tools to assist the investigation;
- Integrate the investigation with relevant research carried out by other parties;
- Autonomously publish the output of the investigation on their own websites or preferred communication channels.

Participants are expected to:

- Support each other in the investigation, collaborating in one or all stages of the process;
- Credit the Observatory and organizations which have collaborated to the investigation when publishing it;
- Inform the Observatory Managers about where the output of the investigations carried out are published.

**Editorial policy:**

Managers of the Observatory are not directly responsible for any of the content produced through the use of the platform. Nevertheless, all materials produced through its use are expected to comply with the standards of fairness, impartiality, accuracy and transparency.

The material produced by members of the observatory will not be used by the observatory managers for any other purpose without prior permission.

*Fairness and Impartiality*

Stories, declarations, rumors or content selected for investigation shall not be unfairly focused on one side or argument of the political spectrum. The material produced must be free from intended bias and patterns of bias. Reports must not include opinion, conjecture, presumption, or any inappropriate language.

*Accuracy*

All reporting, headlines, images, illustrations and other visual information used by participating organizations/individuals in carrying out the investigations shall be based on verifiable evidence.

*Transparency*

Materials produced shall clearly indicate the investigative steps taken, including crediting organizations/individuals who collaborated to the investigation where appropriate. Sources used shall be clear and public, except in cases in which their secrecy is a matter of privacy protection or safety. Corrections and amendments to the published investigation will be clearly labelled and explained.

## 5 Membership status

The membership campaign has started in March 2019, as the observatory platform was launched at SOMA's first public event which took place in Milan (Italy) on 20 March 2019.

As of September 2019, the platform counts with 39 organizations as members, originating in 17 different EU Member States and 5 non-EU countries. Only 25 organization out of 39 have accepted to have their logos published in the SOMA website. The list of member organizations whose names are public is constantly updated on the relevant webpage <https://www.disinfobservatory.org/the-observatory/>.