

has highly impacted our lives. Among other changes, it has affected the way in which we access, share and delivery information online. In such context, malicious acts through the use of digital services and platforms provided negative impulse to the media ecosystems causing a need of evolving European legislations.

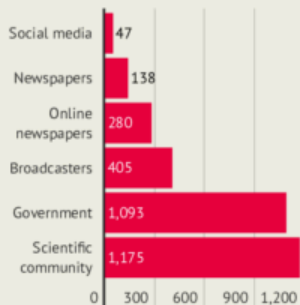
Accordingly, the European Commission has launched a set of actions and tools to better regulate the digital media ecosystem and its actors. Recently, the EC has introduced the "European Digital Strategy" a series of rules governing digital services in the EU. The European Digital Strategy is built around two legislative initiatives: The Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act. Two other relevant efforts were accomplished by the EC over the last years. The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), adopted in 2018, to establish a coordination at European scale for national legislation on all audiovisual media, both traditional TV broadcasts and on-demand services., and the European Democracy Action Plan, launched in December 2020, to empower citizens and build more resilient democracies across the EU.

However, additional efforts are needed. Within this set of actions, SOMA project was funded by the European Commission to support measures to fight disinformation.

SOMA findings

Among its objectives, SOMA launched a survey to measure the impact of disinformation on citizens in relation to Covid-19 pandemic.

that in emergency time, such as the period of covid-19 pandemic, trust in non-official sources of information decreases. In parallel, the trust in official sources of information increases, in particular in information shared by Governments and the scientific community.



SOMA investigated, also, the role of the institutions in communicating directly to citizens and in providing information on how to behave to deal with the Covid-19 emergency. As reported in the pie chart, 74% of respondents stated that communication from institutions is very important, 21% is important while 5% stated that this is of little or no importance.

Results from the survey and from further analysis shows how relevant is, for Institutions and governments, the adoption of a continuous and efficient communication strategy increasing social media visibility and reducing access to misleading and false information. Platforms should be pressed to increase visibility of prominent dissemination of official and trustful sources opening their algorithms for rating and content visualization accordingly. However, findings also suggest that sharing trustful information limiting false news won't solve the problem.

Another issue, emerged from SOMA analysis related to the opportunity to get access to the amount of data handled by the platforms for research purposes.

Policy recommendations

Based on the research carried out, these are three key recommendations for European Institutions to inform policy discussion on disinformation.

prominence of audiovisual media services of general interest". Accordingly, as broadcasters, also the platform should be asked to revise their algorithms to incentivize the dissemination of prominent contents based on the trustworthiness of information instead of the number of views, reach and sharing. Article 7a acknowledges it may be important for Member States to establish incentives for service providers to ensure appropriate prominence of audiovisual media services of general interest with legislative measures. The debate among high level stakeholders such as Eu institutions and platforms should follow the same path providing incentives to the platforms to favour the sharing of trustful information.

2- More and better access to data for research purposes

Data access for research purposes is one of the most pressing issues related to the analysis and comprehension of disinformation. Despite several requests from European institutions, most of platform's data are still not accessible. more and better access should be guaranteed to improve research initiatives. Efforts in terms of hard law must be implemented to guarantee a fast, secure and large access to data, otherwise researchers' capabilities will be always limited and narrowed. A more stringent implementation of the Code of Practice, as a self-regulation instruments, might be first step in the direction.

and trustworthy media ecosystem. A change in the media infrastructure is requested. In particular, two actions are strongly needed:

1. to improve algorithms transparency and exploitability to empower users in the understanding and comprehension of platforms' mechanisms;
2. to clarify and expose advertisements' rules and business model to reduce the monetization of clickbait title.

To achieve this last point more obligations for the platforms are needed in particular for what is related to political advertisement on social media platforms. European institutions are asked to develop a co-regulatory framework to put in place strict obligations for the platforms for the public good.

Only with long-term policy based on a co-regulatory framework setting up obligations for the platforms it will be possible to achieve concrete and stable results.

