United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

April 28, 2023

Case No. FL-2023-00013

Reed Rubinstein
America First Legal Foundation
611 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, #231
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Rubinstein:

As we noted in our letter dated March 31, 2023, we are processing your request for material under the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department of State ("Department") has identified an additional 49 responsive records subject to the FOIA. We have determined that all 49 records may be released in part.

An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made redactions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on each record. Where applicable, the Department has considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing these records and applying FOIA exemptions. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released and is enclosed.

We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Kevin Bell, U.S. Department of Justice Trial Attorney, at kevin.k.bell@usdoj.gov and (202) 305-8613. Please refer to the case number, FL-2023-00013, and the civil action number, 22-cv-03386, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

Diamonece Hickson
Chief, Litigation and Appeals Branch
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

(b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:

1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
1.4(b) Foreign government information
1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction

(b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency

(b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:

ARMSEXP	Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c)
CIA PERS/ORG	Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
EXPORT CONTROL	Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c)
FS ACT	Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f)
IRAN	Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505

(b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information

(b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product

(b)(6) Personal privacy information

(b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
(A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
(B) deprive a person of a fair trial
(C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
(D) disclose confidential sources
(E) disclose investigation techniques
(F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual

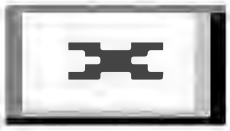
(b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions

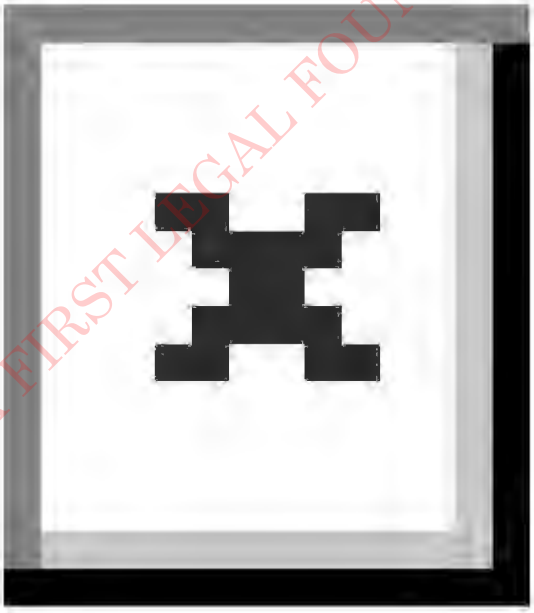
(b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From: Reuters <account@reuters.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Your account is now confirmed
Date: Wed, 23 Nov 2022 13:17:30 +0000





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From: Reuters <account@reuters.com>
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Subject: Welcome to Reuters
Date: Thu, 26 May 2022 13:04:20 +0000

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We would love to hear from you, feel free to email me with your comments

at **sitefeedback@thomsonreuters.com**

Welcome!

Regards,

Alessandra Galloni

Editor-in-Chief

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3 Times Square, New York, NY 10036

Sender: Reuters <account@reuters.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Kristine Coratti Kelly <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: WashPost Invite: In-person entrepreneurship event with Heather Boushey and Steve Case, 6/21 [Response Requested]

Date: Mon, 13 Jun 2022 15:02:27 +0000

Sender: Kristine Coratti Kelly <washpostlive@washpost.com>

Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: WashPost Invite: In-person Entrepreneurship event with Heather Boushey and more Tuesday, 6/21 [Response Requested]

Date: Tue, 7 Jun 2022 15:00:54 +0000

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Tues. at 9:00 a.m. ET: Business founders of color and entrepreneurial equity with SBA Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman and more

Date: Fri, 9 Sep 2022 20:08:59 +0000

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Today at 9:00 a.m. ET: Women business founders and SBA Administrator on growth of minority-owned businesses

Date: Tue, 13 Sep 2022 11:18:56 +0000

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Today at 2:00 p.m. ET: The future of small business after COVID-19 with ETSY CEO Josh Silverman and more
Date: Wed, 29 Sep 2021 16:00:29 +0000

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Today at 1:30 p.m. ET: Inflation, supply chain disruptions and reinventing small business

Date: Wed, 13 Jul 2022 12:11:32 +0000

22

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Customer Care <help@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Ticket ID # 2512669: RE: WashPost Invite: In-person climate change event with Sen. Brian Schatz, Patagonia CEO Ryan Gellert and more, 9/20 [Response Requested]

Date: Fri, 16 Sep 2022 18:07:12 +0000

##- Please type your reply above this line -##

Thank you for contacting The Washington Post.

Your inquiry with ticket #(2512669) has been received and will be reviewed by our staff.

In the meantime, you may find the following information helpful.

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Sender: Washington Post Customer Care <help@washpost.com>

Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: NYTimes.com <ordercs@nytimes.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: The log in link you requested is enclosed
Date: Tue, 24 Nov 2020 16:22:56 +0000

With this button, you'll be automatically logged in to your New York Times account. This log-in link will expire in 15 minutes.

Your existing password still works, should you want to log in with it later.

LOG ME IN

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---

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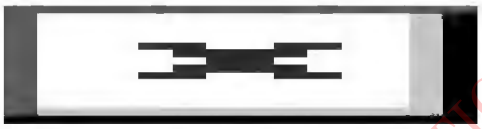
Sender: NYTimes.com <ordercs@nytimes.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Opal Barclay (b)(6) @ap.org>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: The AP would like your input on AP Planner Update
Date: Wed, 10 Mar 2021 13:02:25 -0600

View in browser



Thank you for subscribing to our AP Planner Update newsletter.

We hope you're enjoying the content, and we'd be grateful if you would take part in a short survey about your overall experience.

Your feedback will help us improve the newsletter, and once you have completed the survey, you'll immediately be entered for a chance to receive a gift from AP.

The survey should take no more than four minutes.

START SURVEY

Thank you for your valuable time and input.

Opal

Opal Barclay
AP Product Specialist
Contact Me

[redacted]

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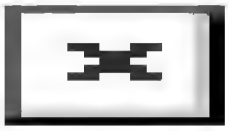
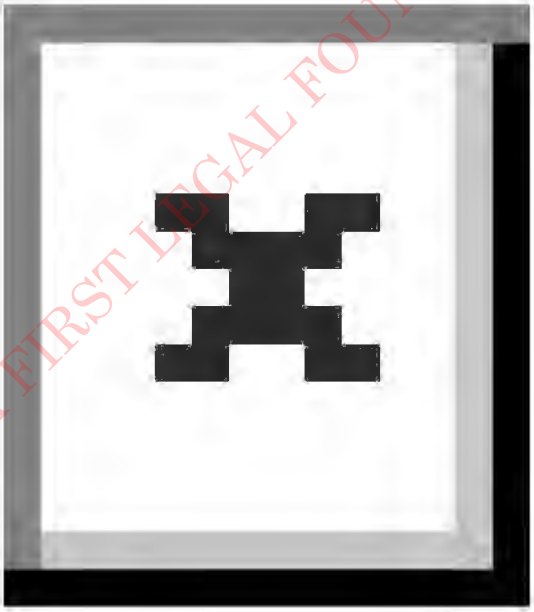
[redacted]

[redacted]

Sender: Opal Barclay (b)(6) @ap.org>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Reuters <newsletter@reuters.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Thank you for signing up to Reuters Newsletters
Date: Mon, 6 Dec 2021 18:04:00 +0000





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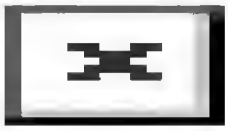
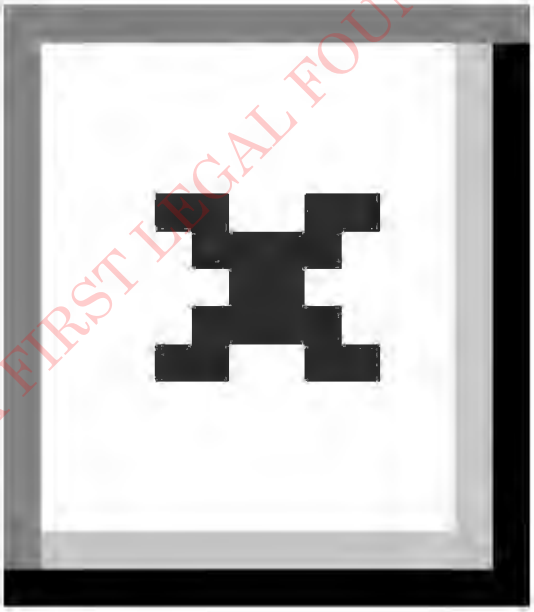
From: Reuters <account@reuters.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Reminder – please confirm your email
Date: Wed, 25 May 2022 13:04:20 +0000





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From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Register: John Kerry, Sen. Mitt Romney and more in a special, week-long climate series, 12/5 - 12/9

Date: Thu, 1 Dec 2022 19:00:58 +0000

33

34

35

36

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Register: Inflation, supply chain disruptions and small business survival with Offline Ventures and Brit + Co's Brit Morin and more, 7/13

Date: Tue, 12 Jul 2022 20:09:19 +0000

40

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Ana Brakus (b)(6) @gmail.com>
To: Baybars Orsek (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Gulin (b)(6) @teyit.org>;
Rajneil Kamath <(b)(6) @ncmn.in>;
Coreena Suares (b)(6) @gmail.com>;
<(b)(6) @15min.lt>;
Inga Springe (b)(6) @gmail.com>;
Jency <(b)(6) @boomlive.in>;
Thanos (Epachtitis) Sitistas (b)(6) @ellinikahoaxes.gr>;
<(b)(6) @newsmobile.in>;
Rabiu Alhassan <(b)(6) @ghanafact.com>;
Angie Holan (b)(6) @poynter.org>;
Bwhitaker (b)(6) @ap.org>;
Jeanfreddy (b)(6) @gmail.com>;
CC: Maarten Schenk (b)(6) @leadstories.com>;
Ellen Tordesillas (b)(6) @verafiles.org>;
Pmfernandez (b)(6) @chequeado.com>;
(b)(6) @zastone.ba>;
MStewart (b)(6) @usatoday.com>;
<(b)(6) @gmail.com>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @mdfgeorgia.ge>;
Tijana Cvjetićanin (b)(6) @istinomjer.ba>;
Enock NYARIKI (b)(6) @pesacheck.org>;
Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6) @poynter.org>;
Alanna Dvorak <(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
Harrison Mantas (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Subject: Re: Working group to address harassment against fact-checkers
Date: Mon, 5 Jul 2021 13:31:45 +0200

Hi everyone,

Thank you, Baybars.

Looking forward to it,

Ana

On Mon, Jul 5, 2021, 13:12 Baybars Orsek <(b)(6) @poynter.org> wrote:
Dear friends & colleagues,

Hope you had a restful weekend.

I would like to thank you so much for your interest in this working group to help fact-checkers around the world to address harassment and threats for our work.

We have received a total of 23 submissions to join this working group. It's great to see such a high volume of interest!

I would like to suggest the below model to launch this working group.

Broader group for monitoring and evaluation

This broader group convenes on a quarterly basis to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of IFCN's actions to help fact-checkers around the world under stress and risks due to harassment and threats. It also provides feedback to IFCN on such activities and evaluates IFCN's performance in those areas by working with IFCN on publishing quarterly "Harassment against fact-checkers" reports for verified signatories and the public.

This group will be updated on a 2/3 basis in a calendar year.

Core group for consulting and planning (group of 11)

A smaller group acts as the core group for consulting and planning by convening on a monthly basis to discuss reported harassment cases and advising IFCN with action items. This group is provided with immediate updates on every harassment case reported by the fact-checking community and asked for their guidance and input.

This group will be updated on a 2/3 basis in a calendar year.

To move forward, I'm suggesting inviting the following names to the core group considering the diversity in geography and background.

Ana Brakus | Faktograf | Croatia
Angie Holan | Politifact | United States
Barbara Whitaker | Associated Press | United States
Ellen Tordesillas | Vera Files | Phillippines
Gülin Çavuş | Teyit | Turkey
Jency Jacob | Boom | India
Maarten Schenk | Lead Stories | Belgium / United States
Pablo M. Fernandez | Chequeado | Argentina
Rabiu Alhassan | GhanaFact | Ghana
Thanos Sitistas | Elinika Hoaxes | Greece
Tijana Cvjetićanin | Raskrinkavanje | Bosnia-Herzegovina

Action items for next steps

I would like you to let me know if you approve the suggested core group by submitting this form no later than this Friday, 9th of July.

Once we have the core group formed, I'll send further information on regular calls (quarterly for the broader group and monthly for the core group) as well as communication methods to foster rapid and effective dialogue.

Please kindly note that this proposed model is not to be set in stone and will require further consultation and discussion to be a better asset for the fact-checking community. Your inputs and feedback are highly needed and appreciated! There will be more opportunities to reflect on this and improve the model on the go as we tackle future challenges and identify room for improvement!

Thank you so much!

Best-

--
Baybars Örsek

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
@baybarsorsek / @factchecknet

Sender: Ana Brakus <(b)(6)@gmail.com>

Recipient: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Gulin (b)(6)@teyit.org>;
Rajneil Kamath (b)(6)@ncmn.in>;
Coreena Suares (b)(6)@gmail.com>;
(b)(6)@15min.lt>;
Inga Springe (b)(6)@gmail.com>;
Jency (b)(6)@boomlive.in>;
Thanos (Epachtitis) Sitistas (b)(6)@ellinikahoaxes.gr>;
(b)(6)@newsmobile.in>;
Rabiu Alhassan (b)(6)@ghanafact.com>;
Angie Holan (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
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Jeanfreddy (b)(6)@gmail.com>;
Maarten Schenk (b)(6)@leadstories.com>;
Ellen Tordesillas <(b)(6)@verafiles.org>;
Pmfernandez <(b)(6)@chequeado.com>;
<(b)(6)@zastone.ba>;
MStewart (b)(6)@usatoday.com>;
(b)(6)@gmail.com>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@mdfgeorgia.ge>;
Tijana Cvjetićanin (b)(6)@istinomjer.ba>;
Enock NYARIKI (b)(6)@pesacheck.org>;
Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Alanna Dvorak (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Harrison Mantas (b)(6)@poynter.org>

From: Jency Jacob (b)(6)@boomlive.in>

To: Baybars Orsek <(b)(6)@poynter.org>
Gulin <(b)(6)@teyit.org>;
Rajneil Kamath <(b)(6)@ncmn.in>;
Coreena Suares <(b)(6)@gmail.com>;
<(b)(6)@15min.lt>;
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<(b)(6)@newsmobile.in>;
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Rabiu Alhassan (b)(6)@ghanafact.com>;
Angie Holan <(b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Bwhitaker <(b)(6)@ap.org>;
Jeanfreddy <(b)(6)@gmail.com>;

CC: Maarten Schenk (b)(6)@leadstories.com>;
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<(b)(6)@zastone.ba>;
MStewart <(b)(6)@usatoday.com>;
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(b)(6)@mdfgeorgia.ge>;
Tijana Cvjetićanin (b)(6)@istinomjer.ba>;
Enock NYARIKI <(b)(6)@pesacheck.org>;
Ferdi Ozsoy <(b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Alanna Dvorak <(b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Harrison Mantas <(b)(6)@poynter.org>

Subject: Re: Working group to address harassment against fact-checkers

Date: Tue, 6 Jul 2021 09:58:15 +0530

Dear Baybars,

Glad to be a part and contribute in whichever way I can.

Cheers to all.

Regards

Jency

On Mon, Jul 5, 2021 at 4:42 PM Baybars Orsek <(b)(6)@poynter.org> wrote:
Dear friends & colleagues,

Hope you had a restful weekend.

I would like to thank you so much for your interest in this working group to help fact-checkers around the world to address harassment and threats for our work.

We have received a total of 23 submissions to join this working group. It's great to see such a high volume of interest!

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Gülin Çavuş | Teyit | Turkey
Jency Jacob | Boom | India
Maarten Schenk | Lead Stories | Belgium / United States
Pablo M. Fernandez | Chequeado | Argentina
Rabiu Alhassan | GhanaFact | Ghana
Thanos Sitistas | Elinika Hoaxes | Greece
Tijana Cvjetićanin | Raskrinkavanje | Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Thank you so much!

Best-

--
Baybars Örsek

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
@baybarsorsek / @factchecknet

Sender: Jency Jacob (b)(6)@boomlive.in>

Recipient: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Gulin (b)(6)@teyit.org>;
Rajneil Kamath (b)(6)@ncmn.in>;
Coreena Suares (b)(6)@gmail.com>;
(b)(6)@15min.lt>;
Inga Springe (b)(6)@gmail.com>;
Thanos (Epachtitis) Sitistas (b)(6)@ellinikahoaxes.gr>;
(b)(6)@newsmobile.in>;
Ana Brakus (b)(6)@gmail.com>;
Rabiu Alhassan (b)(6)@ghanafact.com>;
Angie Holan (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Bwhitaker (b)(6)@ap.org>;
Jeanfreddy (b)(6)@gmail.com>;
Maarten Schenk (b)(6)@leadstories.com>;
Ellen Tordesillas (b)(6)@verafiles.org>;
Pmfernandez (b)(6)@chequeado.com>;
(b)(6)@zastone.ba>;
MStewart (b)(6)@usatoday.com>;
(b)(6)@gmail.com>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@mdfgeorgia.ge>;
Tijana Cvjetićanin (b)(6)@istinomjer.ba>;
Enock NYARIKI (b)(6)@pesacheck.org>;
Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Alanna Dvorak (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Harrison Mantas (b)(6)@poynter.org>

From: Kristine Coratti Kelly <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: RE: WashPost Invite: In-person entrepreneurship event with Heather Boushey and Steve Case, 6/21 [Response Requested]

Date: Thu, 16 Jun 2022 16:04:15 +0000

Sender: Kristine Coratti Kelly <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>

To: Rizzo, Dave (b)(6) @ap.org>;
Khin, John (b)(6) @ap.org>

CC: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: RE: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

Date: Wed, 3 Mar 2021 19:55:38 +0000

Thanks Dave-

We will send them the below materials and share John's email. 4 pm your time is good for us so can you share a day that works for you and we can invite them to participate?
Have a lovely one.

Many thanks, (b)(6)

From: Rizzo, Dave (b)(6) @ap.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 4, 2021 7:50 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>; Khin, John (b)(6) @ap.org>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: RE: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

Hi (b)(6)

Please have the user's that require account verification and resets reach out directly to John Khin above.
*John please re-run current users list to and provide for (b)(6)

Resending the link for online training materials on AP Academy:

https://www.ap.org/ap-academy/

Also, we would like to let you know that we now have a product training and client engagement team and would be happy to schedule a Zoom presentation for the group. Realize difficult with time change involved but we have some people that could be game to do this at an odd hour.

Thanks,

Dave

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 03, 2021 12:49 AM
To: Rizzo, Dave (b)(6) @ap.org>; Khin, John (b)(6) @ap.org>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: RE: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

[EXTERNAL]

Hi Dave and John-

I am following up on the below email. We'd really like to reach out to the members and give them helpful info on using this service.

Have a good one.

Many thanks, (b)(6)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 11:29 AM
To: (b)(6) @ap.org; Khin, John (b)(6)@ap.org>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6)
(b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: RE: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

Hi Dave and John-

Per the report you sent to (b)(6) I can see that several of the users need to verify accounts or change their passwords. Can you send us the Youtube videos you mentioned as well as the best email for the users who need assistant resetting or verifying their accounts. We'd like to reach out to all of them again to encourage them to use the service and we can ask if they'd like a training via WebEx.

In the meantime is there any way to see how much the active users are accessing and/or downloading from AP?
Have a wonderful day.

Many thanks, (b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2021 11:18 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: FW: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

Hi (b)(6),

FYI

(b)(6)
Press and Media Coordinator | Public Diplomacy Office
U.S. Embassy Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu
☎ (b)(6) @state.gov
158 Princess Road | PO Box 218, Suva

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thursday, November 5, 2020 2:23 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: FW: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

Hi (b)(6)

Received this from Dave today. Have emailed him back to ask for some guidance on how to read this report as its not very clear to me.

Appreciate if you have more insight on this to share, thank you.

Cheers,

(b)(6)
Press and Media Coordinator | Public Diplomacy Office
U.S. Embassy Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu
☎ (b)(6) @state.gov
158 Princess Road | PO Box 218, Suva

From: Rizzo, Dave (b)(6) @ap.org>
Sent: Thursday, November 5, 2020 8:46 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: Khin, John (b)(6) @ap.org>
Subject: RE: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

Hi (b)(6)

Well we made it to November 4th but still no declared winner, historic and exhausting at once. Here is the information you requested. It seems to me that it would be a good idea to organize a training session or training materials for you users. Realize there is a time difference issue but we can be flexible for a webex session, there is also a plethora of information online including instructional YouTube videos – please let me know how that sounds.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dave

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 19, 2020 6:44 PM
To: Rizzo, Dave (b)(6) @ap.org>

Cc: Khin, John (b)(6)@ap.org>
Subject: RE: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

[EXTERNAL]

Hi Dave,

Awesome to hear from you! Yes thank you, usage reports will be most appreciated when you get a chance. Of course, the elections just around the corner, I'm excited seeing and hearing all about that. Wishing you and the team all the very best in your coverage.

Talk soon. Have a gorgeous evening on that end.

Cheers,

(b)(6)
Press and Media Coordinator | Public Diplomacy Office
U.S. Embassy Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu
☎ (b)(6) @state.gov
158 Princess Road | PO Box 218, Suva

From: Rizzo, Dave <(b)(6)@ap.org>
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2020 10:38 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: Khin, John (b)(6)@ap.org>
Subject: RE: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

Hi (b)(6)

My apologies for the delayed response and thank you for bumping this up in my inbox. We can run usage reports for you, typically it would take a couple days to compile and deliver, it may take a bit longer as elections are currently consuming a lot of resources.

I will keep you posted and provide a delivery date on the reports shortly.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dave

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 19, 2020 4:52 PM
To: Rizzo, Dave (b)(6) @ap.org>

Cc: Khin, John (b)(6) @ap.org>
Subject: RE: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

[EXTERNAL]

Good Afternoon Mr. Rizzo,

Just following up on my email. Appreciate if you have had a moment to consider the request.

Thank you for your time and look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you.

Cheers,

(b)(6)
Press and Media Coordinator| Public Diplomacy Office
U.S. Embassy Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu
☎(b)(6) @state.gov
158 Princess Road | PO Box 218, Suva

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Monday, October 5, 2020 3:52 PM
To: '(b)(6) @ap.org' (b)(6) @ap.org>
Cc: (b)(6) @ap.org' (b)(6) @ap.org>
Subject: Usage of free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service in the Pacific

Good Afternoon Mr. Rizzo,

Trust this email finds you well. My name is (b)(6) and I'm working with the US Embassy in Suva, Fiji.

I understand you were integral in the free provision of AP content for the Pacific Islands and I would appreciate your assistance in my current task to highlight some data on the program's uptake.

I'm hoping to comply some data on how many news organizations in the Pacific are using the free AP Asia Online and AP Top News Service since the inception of the grant/program.

Is there a way in which your organization is able to assist with this information gathering, also how often they are using the content?

Appreciate your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Cheers,

(b)(6)
Press and Media Coordinator| Public Diplomacy Office
U.S. Embassy Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu

☎(b)(6) @state.gov
158 Princess Road | PO Box 218, Suva

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The information contained in this communication is intended for the use of the designated recipients named above. If the reader of this communication is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that you have received this communication in error, and that any review, dissemination, distribution or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify The Associated Press immediately by telephone at +1-212-621-1500 and delete this email. Thank you.

Sender: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Rizzo, Dave (b)(6) @ap.org>;
Khin, John (b)(6) @ap.org>;
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
To: Ice, John T (b)(6) @state.gov>;
Gordon, Michael (b)(6) @wsj.com>
Subject: Re: Story as PDF and link (in case you can't get through paywall)
Date: Mon, 8 Mar 2021 17:36:36 +0000

Hi Michael,
Sending my thanks as well!
Very best,
(b)(6)
Public Affairs Officer
Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State
Accenture Federal Services Contractor
Cell: (b)(6)

From: Ice, John T (b)(6) @state.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 9:46 AM
To: Gordon, Michael (b)(6) @wsj.com>; (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Story as PDF and link (in case you can't get through paywall)

Hi Michael,
Thanks for sending this yesterday. I have enjoyed our interaction over this one.
Best,
J.T.
From: Gordon, Michael (b)(6) @wsj.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 7, 2021 10:18 AM
To: Ice, John T (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Story as PDF and link (in case you can't get through paywall)

https://wsj-articles-preview.sc.onservo.com/okta/articles/SB_PREVIEW_030620212115 00?tesla=y&noredirect=true&httpsredirect=none
Michael Gordon
National Security Correspondent
The Wall Street Journal
(b)(6) (cell, WhatsApp, Signal)
(b)(6) @wsj.com (work email)
(b)(6) @protonmail.com (encrypted email)
Book site: michaelrgordon.com

Sender: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Recipient: Ice, John T (b)(6) @state.gov>;
Gordon, Michael (b)(6) @wsj.com>

From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
CC: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: State/Poynter: Efforts in the MENA Region
Date: Thu, 14 Jul 2022 14:41:27 -0400

Excellent. As a caveat, I fly to India the first week of August to conduct some training and will be gone for two weeks, so it would definitely be ideal if we can try to schedule something in July.

And yes, had a great conversation with AfricaCheck this morning, excited and hopeful we have ways to move forward!

Best,
Alanna

On Thu, Jul 14, 2022 at 11:50 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Alanna,
Sadly, I've been pulled into a conflicting meeting and recommend we reschedule for when the three of us are available. I'll compare calendars again for later this month.
I also want to thank you for speaking with AfricaCheck about your work in Tunisia. Looks like we might have a way forward to continue your great work!
Thanks,
(b)(6
Sent from my iPhone

--
Alanna Dvorak
International Training Manager/IFCN
The Poynter Institute
ph: (b)(6)
(b)(6) @poynter.org
www.poynter.org

Sender: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Re:
Date: Tue, 9 Nov 2021 17:31:02 -0500

Jet mag
https://books.google.com/books?id=cLIDAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA15&lpg=PA15&dq=%22ethnic+weapon%22+and+Blacks&source=bl&ots=e-zIICzwMD&sig=ACfU3U3eDbtOpsmXslU_GWSYgicNX10wZg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjk1Kvm0Yv0AhWfTDABHdnZC4MQ6AF6BAgUEAM#v=onepage&q=%22ethnic%20weapon%22%20and%20Blacks&f=false

On Tue, Nov 9, 2021 at 2:49 PM (b)(6) .gov> wrote:
Back online with my 5tate Department computer. Temporary system-wide outage. Glad to chat anytime between now and 6 pm. Best, (b)(6)
From: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 9, 2021 10:46 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Re:

Excellent, thanks so much (b)(6) will peruse these before we speak
All best, thanks again, Jim

On Tue, Nov 9, 2021 at 10:43 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Anytime from 2-6 pm is good. Agree there is lots to discuss; very interesting topic.
You may have seen already Doug Selvage's very interesting article, Operation "Denver": The East German Ministry of State Security and the KGB's AIDS Disinformation Campaign, 1985–1986 (Part 1) [attached for reference]. Search for Shively to see discussion of origins of AIDS disinfo story -- I have more to add on this. See also p. 12-23 in 1988 report I wrote, found at http://insidethecoldwar.org/sites/default/files/documents/Soviet%20Active%20Measures%20in%20the%20Era%20of%20Glasnot%20March%201988.pdf, which discusses SOV "Ethnic Weapons" disinfo, which apparently was picked up by Shively and others, per Doug's article. (Doug told me you are speaking with him tomorrow).
This is likely a mashup of SOV disinfo plus delusions/conspiracy theories of local fringe elements, including fellow travelers and useful idiots. Can explain more.
See also original article in US Army's Military Review, which led to "ethnic weapons" disinfo; two versions attached.
All for now.
(b)(6)
From: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 9, 2021 10:28 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Re:

Hi (b)(6)

Looking forward to speaking today -- so much to discuss, and I really appreciate getting some of your time.
Just making sure -- 4:30/1630 est ok time to call?
Thanks again, Jim

On Mon, Nov 8, 2021 at 3:02 PM Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com> wrote:
Ok great advice thanks! Catch you tomorrow and thanks on all

On Mon, Nov 8, 2021 at 2:56 PM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Tomorrow from 14301-1800 is good.
There was an excellent article in the WSJ in September about COVID safety when flying. The most dangerous time is when you (and others) take your mask off to eat. They recommend turning up the forced air in the controls above your seat and pointing the nozzle at your face when your mask is off to scatter any COVID articles away.
I got permission to speak you on the terms we discussed. Will send you a couple of articles later today.
Best,
(b)(6)
From: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Sent: Monday, November 8, 2021 2:40 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Re:

Thanks (b)(6) sounds good
I'm boarding a plane and don't land till around 6/6:30
Is there an ok time tomorrow to try you?
Thanks again much obliged

On Mon, Nov 8, 2021 at 2:37 PM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Jim:
Let's just discuss between you and me and I'll fill the others in as needed. I'll give you a call.
My cell is (b)(6) . Home landline: (b)(6)
From (b)(6) @state.gov>
Sent: Monday, November 8, 2021 11:55 AM
To: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Subject: Re: Re:

Jim:
checking with my colleagues on when is a good time. Any times good or not good for you today or tomorrow?
Thanks.
(b)(6)
From: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Sent: Monday, November 8, 2021 11:46 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6) @state.gov>(b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Re:

Sure, let me know if there's a good time to connect and I can fill you and whoever else is interested in on the arc of the book

On Mon, Nov 8, 2021 at 10:04 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Jim:
Yes, I think if we had a better sense of what you are trying to address and accomplish in the book, that would help a lot.
Thanks.
(b)(6)
P.S. - (b)(6)
From: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Sent: Friday, November 5, 2021 6:29 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>;(b)(6)
(b)(6) @state.gov>;(b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re:

Thanks (b)(6) and thanks, all.
(b)(6) came highly recommended and would be a great help. I'm happy to fill you all in more on the general sweep of the book if you would like.
Thanks and all the best, Jim

On Fri, Nov 5, 2021 at 6:11 PM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
(b)(6)
Please let me know if you need any more information to make a decision on this request for what would likely be several discussions/interviews on the phone and via email with NYT reporter Jim Rutenberg, who, per his email below, is writing "a narrative history book ... about information warfare at home and abroad, from roughly 1970 to now." He is particularly interested in speaking with me about "the successful Soviet operation to plant false stories that AIDS was invented in the US Laboratory at Fort Detrick ... [and] how that story got picked up and elaborated upon in the publications of fringe political movements here in the US."
Jim:
Please call me (b)(6) I already feel old enough w/o being addressed as Mister.
I'd be glad to help on your very interesting project provided my bosses in the Global Engagement Center and Public Affairs agree. I'm looping in my immediate supervisor and the GEC person who handles media requests to start this process.
If my bosses and PA agree, I think it would be best to talk and share information with you on a background or deep background basis meaning that you are free to use the material but without attributing it to the Department of State, with some exceptions in which I would be glad to go on the record or be described as a State Department expert on disinformation, in particular when we are speaking about established Soviet and Russian disinformation and

propaganda practices. I think it's best to do that on a case-by-case basis provided my bosses at GEC and Public Affairs agree.
I am certainly willing to discuss other topics than the AIDS disinformation campaign, if I get permission to speak with you, but I strongly prefer to stick to topics that I know well. From 1987 to 1996, I followed rumors of child organ trafficking very closely, which the Soviets repeated and which also circulated on their own as an urban legend, and paid attention to prominent Soviet disinformation claims (prior to 1992), often helping U.S. Information Agency (USIA) posts overseas respond to Soviet disinformation claims in the local media in their countries. I was at USIA from 1987 to 1996, before it was absorbed into State in 1999 and have been at State since 2003, working to counter misinformation and disinformation most of that time.
Also, many thanks for attaching your excellent 2017 NYT Magazine article, which I had missed. It is an excellent treatment of this topic, enlivened by interviews with Simonyan, Peskov, and other key actors. I will read it carefully.
Many thanks for your inquiry.
Best,

(b)(6)

Senior Counter-Disinformation Adviser
Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State
Contractor: Accenture/Datastrong
(b)(6) @state.gov

From: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Sent: Friday, November 5, 2021 5:15 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject:

Hello Mr. (b)(6)
My name is Jim Rutenberg and I'm a reporter at the New York Times.
I'm doing some research for a narrative history book I'm writing about information warfare at home and abroad, from roughly 1970 to now. I was wondering whether I could check in with you about the work you did on the Active Measures team in the Reagan years. I am looking into the successful Soviet operation to plant false stories that AIDS was invented in the US Laboratory at Fort Detrick. While this is now a fairly well-told tale, I am particularly interested in how that story got picked up and elaborated upon in the publications of fringe political movements here in the US. That labor intensive and onerous work on behalf of the Soviet disinfo agents of the 1980s will stand in contrast to later portions of the book, when their successors will have a much easier time penetrating the American information stream of the social media and cable tv era. Also, I was interested to see in one of your team's reports an assessment that Russian disinformation would be far more effective if they ever figured out how to produce better television, which, of course, they would later go on to do (see https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/magazine/rt-sputnik-and-russias-new-theory-of-war.html), so I'd also want to range a little bit beyond the AIDS operation if you're game.

I am writing the book for Penguin Press and am not yet sure of the publication date (I would expect it to go to market in roughly a year and a half). It is possible that some of what I learn will feed my reporting for The Times, but there are no such plans as of now. If you are amenable then we can discuss the terms of our discussion, but please know that I am comfortable doing this on a background and deep background basis. Of course, I would always be happy to have anything on the record that you are willing to bring onto the record.
Thanks and all best, Jim
Jim Rutenberg
Writer at Large
The New York Times
(b)(6)

Sender: Jim Rutenberg (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: "Kroeker, Scott" (b)(6) @EastWestCenter.org>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
CC: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Vonda Wolcott (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
Alan Davis (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
Joshua Peller (b)(6) @nytimes.com>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: RE: Opportunity for Kaselehlie Press to join the New York Times Content Project
Date: Tue, 15 Dec 2020 20:14:51 +0000

Great. Thank you for the positive response. I'll look forward to hearing back from you and Bill.

Best regards,
Scott

Scott Kroeker | Senior Program Officer, Professional Development Program, East-West Center | (b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 10:13 AM
To: Kroeker, Scott (b)(6) @EastWestCenter.org>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; Vonda Wolcott (b)(6) @iwpr.net>; Alan Davis (b)(6) @iwpr.net>; Joshua Peller (b)(6) @nytimes.com>; (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Opportunity for Kaselehlie Press to join the New York Times Content Project

EXTERNAL EMAIL: Use Caution with Links and Attachments.

This is an amazing opportunity! Thank you!

I will send out immediately. I planned to meet up with the editor this afternoon for a personal matter so I will discuss it with him as well.

Sent from Workspace ONE Boxer

On 16 December 2020 at 6:19:33 AM GMT+11, Kroeker, Scott (b)(6) @EastWestCenter.org> wrote:
Aloha Ms. (b)(6)

I hope you are keeping healthy and enjoying this holiday season. I am writing to you as the East-West Center is administering a project for the Department of State which provides licensing agreement to use *New York Times* content in select Pacific Islands newsrooms. The funds are drawn from the GEC Information Access Fund which we are accessing through a sub-award with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. We would like to make this opportunity available to the *Kaselehlie Press* if you think that Bill Jaynes would be open to the opportunity and a worthy recipient of the license. The year-long license (valued at $6,000) would allow KP to republish *New York Times* content (in both English and Mandarin languages) in its paper and online presence (if any).

If you think that *Kaselehlie Press* would be appropriate would you be willing to make the first approach to introduce Bill to the idea? (b)(6) our GEC contact at INDOPACOM, prefers that approach instead of the EWC directly reaching out, if you are willing. Myself and our contact at the *New York Times* will follow-up your initial query with practical details.

At the end of this email I'm included some boilerplate language used by other embassies to contact media outlets. Feel free to use verbatim or customize to your circumstances.

Thanks very much for your help. Stay safe and happy holidays.

Best regards,
Scott Kroeker

My name is XXXXX and I work with the US Embassy in XXXX it's my pleasure to E-meet you.

I'd like to bring your attention to an opportunity to access content for your publication, the XXXXX.

The U.S. Embassy is offering your news outlet the opportunity to be part of our *New York Times* English & Mandarin content project. We know that many small and medium size news outlets would like to use content from larger outlets, and, that content in Mandarin for occasional Mandarin language supplements is also helpful.

We are pleased to announce a new project for select news outlets in the Pacific:

1) free usage license for *New York Times* English and Mandarin content for at least one year,
2) custom training from the *New York Times* on their website (so you can most easily access the content you want, and on-going technical support),
3) quarterly webinars with prominent international journalists on relevant topics to the Pacific facilitated by the East-West Center, and
4) customized training organized by the East-West Center on specific topics you deem most important to your newsroom.

We hope you will join us in this project! If you are interested, we would like to connect you with Scott Kroeker from the East-West Center, who will be organizing logistics."

Scott Kroeker | Senior Program Officer, Professional Development Program |
(b)(6)
East-West Center
1601 East-West Road
Honolulu, HI 96848-1601, USA
EastWestCenter.org
The East-West Center promotes better relations and understanding among the people and nations of the
United States, Asia, and the Pacific through cooperative study, research, and dialogue. Established by the
U.S. Congress in 1960, the Center serves as a resource for information and analysis on critical issues of
common concern, bringing people together to exchange views, build expertise, and develop policy options.

Sender: "Kroeker, Scott" (b)(6) @EastWestCenter.org>
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Recipient: Vonda Wolcott <(b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
Alan Davis (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
Joshua Peller (b)(6) @nytimes.com>;
(b)(6) .@state.gov>

From: (b)(6) E@state.gov>
To: (b)(6) @nsa.gov>;
'Julian Barnes' (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
CC: DL USCYBERCOM_PAO (H3C9) <DLUSCC_J0_PAO@cybercom.mil>;
(b)(6) @cybercom.mil>;
GEC Press <GECPress@state.gov>
Subject: Re: NYT connection to State Dept GEC
Date: Tue, 2 Feb 2021 18:19:49 +0000

Hi Julian,
Nice to connect. Happy to chat off the record to understand more about your story to see if we have anything to share; or if you have a specific question you can send over email and we can approach it that way.
Very best,

(b)(6)
Public Affairs Officer
Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State
Accenture Federal Services Contractor
Cell: (b)(6)

From: (b)(6) @nsa.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 2, 2021 1:07 PM
To: 'Julian Barnes' (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; DL USCYBERCOM_PAO (H3C9) <DLUSCC_J0_PAO@cybercom.mil>; (b)(6) @cybercom.mil>
Subject: NYT connection to State Dept GEC

Julian-

Connecting you to (b)(6) of the Global Engagement Center-- not sure if they will have something for you on Russian anti-vax disinformation campaign in Spanish, but wanted to make sure you had a good POC for her.

(b)(6)

V/R,
(b)(6) Capt, USAF
U.S. Cyber Command, Public Affairs
COMM: (b)(6)
NSTS: (b)(6)
Personal Cell: (b)(6)
Work Cell: (b)(6)

Sender: (b)(6) @state.gov>
(b)(6) @nsa.gov>;
'Julian Barnes' (b)(6) @nytimes.com>;
Recipient: DL USCYBERCOM_PAO (H3C9) <DLUSCC_J0_PAO@cybercom.mil>;
(b)(6) @cybercom.mil>;
GEC Press <GECPress@state.gov>

From: Lara Jakes (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Hi (b)(
Date: Thu, 11 Mar 2021 19:03:34 -0500

(b)(6) ..

sorry you're not doing Afgh anymore. What are you working on in the GEC? do you like it?
and who is doing Afgh press these days?

all the best

Lara Jakes | Diplomatic Correspondent
Washington Bureau | The New York Times
Mobile/Signal/WhatsApp: (b)(6)
(b)(6) @nytimes.com | @jakesNYT

On Mon, Mar 8, 2021 at 1:09 PM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Alas not working Afghanistan these days. My FSO ways keep me moving about. I am currently working Chinese propaganda and disinformation in the Global Engagement Center.
(b)(6)

From: Lara Jakes (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 12:34 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Hi (b)(

Hi, thanks for circling back -- (b)(6)
I got what I needed, thanks, although wanted to make sure -- you're still doing Afgh policy right/ If so, we shld probably chat given that things are heating up...
cheers

Lara Jakes | Diplomatic Correspondent
Washington Bureau | The New York Times
Mobile/Signal/WhatsApp: (b)(6)
(b)(6) @nytimes.com | @jakesNYT

On Mon, Mar 8, 2021 at 12:30 PM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Hi Lara-
Sorry I was offline yesterday (b)(6)). Playing catchup today.
Let me know if you still want to connect or if you were able to get what you needed.

Best,
(b)(6)
From: Lara Jakes (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 7, 2021 1:08 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Hi (b)(

Got a sec to chat today? Thanks --
Lara Jakes | Diplomatic Correspondent
Washington Bureau | The New York Times
o: (b)(6) | m/s/w'a: (b)(6)
(b)(6) @nytimes.com | @jakesNYT

Sender: Lara Jakes (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
To: Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov>
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Baybars Orsek (b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
CC: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Thibault, Erica (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Connecting - Poynter/IFCN and U.S. Embassy Tunis
Date: Tue, 19 Apr 2022 16:54:04 -0400

Excellent! Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best,
alanna

On Tue, Apr 19, 2022 at 4:50 PM Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Apologies for the delay Alanna. I'm trying to coordinate a call on Friday morning. If you are available, I will circle back with the proposed time. Thanks.
Get Outlook for iOS
From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 19, 2022 9:41:23 PM
To: Thibault, Erica (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov>; Baybars Orsek (b)(6) @poynter.org>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Connecting - Poynter/IFCN and U.S. Embassy Tunis

Hi all,
Just following up on this to see if we can get a call scheduled.
Best,
Alanna

On Sat, Apr 9, 2022 at 3:48 AM Thibault, Erica (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Hi Alanna
Thanks for getting back to us so quickly. Mary Fanous who leads our press efforts will work with you on a time next week fo a call.
Best regards,
Erica Thibault
Counselor for Public Affairs
US Embassy Tunis
(b)(6) @state.gov
From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Sent: Friday, April 8, 2022 7:33 PM

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: Baybars Orsek (b)(6) @poynter.org>; Thibault, Erica (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Connecting - Poynter/IFCN and U.S. Embassy Tunis

Thanks for the connection, (b)(6)
Yes, we do think supplemental mentorship could help both those organizations. What has been helpful is both Fatabyyano's desire to help them cross the finish line and the fact that both organizations are highly motivated and really want to be both effective fact-check units and signatories.
I'd love to hop on a call next week to discuss potential next steps, if that's something you all are amenable to?
Best,
Alanna

On Thu, Apr 7, 2022 at 7:36 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:

Baybars and Alanna,

I oversaw the *Empowering Fact-Checking in the Global South* sub-award from the State Department's Global Engagement Center, working through IWPR. I re-read your final report and the Tunisia portions had some fantastic findings.

I'm connecting you directly with Erica Thibault, the Counselor for Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, to explore what additional mentorship through Poynter/IFCN might look like in Tunisia. Also cc'd is (b)(6) from the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Press and Public Diplomacy. The report had recommended that the two organizations in Tunisia – Les Grandes Ecoles de la Communication and Business News/BN Check – would benefit from additional mentorship to absorb the fact-checking skills.

Erica and (b)(6) – Baybars Örsek is the director of international programming at the Poynter Institute and director of the International Fact-Checking Network. Alanna Dvorak is Poynter's International Training Manager.

Please feel free to keep me cc'd but I'm glad to be connecting you all.

Thanks,

(b)(6)

Foreign Affairs Officer

Global Engagement Center

U.S. Department of State

(b)(6) @state.gov

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Alanna Dvorak
International Training Manager/IFCN
The Poynter Institute
ph: (b)(6)
(b)(6) @poynter.org
www.poynter.org

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Alanna Dvorak
International Training Manager/IFCN
The Poynter Institute
ph: (b)(6)
(b)(6) @poynter.org
www.poynter.org

Sender: Alanna Dvorak <(b)(6) @poynter.org>

Recipient: Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Baybars Orsek (b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;

(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Thibault, Erica (Tunis) (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Baybars Orsek <(b)(6)@poynter.org>
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>
CC: Ferdi Ozsoy <(b)(6)@poynter.org>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Concerns about Thailand Grant
Date: Fri, 5 Feb 2021 12:41:57 -0500

Hi (b)(6)

Thanks for checking in.

As of today, the DS1909 form has been sent to our VP of Finance and Business for her signature and will be sent back to the Embassy in Bangkok for execution.

That will officially extend the project to July 31st of this year.

The course material has been prepared and currently it's currently in the translation process.

The materials will be shared with the embassy for confirmation and they can be delivered as early as the first week of March.

Thank you for your understanding and happy to have a call to discuss if you have any questions.

Best-

Baybars

On Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 12:34 PM (b)(6)@state.gov> wrote:
Ferdi, Baybars,
I want to reach out to see if we could resolve some concerns that have been raised over the Thailand project. I know you have been swamped but post is concerned it is falling behind planned timelines and has voiced concern that it has been hard to keep thing moving. Would you have a moment to touch base so we can make sure things stay on track?
Best, (b)(6)

--
Baybars Örsek

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
@baybarsorsek / @factchecknet

Sender: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>

Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>

From: (b)(6)@nctc.gov>
To: 'Grynkewich, Alexus G Maj Gen USAF CENTCOM CCJ3 (USA)' (b)(6) (b)(6)@umd.edu (b)(6)@umd.edu>; (b)(6)@state.gov (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@washpost.com (b)(6)@washpost.com>; (b)(6)@newsguardtech.com (b)(6)@newsguardtech.com>
CC: (b)(6)@gmail.com (b)(6)@gmail.com>; (b)(6)@arlis.umd.edu (b)(6)@arlis.umd.edu>; (b)(6)@umd.edu (b)(6)@umd.edu>; (b)(6)@lexsg.com (b)(6)@lexsg.com>
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Thank you to Panel 1!!
Date: Sun, 18 Apr 2021 18:52:06 +0000

Team,

Likewise. Outstanding panel that benefited from a well-organized and run event. Great discussion and thanks to all of you working in this space…

Best,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)
Assistant Director, Strategic Operational Planning, and
National Intelligence Manager (Counterterrorism)
National Counterterrorism Center
(b)(6)

From: Grynkewich, Alexus G Maj Gen USAF CENTCOM CCJ3 (USA) (b)(6)
Sent: Sunday, April 18, 2021 11:39 AM
To: (b)(6)@umd.edu; (b)(6) (b)(6)@nctc.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)@washpost.com; (b)(6)@newsguardtech.com
Cc: (b)(6)@gmail.com; (b)(6)@arlis.umd.edu; (b)(6)@umd.edu; (b)(6)@lexsg.com
Subject: RE: [Non-DoD Source] Thank you to Panel 1!!

Joe and Panel 1 teammates—

Truly enjoyed the session and appreciate all who appreciated. Great to see old and current colleagues, and to virtually engage with a few new ones, too. I thought the broad composition of the panel across government and private sector/media was particularly powerful.

Thanks to all, and please reach out anytime if you need anything from CENTCOM.

V/R
Grynch

Maj Gen Alex Grynkewich, USAF
Director of Operations (CCJ3)
Comm: (b)(6)
DSN: (b)(6)
SVOIP: (b)(6)
(b)(6)

From: Joseph Michael Kelly (b)(6) @umd.edu>
Sent: Saturday, April 17, 2021 11:01 AM
To: (b)(6) Grynkewich, Alexus G Maj Gen USAF CENTCOM CCJ3 (USA) (b)(6) ; (b)(6) @nctc.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov; Nakashima, Ellen (b)(6) @washpost.com>; Gordon Crovitz (b)(6) @newsguardtech.com>
Cc: Michael Williams (b)(6) @gmail.com>; Angie Mallory (b)(6) @arlis.umd.edu>; Austin Branch (b)(6) @umd.edu>; Barton Brown (b)(6) @lexsg.com>
Subject: [Non-DoD Source] Thank you to Panel 1!!

Speakers,

I want to thank each and everyone of you for your participation on Tuesday. As you probably saw, yours was the most popular panel drawing over half the keynote audience.

By all accounts, your discussion was truly groundbreaking. Many of the comments I heard in the days afterward focused on the need for appropriate coordination and collaboration across the US government but also between government and the media as well as wider industry. Collectively, you planted the seed for a new way to think about the challenges of disinformation and malign foreign influence.

In the next week or so, we will be posting the keynote address and all the panel recordings to the IPA website behind a password protected link available only to registered attendees. You should all get a copy of that link when we send it out.

Thank you again for your support of the Phoenix Challenge conference and the wider IO community. I look forward to the chance to work with each of you again in the future.

V/R,

Joe

--
Joe Kelly
Professor of the Practice
Applied Research Lab for Intelligence and Security (ARLIS)
University of Maryland
Mobile: (b)(6)

Sender: (b)(6) @nctc.gov>

Recipient: 'Grynkewich, Alexus G Maj Gen USAF CENTCOM CCJ3 (USA)' (b)(6) (b)(6) @umd.edu (b)(6) @umd.edu>; (b)(6) (b)(6) @state.gov (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @washpost.com (b)(6) @washpost.com>; (b)(6) @newsguardtech.com (b)(6) @newsguardtech.com>; (b)(6) @gmail.com (b)(6) @gmail.com>; (b)(6) @arlis.umd.edu (b)(6) @arlis.umd.edu>; (b)(6) @umd.edu (b)(6) @umd.edu>; (b)(6) @lexsg.com (b)(6) @lexsg.com>

From: David Mikkelson <snopes@snopes.com>
SentVia: fakenewssci@googlegroups.com
To: fakenewssci@googlegroups.com
Subject: Re: [fakenewssci] Daily Caller
Date: Mon, 22 Feb 2021 18:32:13 -0800

Yes, I'm familiar with the process and the documents. Simply saying, "We get our funding from (X)," while providing no information whatsoever about how (X) itself is funded, is not transparency -- it's obfuscation.

Check Your Fact is funded from the Daily Caller's newsroom budget, and the Daily Caller is funded by the Daily Caller News Foundation (DCNF). So where does the DCNF get its money from? Providing tax forms that merely document how much revenue the DCNF takes in does nothing to answer that question.

On Mon, Feb 22, 2021 at 6:03 PM Masato Kajimoto <(b)(6)@hku.hk> wrote:

Hi all. I serve as an IFCN assessor in Asia and so, I'm familiar with the process. Here's a link to the latest application made by Daily Caller's Check Your Fact and the assessor's evaluation (the certification must be renewed annually).

You can see the funding sources they disclosed, download their tax returns, etc, in Criterion 4a. All applications and assessments are publicly available on IFCN's website, by the way.

https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/application/public/check-your-fact/38F5A0E1-4438-54B9-68BA-4F805B53B429

With all good wishes,

Masato

==========

Masato Kajimoto, PhD
Associate Professor of Practice
Journalism and Media Studies Centre
The University of Hong Kong
Tel: (b)(6)
E-mail: (b)(6) @hku.hk
Web: https://sites.google.com/view/masatokajimoto/

From: <fakenewssci@googlegroups.com> on behalf of David Mikkelson <snopes@snopes.com>
Date: Tuesday, 23 February 2021 at 02:56
To: "fakenewssci@googlegroups.com" <fakenewssci@googlegroups.com>
Subject: Re: [fakenewssci] Daily Caller

One of the key requirements of IFCN certification is supposed to be transparency of funding. If anyone can parse this word salad and figure out who or what funds the Daily Caller's fact-checking arm, I'd like to know:

https://checkyourfact.com/about-us/

On Mon, Feb 22, 2021 at 6:30 AM Dean Jackson <mailto:(b)(6) @ned.org> wrote:
On the other hand, you really have to ask yourself if you want to be featured on a website with a history of https://www.snopes.com/news/2018/09/06/many-daily-caller-writers-expressed-white-supremacist-views/, next to headlines like "https://dailycaller.com/2021/02/19/public-schools-woke-liberal-activism-critical-race-theory-teachers-unions-enrollment-private-schools/."

It's something everyone has to answer for themselves. I personally wouldn't lend them the credibility.

From: Barrett Golding <mailto:(b)(6) @gmail.com> On Behalf Of Barrett Golding
Sent: Saturday, February 20, 2021 8:04 PM
To: mailto:fakenewssci@googlegroups.com
Subject: Re: [fakenewssci] Daily Caller

The Daily Caller has a NewsGuard Green rating (scoring 70/100), a Source Credibility of Medium from Logically, an Our.news status of Verified, and an MBFC factual-reporting rating of Mixed:
https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/daily-caller/&data=04|01| @ned.org|889bda42c90e49c7c56408d8d60ced2a|4e07708641b34a22b78e41daff10793d|1|0|637494699129300953|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0=|3000&sdata=A1mPGasqiBEYDHPjEArxM6KsOb2cVEB5uT+sn6zOzvA=&reserved=0

By way of comparison CNN and MSNBC are also MBFC Mixed. Another thing Daily Caller has in its favor is its connection with the IFCN-verified fact-cheking site:
https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https://checkyourfact.com/&data=04|01| @ned.org|889bda42c90e49c7c56408d8d60ced2a|4e07708641b34a22b78e41daff10793d|1|0|637494699129310953|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0=|3000&sdata=8VThJL/4Ox7erij2v50LQKDsIVFScwmo2b+kPVmh2AE=&reserved=0

Plus their interview with Dr. Gleb Tsipursky seemed fair and fine.

On Feb 19, 2021, at 6:17 AM, 'Dr. Gleb Tsipursky' via Combating Fake News: The Science of Misinformation <mailto:fakenewssci@googlegroups.com> wrote:
Sharing my personal experience being interviewed by The Daily Caller a few months ago on my own project to address misinformation, it was a good experience, and they published a fair interview. Here's the article, FYI. Anyone interested in knowing more can contact me off the list https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https://dailycaller.com/2020/10/06/politicians-pro-truth-pledge-stop-spread-misinformation/&data=04|01| @ned.org|889bda42c90e49c7c56408d8d60ced2a|4e07708641b34a22b78e41daff10793d|1|0|637494699129310953|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0=|3000&sdata=GxSzMfHznsI2GYRIi+1zHWYZAarneCAU1jl0qxKEfxc=&reserved=0

On Feb 19, 2021, at 2:41 AM, Harith Alani <mailto:(b)(6) @gmail.com> wrote:
… According to my database, Daily Caller has published several misinforming articles themselves.

De : mailto:fakenewssci@googlegroups.com <mailto:fakenewssci@googlegroups.com> de la part de Stephan Lewandowsky <mailto:(b)(6) @bristol.ac.uk>
…the Daily Caller is an "orange" site (by the Grinberg et al., 2019, classification)

(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)

bg
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https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https://hearingvoices.com/&data=04|01|[redacted]@ned.org|889bda42c90e49c7c56408d8d60ced2a|4e07708641b34a22b78e41daff10793d|1|0|637494699129320942|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0=|3000&sdata=8QP6UGoRfhZb3PxsFXJmYiCtzIxUQB2UmpbDT5h0iUk=&reserved=0
https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https://iffy.news/&data=04|01|[redacted]@ned.org|889bda42c90e49c7c56408d8d60ced2a|4e07708641b34a22b78e41daff10793d|1|0|637494699129320942|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0=|3000&sdata=APZn4HRRz4GLSgBVEbBVIJwjVp9VGYWHv+EjvKeVwuE=&reserved=0
--
#FakeNewsSci seeks to cultivate and continue an academic and practical agenda around defining and protecting against fake news and misinformation, and work to build news literacy, defend a free press and strengthen first amendment principles.

There are three ground rules for this community aimed at ensuring appropriate communication and exchange:

(1) Civility is the primary responsibility of membership - we intend to avoid uncivil debates or rhetoric and those who violate this rule will be immediately removed.
(2) To preserve people's comfort with being open and frank, all exchanges are to be treated as "off the record" unless the member(s) in question explicitly agree otherwise.
(3) To maintain high-quality exchanges of ideas and practice, all new members must be recommended by two other group members to be added to this group. Please fill the form at https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https://goo.gl/forms/h1UkZHwGEjt5Z4wg1&data=04|01|[redacted]@ned.org|889bda42c90e49c7c56408d8d60ced2a|4e07708641b34a22b78e41daff10793d|1|0|637494699129330937|Unknown|TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0=|3000&sdata=nSRerkRaVlqjTFkm32uJD7eg0l5rn/vR3o494UuT0TU=&reserved=0 before you apply for membership.

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To view this discussion on the web visit https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/fakenewssci/MN2PR18MB3309FA83352F14763B93AE2AA5819@MN2PR18MB3309.namprd18.prod.outlook.com?utm_medium=email&utm_source=footer.
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To view this discussion on the web visit https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/fakenewssci/CAK-uGwMj-YJKdrUst+iy8UdiC+nMi1XqQ_-sdT_rSVXT751c4Q@mail.gmail.com?utm_medium=email&utm_source=footer.

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To view this discussion on the web visit https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/fakenewssci/CAK-uGwN67nOD5G0gk1bObSZuuewkmNFSxJyo4aSDroGFt1vzSw%40mail.gmail.com.

Sender: David Mikkelson <snopes@snopes.com>; fakenewssci@googlegroups.com
Recipient: fakenewssci@googlegroups.com

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
To: Davey Alba <(b)(6) @nytimes.com>; (b)(6) @eeas.europa.eu>; Eliot Higgins (b)(6) @bellingcat.com>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>;
CC: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Our Most Sincere Thanks for a Successful Event
Date: Wed, 1 Dec 2021 03:40:48 +0000

Dear Davey (b)(6) Eliot and (b)(6)
On behalf of our team at AVC/CBW in DC and the U.S. Delegation to the OPCW in the Hague, I wanted to convey our most sincere thanks for taking time in your busy schedule to join what was, in our assessment and that of others who have already share their appreciation, a very successful event yesterday.
We had 90+ people joining the event from delegations of more than 50 countries. Despite the sobering topic, the wealth of experience and knowledge panelists brought to the table and (b)(6) smooth moderation made for a lively event that conveyed the message we wanted to pass in to OPCW delegates regarding the scope, sophistication and challenging nature of state sponsored disinformation.
As I mentioned before we are looking into editing the video of the event into a more easily shareable format and will let you know where things stand on that front as things progress.
Most respectfully,

(b)(6)
Foreign Affairs Officer

Office of Chemical and Biological Weapons Affairs
Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520
(b)(6) (desk)
(cell)
(b)(6) @state.gov
(b)(6) @state.sgov.gov

Sender: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Recipient: Davey Alba <(b)(6) @nytimes.com>; (b)(6) @eeas.europa.eu>; Eliot Higgins (b)(6) @bellingcat.com>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>

To: Davey Alba <(b)(6) @nytimes.com>;
Eliot Higgins (b)(6) @bellingcat.com>;
(b)(6) @eeas.europa.eu>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @mfa.ee (b)(6) @mfa.ee>;
(b)(6) @eeas.europa.eu (b)(6)
(b)(6) @eeas.europa.eu>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>

CC: AVC-CBW-DL <AVC-CBW-DL2@state.gov>;
USOPCWTheHague <USOPCWTheHague@state.gov>

Subject: OPCW Disinformation Panel

Date: Tue, 23 Nov 2021 20:11:42 +0000

This is the confirmed CSP-26 Side-Event invite

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app
Click here to join the meeting

Or call in (audio only)
(b)(7)(E) United States, Spokane
Phone Conference ID: (b)(7)(E)
Find a local number | Reset PIN

Learn More | Meeting options

Sender: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Recipient: Davey Alba (b)(6) @nytimes.com>;
Eliot Higgins (b)(6) @bellingcat.com>;
(b)(6) @eeas.europa.eu>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @mfa.ee (b)(6) @mfa.ee>;
(b)(6) @eeas.europa.eu (b)(6)
(b)(6) @eeas.europa.eu>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;

(b)(6) @state.gov>;
AVC-CBW-DL <AVC-CBW-DL2@state.gov>;
USOPCWTheHague <USOPCWTheHague@state.gov>

From: Julian Barnes (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
To: GEC Press <GECPress@state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: NYT: Russian Disinfo
Date: Fri, 30 Jul 2021 10:14:32 -0400

(b)(6) GEC
I am working on a story looking at Russia's most recent disinformation efforts around the western vaccines. We are trying to determine if there has been an uptick either coinciding with the various failures of the Sputnik vaccine or the intensification of the Delta outbreak. NSA has referred us to the GEC. I am hoping you all might have some new information to share.
I am at (b)(6) I am out of pocket 1130 to 1:30 but otherwise available today. But I my deadline is early next week not today.
Julian

Julian E. Barnes
Intelligence, National Security reporter
The New York Times
(b)(6) Mobile/WhatsApp/Signal

Sender: Julian Barnes (b)(6) @nytimes.com>
Recipient: GEC Press <GECPress@state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Mon. at 2:00 p.m. ET: New Government with California Secretary of State Alex Padilla

Date: Fri, 8 Jan 2021 22:44:43 +0000

BEGIN:VCALENDAR
PRODID:-//Splash Event Planning System
VERSION:2.0
METHOD:PUBLISH
BEGIN:VEVENT
DTSTAMP:20210108T224442Z
UID:eabf42e0f60a2e0577d204a14510b6f81c2e3a88@newgovtjan11.sp
lashthat.com
URL:https://newgovtjan11.splashthat.com
DTSTART:20210111T190000Z
DTEND:20210111T193000Z
SUMMARY:New Government January 11
DESCRIPTION:For more information - https://newgovtjan11.spla
shthat.com
LOCATION:Washington DC 20071
END:VEVENT
END:VCALENDAR

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Mon. at 2:00 p.m. ET: New Government with California Secretary of State Alex Padilla

Date: Fri, 8 Jan 2021 22:44:42 +0000

BEGIN:VCALENDAR
PRODID:-//Splash Event Planning System
VERSION:2.0
METHOD:PUBLISH
BEGIN:VEVENT
DTSTAMP:20210108T224441Z
UID:eabf42e0f60a2e0577d204a14510b6f81c2e3a88@newgovtjan11.sp
lashthat.com
URL:https://newgovtjan11.splashthat.com
DTSTART:20210111T190000Z
DTEND:20210111T193000Z
SUMMARY:New Government January 11
DESCRIPTION:For more information - https://newgovtjan11.spla
shthat.com
LOCATION:Washington DC 20071
END:VEVENT
END:VCALENDAR

Sender: Washington Post Live <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Katherine O'Hearn <washpostlive@washpost.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Last day to register: WashPost's Global Women's Summit with Ukrainian first lady Olena Zelenska, Hillary Clinton, Vivek Murthy and more
Date: Sun, 13 Nov 2022 15:01:39 +0000

Sender: Katherine O'Hearn <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: (b)(6)@iwpr.net>
SentVia: Google Calendar <calendar-notification@google.com>
To: (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@poynter.org>; (b)(6)@pacom.mil>; (b)(6)@poynter.org>
Subject: Invitation: Poynter Pacific Islands Kick Off Call @ Tue Dec 8, 2020 2pm - 3pm (EST) (b)(6)@state.gov)
Date: Mon, 7 Dec 2020 14:14:33 +0000

You have been invited to the following event.

Poynter Pacific Islands Kick Off Call

When Tue Dec 8, 2020 2pm – 3pm Eastern Time - New York

Calendar (b)(6)@state.gov

Who
- (b)(6)@iwpr.net - organizer
- (b)(6)@state.gov
- (b)(6)@poynter.org
- (b)(6)@state.gov
- (b)(6)@pacom.mil
- (b)(6)@poynter.org

more details »

Conference call link:
(b)(6)

Agenda:
Intro (IWPR)
Overview and timeline of project (Poynter)
Questions/comments (GEC et al)

Going (b)(6)@state.gov)? **Yes** - **Maybe** - **No** more options »

Invitation from Google Calendar

You are receiving this courtesy email at the account ryank@state.gov because you are an attendee of this event.

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Sender: (b)(6) @iwpr.net>; Google Calendar <calendar-notification@google.com>

Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @pacom.mil>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>

From: (b)(6) @iwpr.net
Sent: Mon, 7 Dec 2020 14:09:34 +0000
To: (b)(6) @iwpr.net; (b)(6) @state.gov; (b)(6) @poynter.org; (b)(6) @state.gov; (b)(6) @pacom.mil; (b)(6) @poynter.org; (b)(6) @iwpr.net
Subject: Poynter Pacific Islands Kick Off Call

Conference call link:
(b)(6)

Agenda:
Intro (IWPR)
Overview and timeline of project (Poynter)
Questions/comments (GEC et al)

-::~:~::~::~:~::-
Please do not edit this section of the description.

View your event at
https://calendar.google.com/calendar/event?action=VIEW&eid=MWlubTQxODhxNjNndWdmYjAzZjdkdXNxYnIgcnlhbmtAc3RhdGUuZ292&tok=MTQjdm9uZGFAaXdwci5uZXQ0MzYzZDU3ZDZkNWJiNTllMWQ0YzlmNGQ4ZmRmNGM1MzVkZDliMDJj&ctz=America%2FNew_York&hl=en&es=1.
-::~:~::~::~:~::-

From: (b)(6) @iwpr.net>
SentVia: Google Calendar <calendar-notification@google.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @poynter.org>; (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Subject: Invitation: Poynter Balkans kick off call @ Wed Dec 9, 2020 1pm - 2pm (EST) (b)(6) @state.gov)
Date: Fri, 4 Dec 2020 14:53:36 +0000

You have been invited to the following event.

Poynter Balkans kick off call

When Wed Dec 9, 2020 1pm – 2pm Eastern Time - New York

Calendar (b)(6) @state.gov

Who
- (b)(6) @iwpr.net - organizer
- (b)(@poynter.org
- (b)(6) @poynter.org
- (b)(6) @state.gov

more details »
Conference call link:
(b)(6)

Agenda:
Intro (IWPR)
Overview and timeline of project (Poynter)
Questions/comments (GEC et al)

Going (b)(6) @state.gov)? **Yes** - **Maybe** - **No** more options »

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You are receiving this courtesy email at the account chapmanj2@state.gov because you are an attendee of this event.

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Sender: (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; Google Calendar <calendar-notification@google.com>

Recipient: (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@poynter.org>;
(b)(6)@poynter.org>

From: (b)(6)@iwpr.net
Sent: Fri, 4 Dec 2020 14:44:04 +0000
To:
(b)(6)@iwpr.net;(b)(6)@poynter.org;(b)(6)@poynter.org;(b)(6)@state.gov;(b)(6)@iwpr.net
Subject: Poynter Balkans kick off call

Conference call link:
(b)(6)

Agenda:
Intro (IWPR)
Overview and timeline of project (Poynter)
Questions/comments (GEC et al)

-::~:~::~::~:~::-
Please do not edit this section of the description.

View your event at
https://calendar.google.com/calendar/event?action=VIEW&eid=NnFkYmo4MGZkajNmNW1nNThyZzRkMWU4Y2kgY2hhcG1hbmoyQHN0YXRlLmdvdg&tok=MTQjdm9uZGFAaXdwci5uZXQ3ZTdiYWJhZDEzOTljYTFiZThmMThjMDUwZGViMzlmOTM0OWI3YTIz&ctz=America%2FNew_York&hl=en&es=1.
-::~:~::~::~:~::-

From: (b)(6) @iwpr.net>

SentVia: Google Calendar <calendar-notification@google.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org>;
Dhaniella Falk (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
Alan Davis (b)(@iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Seth Meixner (b)(@iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Invitation: IWPR GEC DRL Western Hem Projects Meeting @ Thu Nov 19, 2020 11am - 12pm (EST) (b)(6) @state.gov)

Date: Mon, 9 Nov 2020 20:41:42 +0000

You have been invited to the following event.

IWPR GEC DRL Western Hem Projects Meeting

When: Thu Nov 19, 2020 11am – 12pm Eastern Time - New York

Calendar: (b)(6) @state.gov

Who:
- (b)(6) @iwpr.net organizer
- (b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org
- Dhaniella Falk
- (b)(@poynter.org
- (b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org
- (b)(6) @poynter.org
- (b)(6) @state.gov
- Alan Davis
- (b)(6) @state.gov
- Seth Meixner
- (b)(6) @state.gov
- (b)(6) @state.gov

more details »

Conference call link:
(b)(6)

Agenda

1. Introduction (IWPR - Vonda)

2. Project Summaries:
- IWPR LAC (Dhaniella Falk)
- Poynter (Baybars Orsek)
- Global Americans (Guy Mentel)

3. GEC/DRL Comments

4. Comments/questions/thoughts on synergies (all)
Going (b)(6) @state.gov)? **Yes** - **Maybe** - **No** more options »

Invitation from Google Calendar

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Sender: (b)(6) @iwpr.net>; Google Calendar <calendar-notification@google.com>

Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org>;
Dhaniella Falk (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
Alan Davis (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Seth Meixner <(b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>

From: (b)(6) @iwpr.net>
SentVia: Google Calendar <calendar-notification@google.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org>;
Dhaniella Falk (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6 @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Alan Davis (b)(@iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Seth Meixner (b)(@iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Invitation: IWPR GEC DRL Western Hem Projects Meeting @ Thu Nov 19, 2020 11am - 12pm (EST) (b)(6)@state.gov)
Date: Mon, 9 Nov 2020 20:41:42 +0000

You have been invited to the following event.

IWPR GEC DRL Western Hem Projects Meeting

When: Thu Nov 19, 2020 11am – 12pm Eastern Time - New York

Calendar: (b)(6)@state.gov

Who:
- (b)(6)@iwpr.net organizer
- (b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org
- Dhaniella Falk
- (b)(@poynter.org
- (b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org
- (b)(6) @poynter.org
- (b)(6) @state.gov
- Alan Davis
- (b)(6) @state.gov
- Seth Meixner
- (b)(6)@state.gov
- (b)(6) @state.gov

more details »

Conference call link:
(b)(6)

Agenda

1. Introduction (IWPR - Vonda)

2. Project Summaries:
- IWPR LAC (Dhaniella Falk)
- Poynter (Baybars Orsek)
- Global Americans (Guy Mentel)

3. GEC/DRL Comments

4. Comments/questions/thoughts on synergies (all)
Going (b)(6) @state.gov)? **Yes** - **Maybe** - **No** more options »

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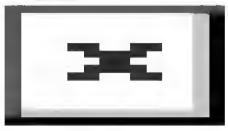
Sender: (b)(6) @iwpr.net>; Google Calendar <calendar-notification@google.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org>;
Dhaniella Falk (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @theglobalamericans.org>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Alan Davis (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Seth Meixner (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Reuters <account@reuters.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Get Reuters.com on the go
Date: Sun, 5 Jun 2022 13:04:20 +0000



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3 Times Square, New York, NY 10036

Sender: Reuters <account@reuters.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Corina Rebegea (b)(6) @cepa.org>;
Sarah Cook <(b)(6) @FreedomHouse.org>;
Danielle Cave (b)(6) @aspi.org.au>;
Rachael Owen <(b)(6) @aspi.org.au>;
Alex Joske <(b)(6) @aspi.org.au>;
Tom Baker <(b)(@iwpr.net>;
Alan Davis <(b)(@iwpr.net>;
Vonda Wolcott (b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(@me.com <(b)(@me.com>;
(b)(6) @ff.cuni.cz (b)(6) @ff.cuni.cz>;
Baybars Orsek (b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(@poynter.org <(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @ceip.org (b)(6) @ceip.org>
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;

CC: Alan Davis <(b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org (b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org (b)(6) @poynter.org>

Subject: GEC FY21 Strategy for Engagement in Europe

Date: Thu, 5 Nov 2020 14:46:05 +0000

Join Microsoft Teams Meeting

+(b)(7)(E) United States, Spokane (Toll)
Conference ID: (b)(7)(E)

Apologies for the multiple updates. We've added a new Teams line that includes a phone dial-in option. Looking forward to speaking with you all later today.

Please find appended below an agenda for tomorrow's discussion. We look forward to speaking with you all.

///

With a new fiscal year and a full slate of programs in execution globally, the GEC China team invites you to join a discussion as we look ahead to our efforts in Europe in FY21.

We hope this discussion can be candid, informal, and focused on how we can bring our unique capabilities to bear to support our efforts to counter PRC malign influence in Europe. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on where we've made progress, where gaps remains, and things we should keep in mind as put together our programmatic strategy for FY21.

Global Engagement Center China Directorate
Agenda for FY21 Strategy for Engagement in Europe Roundtable
November 5, 2020

Participants:

Global Engagement Center
(b)(6)

Australian Strategic Policy Institute
Danielle Cave
Rachael Owen
Alex Joske

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Evan Feigenbaum
Erik Brattberg

Center for European Policy Analysis
Edward Lucas
Corina Rebegea

Freedom House
Sarah Cook

Institute for War and Peace Reporting
Alan Davis
Tom Baker
Vonda Wolcott

Poynter Institute
Baybars Örsek
Ferdi Özsoy

Sinopsis
Martin Hála

Agenda (all times in EST):

14:00 – 14:05	Welcome remarks and GEC/China strategic landscape • (b)(6) GEC/China Director
14:05 – 14:25	Research and networking activities in Europe • Each participant summarizes their relevant work in Europe as it relates to the GEC (max three minutes per organization),

	proceeding in alphabetical order as shown in the Participants list.
14:25 – 14:55	Open discussion • How can we ensure these activities are complementary? • How much overlap is there among our European network partners? • Are there opportunities to amplify each other's work to maximize counter-propaganda and -disinformation impact? • How do we create sustained impact?
14:55 – 15:00	Synthesis, closing remarks, next steps • (b)(6) GEC/China Director

Sender: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Corina Rebegea <(b)(6) @cepa.org>;
Sarah Cook <(b)(6) @FreedomHouse.org>;
Danielle Cave <(b)(6) @aspi.org.au>;
Rachael Owen <(b)(6) @aspi.org.au>;
Alex Joske <(b)(6) @aspi.org.au>;
Tom Baker <(b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
Alan Davis <(b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
Vonda Wolcott <(b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @me.com <(b)(6) @me.com>;
(b)(6) @ff.cuni.cz (b)(6) @ff.cuni.cz>;
Baybars Orsek <(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org <(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @ceip.org (b)(6) @ceip.org>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
Alan Davis <(b)(6) @iwpr.net>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org <(b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @poynter.org <(b)(6) @poynter.org>

From: Gabrielle Settles (b)(6) @poynter.org>
To: <Mediarequests@state.gov>
Subject: Fwd: PolitiFact Article Query to Deputy Director William Malzahn
Date: Wed, 27 Oct 2021 10:17:35 -0400

Good morning,

My name is Gabrielle Settles, and I'm a reporter for PolitiFact (here's a bit more about me). Part of my role is to fact check and report on claims that go viral on social media. I'm currently fact checking a TikTok post claiming that the Biden Administration wants to create an international committee to decide if Second Amendment rights need to be altered or cancelled. **Here's the link to that post.**

From what I've researched, I believe this claim stems from the letter that GOP senators wrote to the Biden Administration to ask for clarification of remarks from Deputy Director for Conventional Arms Threat Reduction, William Malzahn, at the Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. They wrote that Malzahn indicated an intention to rejoin the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty, which they wrote is misguided and would subject Second Amendment rights to an international committee.

I'm hoping that you can connect me with Mr. Malzahn or a representative of his office to give comments for the record today and answer a few questions below.

1. Is the claim that the Biden Admin wants to create an international committee to oversee Second Amendment rights true or false?

2. Can you please confirm that this transcript is of your remarks at the Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty?

3. If the above are your remarks, were you highlighting plans from the Biden administration to join the Arms Trade Treaty? If not, can you describe what you were referring to?

4. Does the Biden administration have any plans to join the Arms Trade Treaty?

Thanks very much for your time. If Mr. Malzahn or a representative would be able to give responses today, that would be most helpful. I'm happy to give someone a call if they'd prefer to answer these questions by phone.

Gabrielle Settles
PolitiFact Reporter
https://www.politifact.com/
(b)(6)
Twitter: @settEMup

Sender: Gabrielle Settles (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Recipient: <Mediarequests@state.gov>

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
To: Baybars Orsek (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Subject: Fact-Check Org Connect Question
Date: Thu, 4 Mar 2021 18:51:00 +0000

Dear Baybars,
Hoping this finds you well. (b)(from GEC here. It's been a while since we last spoke -- just in case it's been too long, I cover Latin America and the Caribbean for the China team.
I had a quick question that I thought you might have some insights into -- my colleagues in our regional bureau were hoping to convene a virtual meet and greet for a small number of U.S. and Brazilian fact-checking orgs. They're looking to get in touch with folks from the following orgs: AFP Fact Check USA, PolitiFact, Snopes, and The Washington Post Fact Checker.
Would you happen to have connections to folks in these orgs? If so, please let me know how this can best be facilitated. Please let me know if you have any questions, and please feel free to give my cell a ring if easiest.
V/r,
(b)(6)
Program Analyst
GEC | DOS | KTG Contractor
Cell: (b)(6)
(b)(6) @state.gov

Sender: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Recipient: Baybars Orsek (b)(6) @poynter.org>

From: Katherine O'Hearn <washpostlive@washpost.com>

To: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Subject: Exclusive Invitation: Washington Post Live in-person climate change event 9/20 [Response Requested]

Date: Wed, 14 Sep 2022 17:30:56 +0000

Sender: Katherine O'Hearn <washpostlive@washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Nancy Nussbaum (b)(6) @ap.org>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: AP Definitive Source: The Pandemic Road Ahead
Date: Thu, 21 Oct 2021 06:35:40 -0600

View in browser

Reminder: The Pandemic Road Ahead

How can you prepare your newsroom for continuing coverage of COVID-19?

The pandemic has morphed into a crisis the world will be living through for some time, as vaccine inequality, misinformation and mistrust lead millions to go about their daily lives with no protection from the virus. Where do we see the story going? What changes are likely permanent? Join AP news leaders for a discussion of where COVID-19 coverage is headed in the months ahead and beyond.

The webinar will last about 30 minutes, followed by Q&A.

Please register even if news may prevent you from joining. **We will send a recording link to everyone who registers.**

Who

-**Jonathan Fahey,** Editor/Health & Science

-**Anna Johnson,** News Director/Europe & Africa

-**Ted Anthony,** Director/New Storytelling & Newsroom Innovation

When

Date: October 28, 2021
Time: 0900 GMT (5 a.m. Eastern)
Register here

Date: October 28, 2021
Time: 2 p.m. Eastern (1700 GMT)
Register here

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

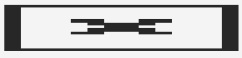
Please feel free to share this invitation with anyone from your staff who might be interested in these topics.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Nancy Nussbaum
Global Director of Engagement

Need any help? Talk to us.
We're open 24/7

Editorial Support (editorial questions and requests, on-the-day and planning)
Customer Support (technical queries, access and account issues, account creation)



The Associated Press is an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day.

200 Liberty St., New York, NY 10281

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Sender: Nancy Nussbaum (b)(6) @ap.org>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Nicola Aitken <(b)(6)@fullfact.org>
SentVia: disinfo@googlegroups.com
To: disinfo@googlegroups.com
Subject: [disinfogroup] Full Fact: Facebook Third-Party Fact-Checking report 2020
Date: Thu, 17 Dec 2020 11:36:31 +0000

Hi all,

I am very pleased to say that Full Fact, the UK's independent fact checking charity, has today published two reports, both of which I have attached below.

Report on the Facebook Third-Party Fact-Checking programme
The first report details our experience of participating in the TPFC programme over the past 18 months. We wrote this report to build transparency around the programme so that people can reach informed judgements and others can learn from it. This report only covers Full Fact's experience of the programme and does not describe or evaluate the experience of other fact checkers in the programme.

We make seven recommendations, four of which are specifically aimed at Facebook and how the programme functions.

The other three are recommendations for all internet companies:

- **Recommendation 5:** Provide machine readable data to fact checking partners
- **Recommendation 6:** Share a register of emerging potentially harmful misinformation trends with governments and other relevant official bodies
- **Recommendation 7:** Implement greater transparency around the use of AI in claim matching

Challenges of Online Fact Checking
The second report is a research report on the experiences of fact checkers in tackling online misinformation. This is based on interviews with nineteen fact checkers across the globe, and includes ideas for helping to address some of the most common challenges, with a focus on technology and internet company partnerships.

All of our reports are also published on our website. We'd be very happy to discuss our findings further with anyone who is interested.

Best wishes,
Nicola

--
Nicola Aitken
Policy Manager
(b)(6)

Full Fact
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Twitter • Facebook • LinkedIn

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Sender: Nicola Aitken (b)(6) @fullfact.org>; disinfo@googlegroups.com
Recipient: disinfo@googlegroups.com

Full Fact

Report on the Facebook Third-Party Fact-Checking programme

July 2019 - December 2020

FULL FACT

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Contents

Introduction

Full Fact first started working with Facebook on the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme in January 2019. When we joined the programme we committed to reporting regularly on its operation. Our first report, published in July 2019, covered January to June 2019.[1] This second report details our experience from July 2019 to December 2020.

We attempt in these reports to create further transparency around the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme, so that people can reach informed judgements and others can learn from it. We are independent from Facebook and not party to their internal discussions and choices so there are limits to the information we can report on.

This report only covers Full Fact's experience of the programme and does not describe or evaluate Facebook's overall response to the harms that false information causes, or the experience of other fact checkers in the programme.

Our first report set out an overview of how the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme functions, a summary of what work Full Fact undertook in the first six months of the programme, observations from this and recommendations for how the programme could be improved. In this report we give an overview of how the programme has evolved since June 2019, including examining where Facebook has responded to and/or implemented the recommendations we made in our first transparency report.

Broadly, our views are that:

This is a valuable programme. It made a significant difference to our ability to tackle misinformation during the 2019 UK election, and to Facebook's ability to respond. Facebook's global network of fact checking partners meant it had options for responding to misinformation related to the pandemic that other internet companies did not have.

Other internet companies should emulate the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme. In particular, from what we can tell, YouTube stands out as particularly being able to benefit from a similar programme to the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme.

1 fullfact.org/media/uploads/tpfc-q1q2-2019.pdf

A partnership such as the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme can only be one part of an effective response to misinformation and disinformation. Other decisions the internet companies make are critical and need scrutiny and oversight: from product design, to advertising standards, to rules for user behaviour.

Our two main concerns continue to be transparency and scale. Explaining the programme and its results is Facebook's responsibility. These independent reports from Full Fact seek to add to the information Facebook provides, not act as a substitute.

Most internet companies are trying to use AI to scale fact checking and none is doing so in a transparent way with independent assessment. This is a growing concern.

Tackling misinformation and disinformation in an open society is complex and hard. This report is mainly concerned with the practicalities of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme and it makes recommendations to Facebook based on our experience. For example, during the 2019 UK election period the programme helped our team to see and respond to claims being made online. However, ambiguity about how to implement the policy that "posts and ads from politicians are generally not subjected to fact-checking" was a practical issue that remained unresolved until new guidance was shared by Facebook in September 2020 ahead of the US election. The UK has thousands of elected politicians including local councillors, and many of them cannot readily be identified as such from their Facebook presence. The guidance on this issue could still be clarified further. We urge Facebook to continue to collaborate with the fact checkers using this programme as they develop further guidance on this and other evolutions of the programme. We offer this report as part of that process, and to keep that dialogue in the open.

All this work needs to be done with open transparent democratic oversight and clear protections for freedom of expression. The Online Safety Bill is a key opportunity for the UK government to demonstrate it can meet this need.

In September 2020 Facebook rolled out a number of new changes to the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme, including new labels for fact checkers to use. In this report we give an overview of these new labels, but do not comment in detail on their effectiveness. We will review the new labels in more detail in the next report. In September 2020 Full Fact also began a pilot of fact checking content received on WhatsApp. The impact of that pilot is out of scope of this report and more information can be found on our website.[2]

2 fullfact.org/blog/2020/sep/full-fact-whatsapp-uk

2020 Recommendations

We make seven recommendations for Facebook and, where appropriate, other internet companies:

- **Recommendation 1:** In the queue, provide data points of number of shares over time, which can be displayed on a graph
- **Recommendation 2:** Invest in better claim matching to identify content
- **Recommendation 3:** Continue to collaborate with fact checkers when developing changes to the programme
- **Recommendation 4:** Continue to review whether users are given the right information when their content is fact checked
- **Recommendation 5:** Provide machine readable data to fact checking partners
- **Recommendation 6:** Share a register of emerging potentially harmful misinformation trends with governments and other relevant official bodies
- **Recommendation 7:** Implement greater transparency around the use of AI in claim matching

The production of this report

This report was drafted by staff at Full Fact, with input from everybody involved in our work under the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme. The contents are the responsibility of the Chief Executive. They may or may not reflect the views of members of Full Fact's cross-party Board of Trustees and they are not the responsibility of Facebook or any other organisation named in the report. This report has not been shared in advance with other fact checkers who are part of Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme.

According to the approach we agreed before joining the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme, this report was provided in draft to Facebook on 14 December 2020, with an invitation for Facebook to provide feedback and to respond publicly.

Facebook's response

Keren Goldshlager, Integrity Partnerships, Facebook, said:

"Fact checking has a critical role to play in stopping the spread of misinformation on Facebook and across the broader internet. In the past year, we have grown our global network of fact checking partners to 80 organisations, working in 60 languages, fighting misinformation for critical events like elections and COVID-19. We know our efforts are working. From March to October of 2020, we labeled about 167 million pieces of COVID-19 related Facebook posts, resulting in a 95% drop-off in click-through to the underlying false content.

We welcome Full Fact's reporting on the state of online misinformation and are proud of their observation that ours is 'the most effective response of any internet company so far.' We look forward to improving our work even more – with Full Fact and all our fact checking partners – in the months and years to come."

Operating guidelines

Our operating guidelines have not changed since the 2019 Third-Party Fact-Checking report.

Funding

Between July 2019 and November 2020, Full Fact received £312,507 for its work on the Third Party Fact Checking programme.

The amount of money that Full Fact is entitled to depends on the amount of fact checking done under the programme.

Progress on the 2019 recommendations

Our 2019 Third-Party Fact-Checking report made 10 recommendations to Facebook.

Facebook responded to that report stating:

"We are encouraged that many of the recommendations in the report are being actively pursued by our teams as part of continued dialogue with our partners, and we know there's always room to improve... We look forward to continued collaboration with Full Fact and our more than 50 global fact-checking partners."

We welcomed Facebook's commitment to working with us, and other fact checkers, to improve the programme. Some of the recommendations made in 2019, such as to include Instagram in the programme, were implemented swiftly following the publication of our report.

On 11 August 2020 Facebook publicly announced[3] a number of new updates to the Third-Party Fact-Checking labels available to fact checkers, which was made available to UK Third-Party Fact-Checking partners on 24 September. We are pleased that this includes many of the recommendations that we called for in 2019. However, we are disappointed that it has taken over a year for these changes to be put in place.

Below we review Facebook's response to each recommendation in turn.

Recommendation 1: Continue developing tools that can better identify potentially harmful false content, including repeated posts

Within its fact checking product, Facebook provides fact checkers with a queue of publicly-shared posts that have been identified as potentially needing fact checking from both its own systems and from user reports. From our experience the majority of the queue's contents are posts that are not fact checkable, usually because they don't contain actual claims or contain claims that are not relevant to the UK and therefore fall outwith our editorial remit. Our 2019 report highlighted our view that there must be more potentially harmful false content than we were able to see, and this is still the case.

3 facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking/new-ratings

Initially, Facebook slightly improved the queue by providing a 'Related Items' column under posts we had already rated. It was a step in the right direction but had limited use as often no related articles would appear.

As of September 2020, there is a 'Suggested Matches' tab directly in the tool. These matches are much improved in terms of the claim identified, and often help us to find duplicates. There is certainly still some room for improvement, but we recognise that we are benefitting from developing technology and we welcome this. As experts in artificial intelligence in this field we know how hard it is to get right and the risks from imperfect technology. The results we have seen so far emphasise the need for independent scrutiny of the use of AI to tackle harmful false information online by all internet companies.

Recommendation 2: Provide more data on shares over time for flagged content

Facebook has introduced the option to display shares over the last 24 hours and the last 120 days for posts on the queue. This is helpful in giving fact checkers an idea of whether something is currently going viral, or if the sharing of it has slowed down.

But this data can't be used to get the full picture of where the past is in its journey of going viral. While we understand that some of this information is available on CrowdTangle, a public insights tool from Facebook, we recommend introducing data points of number of shares over time, which can be displayed on a graph, directly within the tool used to rate content.

Recommendation 3: Add a 'Mixture' rating which does not reduce the reach of content

Facebook renamed the 'Mixture' rating to 'Partly False' based on user research which it says shows that the mixture label confused users. Previously content labelled as 'Mixture' had its distribution on newsfeeds reduced, usually with a grey overlay if the misinformation is an image or video. These posts also had their distribution reduced less than posts rated as 'False'. This has not changed with the new 'Partly False' label.

Our recommendation was to have a rating that indicated some of the content may be false, but that did not reduce the distribution on newsfeeds. Although Facebook introduced a 'Missing Context' rating, which does not downrate content on newsfeeds, this rating isn't for explicitly false information, it's for content that's potentially misleading without context. The change of language from 'Mixture' to 'Partly False' means that in some cases, this newer rating can seem too strong if a post contains a combination of true and false claims. 'Missing Context' may

also not be appropriate if the claim is a mixture of true and false, and context is not the issue.

Recommendation 4: Add an 'Unsubstantiated' rating

Facebook has not added such a rating. We repeat that this would be beneficial in cases where we cannot definitively say something is false, but equally can find no evidence that it is correct. Facebook states that its new 'Missing context' rating should also apply to "claims stated as fact that are unproven".[4]

Recommendation 5: Add a 'More context needed' rating

We were pleased to see Facebook introduce a 'Missing Context' label in September 2020.

Recommendation 6: Add a rating for humorous posts other than satire or pranks

In October 2019 Facebook removed the 'Satire' rating, therefore meaning that for just under a year there was no way to label content originally made as a joke but which had been misconstrued. During that time we were unable to stop the spread of things we previously[5] would have been able to,[6,7,8] including this image about removing a "tracker" from a wheel,[9] or where to put antifreeze in an engine.[10]

Facebook has now reinstated the 'Satire' rating, in September 2020, based on feedback from its fact checking partners.

Recommendation 7: Develop clearer guidance on how to differentiate between several claims within a single post

Facebook has changed the process of rating content. While the entire post is given one rating, fact-checkers now also have the option to indicate which components/ details within the post are false, for example just the text, just the photo, the text and photo together, or the text and photo separately. Facebook then uses these details to find identical content. This gives us some way to show images have been taken out of context, but it does not resolve this recommendation.

4 facebook.com/business/help/341102040382165

5 fullfact.org/online/wind-turbine-explosion

6 fullfact.org/online/wind-turbine-explosion

7 fullfact.org/online/picture-mum-snorting-drugs

8 fullfact.org/online/freddos-vs-inflation

9 eatliver.com/rfid-chip

10 facebook.com/465404940859107/photos/a.465407467525521/551148355618098

Fact checkers still have a problem with how to rate pieces of content that contain multiple claims, where they are a combination of true and false. For example, it has not always been clear if the new 'Partly False' label (as discussed under Recommendation 3 above) means that the claims within a post have to be half true and half false. Facebook's help centre[11] now says that one definition of 'Partly False' is "A mix of true and false key claims, where the false claims do not predominate."

It is unclear what action fact checkers should take if the post contains a large number of claims that are a mixture of true, false and opinions, perhaps in an even split. At the moment Full Fact is dealing with this on a case by case basis.

Recommendation 8: Share more data with fact checkers about the reach of our fact checks

Data on how many people are seeing fact checks via Third-Party Fact-Checking and, more importantly, whether seeing these checks is changing their behaviour, has still not been made available to fact checkers on the programme. There is only so much individual tracking that can be done by fact checkers themselves, for example using website analytics.

Full Fact was given an 'activity summary' by Facebook for Q1 and Q2 of 2019 which contained general information about how many people had got notifications because of our work, and how many duplicate pieces of content they identified. Before October 2020 we did not receive any summaries, and remain unclear on whether similar summaries were made available to other fact checkers.

However, late in October 2020 Facebook rolled out a new feature which provides a small amount of information about the reach of fact checks done through the programme to individual partner organisations.

In order to evaluate the success of the programme, fact checkers need country specific machine readable data to understand how different groups react to seeing fact checks; the decisions people take and whether this changes according to the rating shown to users; how many users have seen and interacted with fact checks from specific partners; and how user and publisher behaviours might change in the long term. This should be provided at regular, agreed intervals.

11 facebook.com/business/help/341102040382165

Recommendation 9: The Third-Party Fact-Checking programme should expand to fully include Instagram content

We are pleased that Facebook has expanded the programme to include Instagram.

Previously, ratings we applied to Facebook images could affect identical pictures on Instagram. False pictures we rated would also be blocked from the Discover page and hashtags on Instagram. From the end of 2019, Instagram posts appeared in the queue Facebook provides us. A grey overlay now appears on Instagram posts rated 'False', even if the false post is shared in stories or as a direct message. Facebook's rules on politicians and their adverts not being subject to fact checking also applies to their Instagram posts.

Recommendation 10: Be explicit about plans for machine learning

Facebook has not effectively taken this recommendation forward. We recognise that Facebook continues to explore the use of a range of AI projects across its products and it has provided more information over the past year about when it uses machine learning.[12] This is welcome.

However, the key question for Facebook and all other internet companies is how they use machine learning, which is complex and can have unintended consequences. This work cannot be done in isolation. Substantial effort is needed to provide clarity on the definitions and the limits of the definitions they use, as well as the data and the limits of any data that powers algorithmic decision making. As well as definitions and data, the product choices that are made or informed by any algorithms need to effectively communicate its limits to users. Analysis and evaluation of misinterpretations needs to be made available, and must feed back into the design process. Without these steps, work in this area is inadequate at best.

Full Fact believes that greater transparency in these choices is the only responsible way to develop this space. We have long advocated for internet companies to commission and publish shared training and evaluation datasets, to continually test for unintended consequences of the use of AI and technology. We are also aware that the one-size-fits all model does not work for a global service that operates across many languages, cultures and societies. Algorithmic choices must reflect these subtleties or effectively understand and communicate algorithms' limits. We would welcome Facebook taking the industry lead in this space and we are prepared to work with them on it.

12 For example in these blog posts: ai.facebook.com/blog/heres-how-were-using-ai-to-help-detect-misinformation, ai.facebook.com/blog/using-ai-to-detect-covid-19-misinformation-and-exploitative-content

Other changes since July 2019

A summary of how the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme works is detailed in our July 2019 report.[13]

Facebook has made changes to the programme since then. We summarise the most impactful below.

Ratings

Facebook has made a number of changes to the label ratings available to fact checkers to apply to content:

- Up to October 2019 the labels available were: **False, Mixture, False Headline, True, Satire** and **Opinion**.
- From October 2019 to August 2020 the labels were: **False, Partly False, False Headline** and **True**.
- From September 2020 onwards the labels are: **False, Altered, Partly False, Missing Context, Satire** and **True**

'Mixture'

The 'Mixture' rating was replaced with 'Partly False'. Facebook said this change was based on user research, as 'Mixture' had not been well understood by users. Facebook said the underlying definition would remain the same. Content previously rated 'Mixture' now shows up as 'Partly False' on Facebook.

Although we agree that the 'Mixture' rating was difficult for users to understand, the 'Partly False' rating comes across as a completely different category with a different definition. As outlined in the first section, this means we would not apply the 'Partly False' rating to all content we had previously rated as 'Mixture'. There are cases where content was genuinely a mixture of true and false (often posts with several claims) and 'Partly False' is, to us, a completely different rating.

'Satire' and 'Opinion'

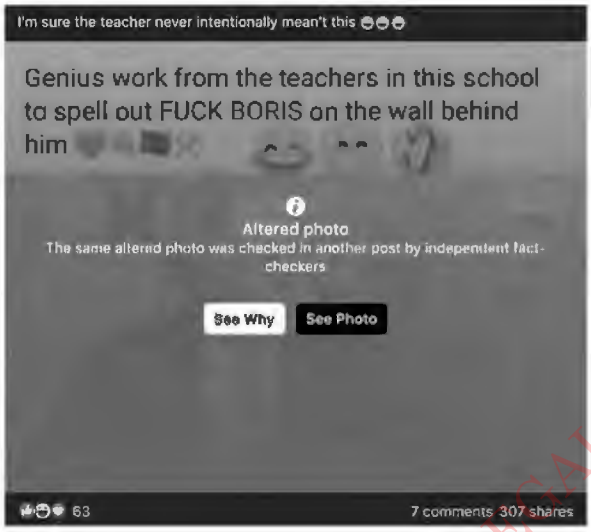
Facebook removed the 'Satire' rating but then reintroduced it in September 2020. The 'Opinion' rating was also removed, which was previously a rating that didn't

13 fullfact.org/media/uploads/tpfc-q1q2-2019.pdf

demote the content it was attached to. Although genuine opinions were always exempt from the Third-Party Fact-Checking, there was a rating with that name.

'Altered' and 'Missing Context'

In September 2020, Facebook introduced an 'Altered' rating, for pictures, video or audio that has been "edited or synthesised beyond adjustments for clarity or quality, in ways that could mislead people".[14] This content would be given a grey overlay, like false posts, and users would be notified if they had previously shared it, and if they tried to share it.



Facebook also introduced the 'Missing Context' rating in September 2020 for content that "may mislead without additional context". By their definition, this would cover content that includes claims stated as fact that are unproven, for example, certain medicines which have the potential to treat Covid-19, but haven't been proven to do so. Content rated this way has a label but does not have the full visual overlay, or have reduced reach on news feeds.

As stated above, we will review the effectiveness of these new labels in our next report.

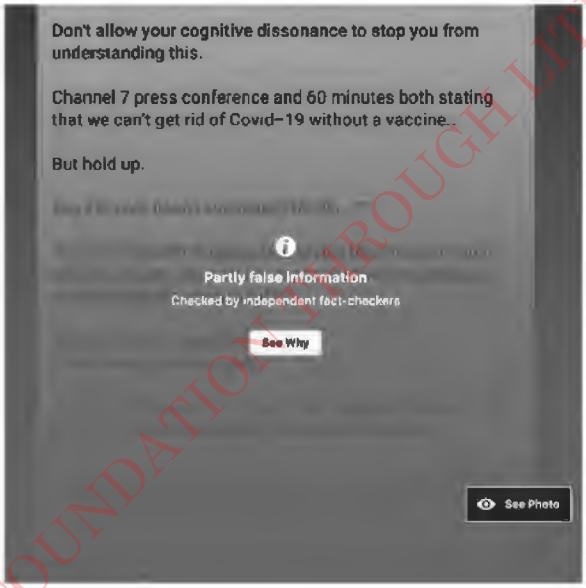
Overlays

In October 2019, Facebook said:

"Content across Facebook and Instagram that has been rated false or partly false by a Third-Party Fact-Checker will start to be more prominently labeled so that

14 facebook.com/business/help/341102040382165

people can better decide for themselves what to read, trust and share. The labels below will be shown on top of false and partly false photos and videos, including on top of Stories content on Instagram, and will link out to the assessment from the fact-checker. Perhaps the most obvious change to the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme is how content rated false now appears to users."[15]



A grey overlay now appears over images, and videos and articles on Facebook rated 'False'. When the 'Altered' rating was introduced in September 2020, content rated as such also had a grey overlay."

If the content of the post is just a text-based status, no overlay appears.

Instagram

Facebook introduced Instagram posts to the queue towards the end of 2019. Previously, if we had rated pictures on Facebook via Third-Party Fact-Checking as false, identical pictures on Instagram would be hidden from the Discover page and hashtags.

From December 2019, Instagram posts have also appeared in the queue, and can be rated like any other piece of content. Instagram TV (IGTV) posts and the recently launched Reels can also appear in the queue. Fact checkers cannot rate content posted to Stories unless it is made into an Instagram grid post, however if a rated post is embedded as an Instagram story, Facebook will show the corresponding label.

15 newsroom.fb.com/news/2019/10/update-on-election-integrity-efforts

The data provided to fact checkers via the queue about these posts is different to the data provided about Facebook posts. Shares are not reported, which is perhaps more understandable given that Instagram is less share-focused. Views are provided for the past 24 hours and the past 120 days.

Posts rated 'False' also have a grey overlay, similar to Facebook posts, with the option to read more.[16] This overlay also appears if the post is shared via direct message between users, as well as in Stories.

Politicians' speech

How political speech should be treated by Facebook or other internet companies raises questions of principle and practicality. Reasonable people can and do disagree about these principles. This section is intended to inform these discussions by explaining the practicalities.

For our part Full Fact continues to believe that more choices about the responsibilities of internet companies should be made through open democratic transparent debate. To their credit, Facebook has said the same.[17] The UK parliament has yet to debate these issues substantively, despite the important work done by some Select Committees.

In September 2019, Facebook's VP of Global Affairs and Communications Nick Clegg made a speech in Washington DC during which he discussed political speech on the platform. He repeated the fact that politicians are exempt from the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme, which we had been aware of since the start of the programme.

During the speech he said:

"We do not submit speech by politicians to our independent fact-checkers, and we generally allow it on the platform even when it would otherwise breach our normal content rules. Of course, there are exceptions. Broadly speaking they are two-fold: where speech endangers people; and where we take money, which is why we have more stringent rules on advertising than we do for ordinary speech and rhetaric."[18] Facebook has made clear that this includes the words a politician says as well as photo, video, or other content that is clearly labeled as created by the politician or their campaign.[19]

16 instagram.com/p/B6-QWoDAz5p

17 about.fb.com/news/2020/02/online-content-regulation

18 about.fb.com/news/2019/09/elections-and-political-speech

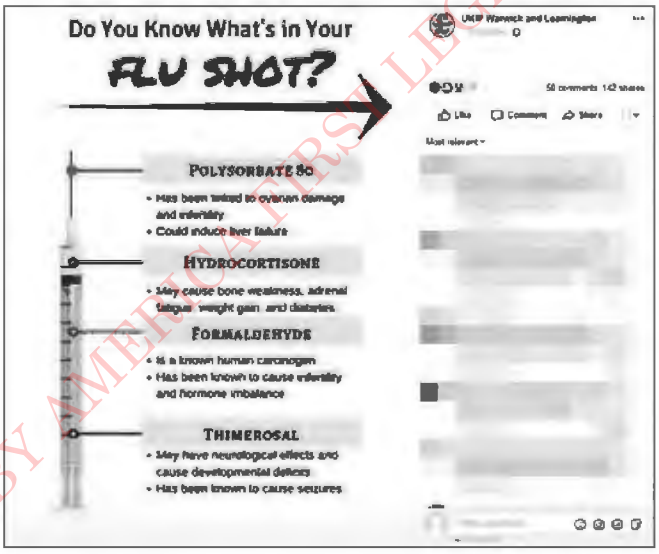
19 facebook.com/business/help/315131736305613?id=673052479947730

In a blog post accompanying the speech, he repeated that politicians are exempt from fact-checking, but that "when a politician shares previously debunked content including links, videos and photos, we plan to demote that content, display related information from fact-checkers, and reject its inclusion in advertisements."[20]

Facebook policy includes what it calls a newsworthiness exemption[21] - if someone "makes a statement or shares a post which breaks our community standards we will still allow it on our platform if we believe the public interest in seeing it outweighs the risk of harm."[22]

Mr Clegg continued in the blog post: "Today, I announced that from now on we will treat speech from politicians as newsworthy content that should, as a general rule, be seen and heard." But he added that this would not apply to ads and that "if someone chooses to post an ad on Facebook, they must still fall within our Community Standards and our advertising policies."

In response to criticism of inaccurate content from high profile individuals remaining on the platform, in June 2020 Facebook announced that it would start labelling content that is covered by its newsworthy exemption. It will also give users a warning that content might break community standards when they attempt to share it. In the announcement, Mark Zuckerberg reiterated that "there is no newsworthiness exemption for content that incites violence or suppresses voting. Even if a politician or government official says it".[23]



20 about.fb.com/news/2019/09/elections-and-political-speech

21 about.fb.com/news/2016/10/input-from-community-and-partners-on-our-community-standards

22 about.fb.com/news/2019/09/elections-and-political-speech

23 m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10112048980882521&id=4

There are cases where Facebook's definition of political speech would mean we would be prevented from fact checking posts that could cause harm. For example, in October 2019 a regional UKIP Facebook page shared an image containing misinformation about vaccines.[24]

Under the terms of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme, we were not able to give this content a rating, as Facebook defines it as political speech, despite its obvious potential for harm. It is unclear whether this page is affiliated with the central party, and the party does not, at the time of writing, seem to have any policies against vaccinations.

In mid-March 2020, as lockdown in the UK began, we also saw some local councillors share an out of context image of worshippers outside of a mosque,[25] which was taken before lockdown began. We did not attach the accompanying false rating to content from these figures.

Facebook do say that their Community Standards apply to politicians' speech. This means that they can remove misinformation "which can contribute to imminent physical harm or violence", including harmful misinformation about Covid-19 and more recently Covid-19 vaccine misinfo. This is outside the scope of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme and is at Facebook's discretion.

In August 2020 Facebook updated their policy to clarify that a "politician" is defined as "candidates running for office, current office holders – and, by extension, many of their cabinet appointees – along with political parties and their leaders". This also clarifies that former candidates for office or former officials continue to be covered by our Third-Party Fact-Checking programme".[26]

Beyond this definition, Facebook has taken the view that who qualifies under the political exemption is best determined by local fact checkers who understand their own political environments, asking "fact-checkers to use their expertise and judgment to determine whether an individual is a politician".[27] However, we believe that there is room for further guidance to ensure consistency internationally.

In evaluating all this, Full Fact's starting point is freedom of expression, the freedom to impart and receive information, and the need for proportionate responses to specific harms within that.

24 facebook.com/UKIPWarwickandLeamington/photos/a.381582272026313/1251844571666741

25 fullfact.org/online/coronavirus-mosque-shut-lockdown

26 facebook.com/business/help/315131736305613?id=673052479947730

27 facebook.com/business/help/315131736305613?id=673052479947730

As this debate proceeds, we ask people to reflect on whether rules that privilege the political speech of office holders and candidates over other citizens in a democracy succeed in either protecting freedom of expression, or allowing proportionate responses to real harms caused by their speech.

Again we emphasise that there is no perfect answer to the trade-offs here, and certainly none that will apply equally well in the different democracies of the world. These decisions are being made by US-based internet companies and not locally in open transparent democratic processes because of the failure of democratic governments and parliaments to act.

Opinion and science

Some campaigners against climate change have claimed that the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme has a loophole that allows claims from climate change sceptics to go unchecked, as opinion claims are out of scope of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme. In at least one particular case some misleading claims about climate science have been ruled ineligible for fact-checking because Facebook has classified them as opinions.[28]

We have not had any issue around this boundary or Facebook's approach to it in our work on the programme and we will report it in these transparency reports if we ever do. Again, this report does not speak for any other fact checker involved in the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme.

We have sought and received assurances from Facebook that they will not take any action which alters the effect of any fact check provided by Full Fact to Facebook without informing us.

However, it has always been the case that you can't fact check an opinion on Facebook or anywhere else, as we discussed in our first transparency report. The line between fact, opinion, and judgement has always been contested, since long before the internet, and long before the climate change debate.

For example, the UK, Cl. 1(iv) of the Editors' Code of Practice[29] says that: "The press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact." Similarly, point four of the National Union of Journalists Code of Conduct[30] says that "a journalist... Differentiates between fact and opinion."

28 nytimes.com/2020/07/14/climate/climate-facebook-fact-checking.html

29 ipso.co.uk/editors-code-of-proctice

30 nuj.org.uk/about/nuj-code

The boundary between fact, judgement, and opinion can be blurred by experts as well as journalists and anybody else. We are conscious of the risk to freedom of expression from attempts to counter harmful false information overreaching and it is important that scientists and other experts in public debate recognise those risks too. This needs further open and transparent discussion in the context of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme.

Appeals

Authors of posts that have been fact checked can contact fact checkers via email if they believe they have corrected the rated content, or want to dispute the fact checker's rating.[31]

Each fact checker has its own specific email address to deal with these queries.

In our experience, this process is not communicated well to authors of posts. Almost all of the emails Full Fact receives to its appeals email address are from people whose content has been rated by other fact checkers, rather than Full Fact. Some assume because their post is in English, or because they are based in the UK, that we have fact checked it, which is not always the case.

They almost always do not know how to find out which fact checker has rated their content, how to contact that fact checker, and sometimes they do not know which of their posts have been fact checked. We understand from Facebook that every Page admin has access to a Page Quality tab that shows active fact checks, including a link to the content and the corresponding fact check article, and that Page and domain owners receive notifications when content has been fact checked. But in our experience this information is not being understood by those who wish to appeal.

Facebook asks that we try to acknowledge emails of this nature within 24 hours, but it takes work to establish whether or not these emails are meant for us, especially as it is not always clear what has happened or what changes could be made to the post. A series of relatively small tweaks would improve this considerably:

- Make it clear to publishers which fact checkers have rated their post, and give them the contact details of that fact checker automatically.
- Make it clear to publishers which of their posts has been rated.
- Make it clear to publishers they need to include a link or screenshot

31 facebook.com/business/help/182222309230722

of the post they are referring to when making an appeal.

In early 2020 Facebook provided a template for users to use with which they can email fact checkers.[32] We will assess whether this has had a meaningful impact in our next report.

Facebook has also announced the first members of the new Oversight Board.[33] Facebook has stated that in the future, people who use Facebook will have the ability to request a review of the other enforcement actions. For example, this could potentially include content rated false by Third-Party Fact-Checkers on the basis that the content was not eligible for fact checking. We await more detail and engagement on how this will function.

Changes to workflow

Facebook's product that fact checkers use to submit their ratings has also been changed for the better. From September 2020, fact checkers attach the rating to a post, and also tell the system what part of the post is that rating: whether it's the text of the status, the photo or video itself, the text contained in the image, or all of this together. This was to improve Facebook's ability to find identical content to rate, using our fact checks.

Facebook are also using this extra information to surface similar pieces of content, suggesting additional content to fact checkers to also rate. The quality of these surfaced related items has notably improved in recent months, and this is now a valuable part of the tool.

Collaboration

We appreciate that Facebook has been open and collaborative with us on specific pieces of research conducted, including a collaborative project testing the impact of different headlines on user understanding and seeking our advice on evaluation of the joint media literacy campaign Stamp Out False News[34] that launched in July 2020.

There is scope for significantly more research and collaboration with external experts. Online misinformation is a new area of inquiry, and fact checkers need field research to greater understand the impacts of ratings, and their various formats, on different users' beliefs and behaviours. It would be beneficial to see Facebook testing the impact of different messaging on posts which have been fact checked, to understand what changes behaviours.

32 facebook.com/business/help/997484867366026

33 about.fb.com/news/2020/05/welcoming-the-oversight-board

34 stampoutfalsenews.com

Facebook should continue to work with fact checkers to understand the most effective way to prevent misinformation from spreading on their platform.

Observations from Full Fact's work since July 2019

Between July 2019 and 14 December 2020 Full Fact has published over 420 fact checks on posts as part of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme.

November 2019 UK General Election

The UK General Election was announced at the end of October 2019, with official campaigning beginning a week into November.

The Third-Party Fact-Checking programme helped us to see content related to the election. For example, we checked claims suggesting a viral image of a boy sleeping on a hospital floor had been faked. We rated this 'False'.[35] We attached our reference article to 71 pieces of content on the queue on 10 December, and Facebook told us on 12 December that the rating had been applied to 971 instances of the claim on the platform. We're proud of being able to have this impact on a debate that dominated the news cycle for several days.

However, as outlined above in "Politicians' Speech", Facebook has a standing policy that states: "posts and ads from politicians are generally not subjected to fact-checking."[36]

We asked Facebook multiple times over the course of the election period to clarify the definition of a politician: did it include anyone running for any seat? What about local councillors, or people who were known publicly as politicians but who weren't currently in office? Or those in the running to become Police Commissioners?

Previously, we had not been fact checking direct quotes from anyone in elected office, or the output of registered political parties or official campaigns, via the programme. But we did not receive answers to the questions we posed to the Facebook team. Facebook did not provide updated guidance on the definition of a politician until September 2020 in the context of the US election. This guidance still does not answer all of the questions we posed in 2019.

35 fullfact.org/online/LGI-photo-boy-facebook

36 web.archive.org/web/20200104205448/https://www.facebook.com/help/publisher/182222309230722

At one point, Facebook asked us to remove a rating from a piece of content because it had been posted by a local councillor, and therefore violated the policy. We did remove this rating.

It is currently impossible for fact checkers to determine in all cases whether a user is a political figure or not. With over 10,000 councillors, MPs and peers in the UK alone it is no small task. In the UK this data sits between the Electoral Commission, local councils and non-profits like Democracy Club and mySociety.

There are other complexities that must be considered. For example, individuals may be using personal accounts that don't publicly disclose their roles or they may not be verified or badged appropriately. There is also no guidance on how to treat politicians who may be considered inactive, for example some councillors or MPs who may be on maternity leave. As discussed above, Facebook's general position is that it prefers to leave these judgements to the expert fact checkers it works with. We believe that is compatible with further guidance to ensure consistency internationally.

Edited Sir Keir Starmer video

During the election, the Conservative party edited footage of Sir Keir Starmer MP being interviewed to make it look like he did not respond to a question on Brexit.[37]

We publicly called this irresponsible.[38] The Conservative party did not delete their Facebook post[39] containing the edited video.

We did not rate the original posts on Facebook via the Third-Party Fact-Checking product, as it would not have been in scope, having been posted by a registered political party. However, we did initially apply a rating to a number of other versions of the video, reposted on Facebook by non-politicians and pages that weren't political parties. Facebook asked us to remove these ratings on those videos, which we did. We also removed the text at the bottom of our article[40] that gave it a rating, as all of our fact checks on content identified through the programme do.

We were surprised by Facebook's decision. The video was, by its very nature, not direct and unedited speech, as per the guidelines at the time. Although the content

37 fullfact.org/news/keir-starmer-gmb

38 twitter.com/fullfact/status/1191784713997946885?lang=en

39 facebook.com/watch/?v=399805414261833&external_log_id=cdd82f33354b52f80e09a97dbda9e-cb9&q=conservatives%20brexit%20minister%20can%27t%20or%20won%27t

40 fullfact.org/news/keir-starmer-gmb

was originally edited together by the Conservative party, the video itself didn't have any Conservative branding on it. The video was still misleading without the accompanying text in the Conservatives' tweet and Facebook post.

This is another example of where greater discussion is needed on how fact checkers should interpret and enforce the political speech policy. As above, we had previously sought further guidance and advice for how the rules should be interpreted during the election campaign but did not receive clarification on the points we raised. This is urgently needed before the next political event, which in the UK will be in May 2021.

Covid-19 infodemic

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020, we have seen a significant amount of false claims and exaggerations originating and spreading on social media.

The Third-Party Fact-Checking product has proved to be a valuable tool when it comes to monitoring the types of misinformation spreading about the virus, including dangerous misinformation about cures, preventative measures and the origins of the disease. Facebook have taken a number of additional measures to counter Covid-19 related misinformation, and have published information on this on their blag.[41] This has included providing Full Fact with additional funding to hire a health misinformation Fellow.[42]

We have seen a huge amount of misinformation related to Covid-19, including claims about vaccines such as claims about previous vaccines,[43] and whether vaccines can be forced on members of the public.

The fact that when the disease was first named, it was referred to as simply 'coronavirus' certainly fueled some of the early misinformation we checked. A picture of a coronavirus vaccine for dogs[44] was used to peddle the myth that Covid-19 is not a new disease.

Long copied and pasted chainmail-like posts have been common.[45,46] A post on Facebook claiming to be from a user's uncle that was shared over 300,000 times is a good example of a mixture of accurate and inaccurate claims. While the post

41 about.fb.com/news/2020/10/coronavirus

42 facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking/global-health-fellowship

43 fullfact.org/online/coronavirus-vaccine-compared-to-flu-vaccine

44 fullfact.org/online/dog-vaccine-coronavirus

45 facebook.com/Brett.Bolton.333/posts/10162928980710104

46 facebook.com/FamilyBreakFinder/posts/3313309172016539?__tn__=-R

did include some basic advice that is worth following, it also contained some claims which could have falsely led people to believe they have not been infected when they have, or which suggested ways of preventing infection that will not work. The post was updated to remove most of the false claims after we published the fact check, although several copied and pasted versions of the original remained. We have also seen this post, or claims from within it, in various forms circulating on Twitter and WhatsApp.

There are circumstances where an 'Unsubstantiated' and 'More Context Needed' rating would have been a useful tool earlier in the pandemic. For example, since the disease is a new one research into it is ongoing, these ratings would have been useful when there was no consensus[47] on how long the virus could survive on surfaces.

5G

We highlighted the risk of 5G conspiracy theories in our 2019 report, noting the distinct lack of official guidance properly addressing some public concerns, and recommending that gap was filled. We are disappointed that it has taken arson attacks[48] for the government and public health bodies to take steps to address this.

Since then a number of claims have surfaced and spread making a non-existent connection between 5G and the outbreak of Covid-19. We started seeing the link between 5G and Covid-19 claims in the second half of January, shortly after the virus started getting significant UK media coverage. There are multiple theories, which sometimes overlap, but can also contradict each other.

The queue was valuable in giving us insight into the range of claims that were being shared online. We fact checked and rated 'False' posts[49] claiming that 5G compromised human health and weakened immune systems. One of the most common false claims we saw was secret messages about 5G and Covid-19[50] (rated 'False') in the design of the new £20 note. Another prominent 'False' theory[51] is that Covid-19 symptoms were actually "mass injury" from 5G. Facebook groups, many of which existed and shared conspiracy theories about 5G before Covid-19, have been key in spreading such claims.

47 fullfact.org/online/coronavirus-surfaces-packages-china

48 bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52281315

49 fullfact.org/online/wuhan-5g-coronavirus

50 fullfact.org/online/5g-coronavirus-20-note

51 facebook.com/joshyjones89/posts/10157798506676224

Claims about 5G made up a relatively small amount of our work before the pandemic, but now contribute to a significant amount of what we see on social media. In a few weeks, we saw 5G posts go from a niche corner of the internet to several fully fledged conspiracy theories fleshed out around the world's biggest news story. This resulted in Full Fact publishing an explainer in April 2020 reviewing the background to the conspiracy theories and explaining why they were incorrect.[52]

Understanding the impact of Third-Party Fact-Checking

We are clear that the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme is worthwhile, and we have recommended that a similar programme is introduced by other internet companies.[53]

But greater information is needed on the impact of fact checks on the prevalence of bad information and user behaviour. For example, it is not clear whether, or to what extent, Third-Party Fact-Checking is pushing users to use Facebook Messenger or closed peer to peer networks to share information instead.

In October 2020, Facebook offered fact checking partners activity summaries, which tell us how many posts with our labels were viewed each day. But without more specific data on what labels influenced what behaviour, the impact this makes is limited.

Machine readable data will help fact checkers to understand how different groups react to seeing fact checks, the decisions people take and whether this changes according to the rating given, and how behaviours might change in the long term. Anonymised data about the impact of individual fact checks would help fact checkers start to understand more about the effectiveness of our headlines, images, summaries, and to learn from long term patterns.

This should be provided at regular agreed intervals, ideally quarterly.

This additional information would help fact checkers to discuss impact and share evidence with potential funders and supporters, and allocate staff time effectively between Facebook work and other potentially impactful work such as training mainstream media journalists.

We would welcome and be prepared to contribute to more work in this area identifying the information needed from all internet companies to properly and proportionately address harmful false information online.

52 fullfact.org/online/5g-and-coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-came

53 fullfact.org/blog/2020/apr/full-fact-report-2020

In addition, Facebook and the other internet companies have the best information on what potential harmful misinformation is being shared on their platforms. Covid-19 misinformation has highlighted the importance of acting early to tackle harmful claims and provide accurate information. By regularly sharing insights into emerging potentially harmful misinformation trends with governments and other relevant official bodies this would improve understanding of emerging threats that could cause real world harm.

Claim Matching

Finding repetitions of claims within text online is a process we refer to as claim matching, and it is vital to mapping the spread of misinformation online. Claim matching is necessary for large scale interventions against misinformation, but it comes with many warnings.

As a technology solution, it faces challenges in every direction. Finding repeats of an exact phrase is broadly a solved problem using existing search and document retrieval techniques, but as we broaden out to paraphrases of the claim it gets harder. Even exact matches need to be sensitive to context; the difference in someone referring to something in the positive (confirming the misinformation) or negative (disputing it) is huge. For paraphrases the complexity is considerably greater.

Some areas of repetition of misinformation can broadly be solved by existing technology. The ability of a perceptual hash to identify if an image is exactly the same as another is proven and can work at a fine grain with high certainty. Similar hashing and vector models for sentences of text are not so well developed and can not be treated simply as something that a black box AI model can compute.

As this kind of technology develops and actions are taken off the back of it, transparency will become ever more important. Different phrasing of the same claim will require different actions. As it stands there is very little public information about actions. As we move to models where repetitions and paraphrases are being found at scale, and actions are automatically taken at scale without human intervention, it is especially important that the data, definitions, choices, and their unintended consequences are carefully scrutinised.

We continue to call on all internet companies to support the creation of open regularly updated evaluation datasets to help ensure that these technologies can be responsibly applied.

Editorial independence

Facebook has not sought to influence Full Fact's editorial choices. Facebook has never asked Full Fact to give or change any rating, or to treat any publisher in one way or another.

Facebook has asked Full Fact to fact check a specific post, a false claim that the City of London Police and Martin Lewis (a personal finance expert) are warning about a scam. Both sides were clear that the decision as to whether to do any specific fact check is Full Fact's. We had previously fact checked a variant of the same claim, and we did choose to publish a fact check on this.[54]

This notice will appear in all future reports unless there is any reason to modify it.

Facebook provides us with a queue of publicly-shared posts that Facebook has identified as potentially needing fact checking using its own systems. We do not know except in the broadest terms how these posts are chosen.

54 fullfact.org/online/martin-lewis-city-of-london-police. The previous variant did not mention Martin Lewis: fullfact.org/online/city-of-london-police-scam.

Recommendations

We welcome the progress that Facebook has made in developing the programme.

In our first report, we made a number of recommendations as to the ratings system. Broadly, we suggested the creation of 'More context needed', 'Unsubstantiated', and 'Mixture' ratings that didn't reduce reach and a rating for humorous posts, outside of satire and pranks.

After just over a year, Facebook has enacted some of these recommendations, and have added a 'Missing Context' rating, added 'Altered', and replaced 'Mixture' with 'Partly false' content. However there are several areas where additional changes would make fact checkers' work more effective.

Provide fact checkers with greater information

- In the queue, provide data points of number of shares over time that can be displayed on a graph within the product to help fact checkers understand how content is going viral.
- Invest in better claim matching to reduce the amount of false positives in the queue, and better match content to similar claims.
- Continue to collaborate with fact checkers to understand the most effective way to use the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme to prevent misinformation from spreading, particularly when considering new changes to the programme or the tools available.

Provide publishers with more information

- Make greater information available to people when their content is fact checked, including which fact checkers have rated which post, give them the contact details of that fact checker automatically and make it mandatory for people to include a link or screenshot of the post they are referring to when making an appeal.

Use the Third-Party Fact-Checking database

- Provide machine readable data to fact checking partners on the impact of individual fact checks, to enable partners to understand

more about the effectiveness of the programme, share evidence with funders and know how to best allocate resources.

- Share a register of emerging potentially harmful misinformation trends with governments and other relevant official bodies to help them understand emerging threats that could cause real world harm.

Transparency and accountability

- Implement greater transparency around the use of AI in claim matching. While Facebook has provided some detail on its machine learning work this cannot be done in isolation. Substantial effort is needed by all internet companies to provide transparency on the data that powers algorithmic decision making and its effects, intended or otherwise.

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The challenges of online fact checking

FULL FACT

About this report

Misinformation causes real harm to people's lives, health, finances and to democracy. It is time consuming and often difficult to check. This report lays out the main challenges fact checkers around the world face in finding and checking claims which appear in online places. It also presents ideas for improving these processes, with a focus on technology and counteracting the pressures fact checkers face when working with internet companies.

We welcome feedback and comments at **fullfact.org/contact**

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Contents

How we gathered the data

Interviewees approached for this research were chosen based on a number of factors. Foremost was the need to obtain a range of global perspectives: we wanted to hear from fact checkers in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa regions.

We wanted to explore the diversity in experiences of online fact checking, so decided to approach newer as well as more established fact checkers, large and small organisations, independent organisations as well as those which are part of a larger media house, online-only fact checkers as well as those which also do political fact checking. We also wanted to interview organisations that are not Facebook partners, and at least one fact checker that is not a signatory to the International Fact-Checking Network Code.

After drawing up a shortlist of fact checkers to contact against these criteria, we reached out to editors and reporters from:

AFP North America	**Chequeado** Argentina	**Factnameh** Iran	**PolitiFact** USA
Africa Check South Africa	**Dubawa** Nigeria	**Fatabyyano** Jordan[1]	**Rappler** Philippines
Africa Check Senegal	**Ellinika Hoaxes** Greece	**Full Fact** UK	**La Silla Vacía** Colombia
Animal Politico Mexico	**Fact Crescendo** India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka	**Maldita.es** Spain	**Teyit** Turkey
Aos Fatos Brazil	**Factly** India	**PesaCheck** Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda	

1 Based in Jordan but serves Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Libya, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan and Lebanon.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted over Zoom and telephone in February and March 2020, and ran to around 90 minutes for each fact checker, including for Full Fact. Themes included monitoring of online claims, research, publication, distribution, the Facebook partnership and working with internet companies more generally, and fact checkers' use of technology. This was supplemented with unstructured calls with Full Fact's automated fact checking team, the International Fact-Checking Network, ABC RMIT Fact Check, and Lead Stories' Trendolizer.

Transcripts and field notes were then thematically analysed and supplemented with further phone calls, emails or Slack communication.

We are grateful to Facebook for funding this report, and would like to thank all the fact checkers and other colleagues who generously contributed their time to this research.

Introduction

Online organisations have been publishing fact checks since the foundation of Snopes in 1994, but the profile of fact checking has increased significantly over the past decade. Among the many reasons for this are the proliferation of misinformation online and increased collaboration with internet companies. Fact checking organisations which partner with Facebook have gained powerful levers to identify and reduce the spread of online misinformation. Internet companies are finding new ways to display fact checks in products like news feeds and search results, bringing name recognition and large new online audiences to fact checkers.

The consensus on what should be checked has evolved to include online content as well as claims from politicians. Some organisations, such as Maldita.es or Teyit, were founded specifically to check social media content, while others took longer to expand their scope and treat online claims as equally important to political speech. Alongside this, fact checkers have added open source intelligence tools and research techniques to their repertoire, such as reverse image searching and advanced social media monitoring.

Criticisms of independent fact checking have also increased. A member of Facebook's new oversight board raised a concern that "fact-checking is biased" during one of his first media outings as a new board member.[1] During a recent UK Parliament Select Committee hearing, Twitter's Head of Public Policy, responding to a question about why Twitter does not have a program like Facebook's, suggested that fact checking can entrench false views.[2] (Full Fact's review of academic literature on this topic found that so-called backfire effects are rare, not the norm.)[3] Alongside this, fact checkers – in common with other journalists – have experienced increasing legal threats, as well as online and political harassment from partisan campaigns and trolls.[4]

1 dailysignal.com/2020/05/14/what-does-facebooks-new-oversight-board-mean-for-conservative-posts

2 committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/459/pdf

3 fullfact.org/media/uploads/backfire_report_fullfact.pdf

4 poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/abuse-and-threats-come-with-the-territory-for-many-of-the-worlds-fact-checkers; americanpressinstitute.org/fact-checking-project/factually-newsletter/factually-spains-fact-checkers-become-a-target

The practical challenges of fact checking are varied. Within the monitoring and selection process, fact checkers are grappling with large pools of potential claims to check, questions over how to define virality and worries about whether cyber armies are gaming reporting. Research also presents numerous challenges, including constraints on the accessibility of information and the transparency of authorities, highly repetitive claims and research tasks, and changes to or discontinuation of online investigation tools. In terms of publishing and distribution, fact checkers face challenges such as internet shutdowns, setting up new social media channels and sustaining media partnerships.

While technology already assists fact checkers and could be put to further use, particularly in terms of monitoring, claim matching, distribution and managing communities, there are limits to its effectiveness. Some of the challenges of online fact checking are dependent on the political situation within a country, and are not resolvable using technology – such as obtaining information from certain governments or lack of transparency and access to information. Automation is viewed with skepticism by fact checkers. Many believe that the phrase "automated fact checking" describes a project that misguidedly attempts to automate processes that require human judgments – such as weighing the credibility of evidence or recognising satire.

Up until now, fact checking organisations have generally reacted to proposals from internet companies in a piecemeal and unsystematic way, for example signing up individually to Facebook's fact checking program before having joint discussions or asking collectively for certain conditions. This is understandable given fact checkers' small budgets and stretched resources, and the frequent use of non-disclosure agreements. Many organisations are struggling simply to keep their heads above water amid a deluge of dubious claims, especially during the coronavirus epidemic. This has left them without the time or capacity to address questions of sustainability and risk, and whether or how collective action could protect individual organisations in the long term.

Nevertheless, fact checkers now need to consider these questions. It is vital that we identify where there are opportunities to work together more effectively to protect fact checkers' financial security and to ensure that fact checkers are proactively determining how our work is re-used by third parties in the online world beyond our websites.

Key recommendations

Recommendations for internet companies

These are overarching recommendations for the companies that own Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Google, Twitter and platforms coming into the mainstream such as TikTok. Some companies already have some of these measures in place, in which case we recommend they be maintained.

- Allow users to report suspected misinformation, aggregate reports data, and share it in anonymised formats and in real-time with fact checkers in relevant countries.
- Work with fact checkers globally to label misinformation and feed this data to AIs.
- Internet companies' misinformation teams should coordinate and standardise approaches to dealing with potential misinformation so that fact checkers send the same data into every company's system rather than adapting for multiple systems.
- Pay fact checkers for work which is used to improve the quality and trustworthiness of internet companies' products and brands.
- Show more awareness of the risks of a US-centric approach to the development of misinformation policies and products by expanding product testing and consultation to include a wider range of fact checking organisations.
- Fund the International Fact-Checking Network to enact the recommendations in this report, which are intended to counteract the pressures fact checkers experience when working with internet companies.
- Participate in a discussion on how to better protect fact checkers from harassment and coordinated attacks.
- Label inaccurate and misleading claims and provide links to fact checks.

Facebook

Facebook's efforts to reduce misinformation on its platform should be commended. Leaving aside its shortcomings and development hurdles, Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme has undeniably contributed to improving the state of information online.

However, there are still important improvements to make. In addition to the applicable recommendations above, we recommend that Facebook enact the following recommendations to more effectively tackle misinformation and coordinated activity on its platform, support the sustainability of fact checking and make it quicker and easier for fact checking partners to monitor, research and publish fact checks.

- Maintain the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme, and expand into under-served regions.
- Continue to bear in mind the needs of Third-Party Fact-Checking partners for predictability, so that they can plan and invest in long-term sustainability.
- Work with partners and coordinate with funders globally to develop a long-term plan to mitigate financial reliance on Facebook.
- Regularly share information about the impact of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme including:
  - Country-specific, machine readable data to understand how different groups react to seeing fact checks
  - The effects of fact checks on user behaviour
  - Views and interactions with fact checks from specific partners
- Share information about Facebook's AI, including whether and how ratings data, claim matching data and ClaimReview data are used to improve effectiveness; and information about the AI models being used to generate different parts of the queue.
- Continue to consult with fact checkers about product changes and policies that will affect their work in advance, especially when there is a high likelihood of media attention.

- Share information about how fact checker feedback is being dealt with, for example how it has been prioritised, who has and hasn't heard it, and why it will or won't be acted upon.
- Increase developer capacity to more quickly and reliably resolve issues that affect the quality and accuracy of fact checking produced by Third-Party Fact-Checking partners.

CrowdTangle

- Collaborate with fact checkers to integrate claim detection into CrowdTangle.
- Continue to provide access and training, including to fact checkers that are not signatories of the International Fact-Checking Network Code of Principles.
- Continue to develop new lists for predictable or breaking news events such as healthcare crises, deliberate attacks and elections.
- Develop image-search capability.
- Introduce alerts for hashtags.
- Review CrowdTangle's effectiveness in smaller languages and scripts.

WhatsApp

- Continue to enable fact checkers to connect customer management software to support communications, and to analyse and prioritise reader requests.
- Develop metrics to help publishers track engagement (e.g. number of forwards).

Google and YouTube

Google and YouTube have shown increased willingness to engage with fact checkers. They can make the most of this uptick in credibility

by investing in more engagement and outreach and exploring a paid, structured fact checking programme for YouTube.

- Expand the Information Credibility team to enable more consultation and outreach and build deeper two-way relationships with fact checkers.
- Introduce a collaboratively-developed, structured, paid programme partnering with fact checkers to identify, label and reduce circulation of misinformation on YouTube, and notify users who have watched or shared misinformation.
- Develop a CrowdTangle-style tool for monitoring viral misinformation on YouTube, and provide access and training to verified fact checkers.
- Increase transparency, including data about the impact of ClaimReview on Google's platforms, information about which parts of products fact checks are appearing on (sometimes called surfaces) and how many people are seeing and engaging with these (at country level), and the criteria Google uses to decide which fact checkers are treated as trustworthy sources.
- Continue to support takeup of ClaimReview schema and Media Review schema, including hosting events and training, and building technical capacity and confidence among fact checkers with fewer technical resources.
- Continue supporting independent fact checking with direct grants and/or grants to the International Fact-Checking Network.

Twitter

- Invest in a partnerships team to develop partnerships with fact checkers.
- Introduce a collaboratively-developed, structured, paid programme partnering with fact checkers to identify, label and reduce circulation of misinformation on Twitter, and notify users who have seen or shared misinformation.
- Support independent fact checking with direct grants and/or grants to the International Fact-Checking Network.

- Provide links to independent, verified fact checkers and fact checks in 'Get the facts' Moments and other features.
- Provide information about how fact checkers' work is being used internally to tackle misinformation on Twitter.

International Fact-Checking Network

- Facilitate and lead discussions about how fact checkers wish to relate to internet companies and others wishing to use our work online, and identify common positions on these matters among fact checkers.
- Seek feedback from the community about where to host a social entry point for ClaimReview in order to ensure that a wider variety of voices can contribute, that changes are understood by fact checkers with fewer technical resources and that implementation issues are resolved.
- Collaborate with Google, Bing, Facebook and other online platforms to provide clarity on questions fact checkers have about ClaimReview. These questions include: the internal translation capability of platforms' products; products' ability to cope with regional languages; how adding ClaimReview interacts with algorithms e.g. interaction with search results ranking; why ClaimReview works intermittently in Google Search; how Facebook is using ClaimReview to conduct claim matching.
- Provide grants and develop guidance to support fact checkers who want to carry out audience research.
- Hold a discussion with verified and unverified fact checkers to revisit the International Fact-Checking Network's position on signatories using pseudonyms in countries where journalists are at risk.
- Continue to provide grants for experimental projects to help fact checkers reach new audiences and for technical innovation.
- Continue to lead discussions on building solidarity and resources for fact checkers experiencing online and political harassment, including legal challenges.

Fact checkers

- Develop a collective process to engage with and contribute to internet companies' responses to the evolving challenges of online misinformation, to protect the long term sustainability and independence of fact checking.
- Prioritise sustainability planning, including mitigating the impact of a sudden reduction in funding from certain sectors.
- Identify the impacts of Third-Party Fact-Checking on editorial output and strategy.
- Continue to develop technology to assist with fact checking, especially technology which can benefit multiple fact checkers, improving natural language processing in smaller languages, and technology tackling distribution challenges and repetitious claims.
- When experiencing online and/or political harassment, reach out to the International Fact-Checking Network and global colleagues with requests for support.
- Continue to ask for help and assist colleagues around the globe with local research favours and advice.

Funders

- Support projects to improve accessibility and presentation of public and ministerial data (e.g. work with a government to overhaul its national statistics portal or open up public datasets).
- Support the International Fact-Checking Network for activities recommended in this report, such as support for online harassment and sustainability efforts.
- Support research into effective presentation of fact checks, information and news consumption and belief formation, in different markets especially those outside the USA, with an emphasis on practical recommendations.

Technologists

- Build relationships with fact checkers by offering basic technical support before embarking on complex automation projects.
- Steer clear of the phrase "automated fact checking" to avoid alienating potential users of automation technology: instead focus on collaborating with fact checkers and drawing on their expertise to identify which repetitive tasks can be done reliably by machines.
- Prioritise building tools and technology with a large potential user base (see expanded recommendations for more detail) and seek testing commitment from more than one fact checker.
- Continue to develop technology to help fact checkers, especially: improving natural language processing in smaller languages, technology tackling distribution challenges and repetitious claims.

Monitoring and selection of online claims

Monitoring is widely seen as the hardest part of the process. Fact checkers must strike a difficult balance: ensuring that their nets capture the most harmful content on the web, without getting overwhelmed by possible claims to check.

Depending on the country and the news cycle, a fact checking team might start their day scrolling through hundreds of items of content in Facebook's fact checking product, and reviewing a large number of claims submitted by readers. They might check what's appeared on CrowdTangle while they were asleep, conduct manual searches on Twitter and Facebook based on the day's news, and then see what's circulating in private Facebook and WhatsApp groups which they are a member of.

Even in bigger organisations, editorial teams devoted to fact checking are not usually larger than ten people. Not every claim can be investigated, so it's vital for fact checkers to be able to rapidly filter out irrelevant claims, and to have clear criteria for chaosing which claims to check.

How fact checkers find claims

The most common ways of finding claims are through manual searching and reader suggestions, as well as through the Facebook-owned CrowdTangle social media monitoring tool, and the fact checking product Facebook has developed for use by its partners.

CrowdTangle

CrowdTangle is a social media monitoring and analysis tool. Fact checkers can use it to see what popular content is circulating and how it is spreading across platforms. It covers Facebook groups and pages, Instagram pages and Reddit. Users can set up email and Slack alerts for viral content. For example, a fact checker could set up alerts for when a Facebook post mentioning the words "coronavirus" and "5G" gains a certain level of engagement velocity.

CrowdTangle requires users to build lists of pages or groups, which can then be monitored using keyword searches. Sometimes CrowdTangle staff create lists, for example during elections or events like the coronavirus pandemic.[5] This is a popular service among fact checkers as it saves a lot of time.

PolitiFact says that it spends up to a day per week curating and creating lists on CrowdTangle. Not all fact checkers use CrowdTangle this heavily. The reasons for this include lack of confidence or mastery, lack of local language capability (for example CrowdTangle not recognising Turkish letters like ç), or seeing CrowdTangle as a less useful tool for identifying online misinformation in their country context.

Some fact checkers mentioned that this tool – in common with other social media monitoring tools – prioritises reach and engagement over identifying claims. We recommend that CrowdTangle continues to engage with fact checkers' to meet their needs in terms of identifying claims as well as reach and engagement.

Manual searches

Many fact checkers also manually monitor, following specific people and pages, searching for links and misspellings of names, or following private Instagram accounts to monitor what content is appearing beyond CrowdTangle's reach, which only covers public content.

Some fact checkers also monitor topics to spot possible claims – for example a keyword search for "coronavirus" could highlight claims that the virus originated in a lab in Wuhan, or that 5G causes the virus.

Reader suggestions

Many fact checkers encourage reader suggestions via WhatsApp, Messenger, email, Telegram and custom-built platforms. These tips have huge value for fact checkers who want to get outside their echo chambers or gain insight into closed systems, such as WhatsApp groups, private Instagram pages or private Facebook groups.

5 apps.CrowdTangle.com/covid19/boards/covid-19usa

Some interviewees said they promote their phone number, but did not mention whether there is any strategy behind this, such as aiming to reach certain demographics. Others do not promote their number because they do not have the resources to sift through extra tips.

Audiences do not always understand what constitutes a checkable claim. Chequeado addresses this by regularly posting its methodology on social media, which includes information about what Chequeado does and does not check.

Facebook's fact checking product

Facebook's programme provides partners with a tool to carry out their work: the "fact checking product". This allows fact checkers to see a queue of user-submitted and AI-surfaced content which may be false or misleading (known colloquially as "the queue"), to rate items of content which a fact checker chooses to check, and to connect fact checks up with ratings within the product. Facebook then uses this data to react to misinformation, for example by downranking it, notifying people who have already shared it, and providing warnings to people who are about to share it. There is no equivalent tool for fact checkers at other internet companies.

There is wide agreement that the queue gives fact checkers insight into misinformation. We heard that, despite its many shortcomings, it can be useful for finding claims which would not be visible using other monitoring methods such as CrowdTangle or manual searching. However, most of the Facebook partners we spoke to use the queue in combination with other monitoring techniques, rather than as a primary monitoring mechanism:

> *We find claims through crowdsourcing and then look them up to see if they're in the queue.* – **Fact checker**

> *There are parts of the tool that are useful, but we wouldn't be able to work only with the tool.* – **Fact checker**

The quality of the content presented in the queue varies from country to country, and there are several areas where it could be improved to be

more consistently useful, including in terms of relevance, over-emphasis on virality, lack of transparency, and language capability.

The relevance of the content varies. At the useful end of the scale, fact checkers see a wide range of content in the queue. This includes articles, URLs, memes, photoshopped images, videos, photo albums and single images, links to websites, Facebook posts, tweets, YouTube links, health claims, job scams, and hoaxes. At the unhelpful end, fact checkers see advertisements, music videos, opinion – and in one country an interviewee even reported seeing pornographic content.

> *The combined score is helpful and filtering is getting better, but finding anything on rated articles is still a problem. We still see lots of unrelated and meaningless content like music videos and ads. We've repeatedly told Facebook's team that we see lots of ads but they say they can't do anything about it.* – **Editor**

Volume and relevance

Many fact checkers said that the queue is cluttered and cantains too much content – both misinformation and non-checkable content – to be effectively assessed and prioritised by their staff.

The consequences of low relevance include wasting the time of highly skilled researchers, (for example, fact checkers talked about regularly watching 8-minute long videos to see if there are checkable claims), list fatigue and increased likelihood of missing harmful claims. One fact checker describes sifting through the queue as "tedious".

Other interviewees said: "I find the queue difficult to navigate. I don't know if what's in there is the worst of what's out there. A lot of it's silly memes and add things." ; "There are mare than 1000 items in the queue. We have to pick out what we can bookmark - even from there we have to sift through and pick out what to check." ; "Sifting through the tool is tedious. One persan sifts through the queue and adds claims ta a Gaagle Dac."

Some fact checkers mentioned that the queue has improved since the beginning of the partnership. For example, one interviewee said that 12 months ago none of the claims were checkable compared to roughly 30% now.

In general, it looks like there is potential to save highly-skilled researchers' time by using technology more effectively. As one interviewee put it, "There's a lot of irrelevant content that we have to remove and dig through to find checkable content – that time could be spent doing other things."

Ideas about how to funnel down the content in the queue included:

- Connect Full Fact's claim detection tool to the queue to sift checkable claims from general viral content. This uses a machine learning model to say whether or not text contains a factual claim, and could reduce the queue down and make it more manageable and useful.
- Expand community reviewers[6] to sift through the queue and narrow down what is there based on criteria agreed among fact checkers.
- Feed whitelisted sites such as genuine news websites into the algorithm.
- Integrate speech to text software for video content.

Overemphasis on virality

Facebook's fact checking product is seen as having an overemphasis on virality – i.e. a gathering speed of increasing shares and views – in comparison to potential checkability.

Many fact checkers thought that the queue seems to surface viral content indiscriminately, regardless of whether there are claims that might be checkable within the content. For example, one fact checker says that news articles appear: "When news articles are getting more shares and reach, Facebook mistakes them for viral misinformation".

Fact checkers in Senegal, the Philippines and India expressed concern about the overemphasis on virality. One organisation comments, "Viral content doesn't take into account whether something might be false. The queue isn't really efficient."

6 about.fb.com/news/2019/12/helping-fact-checkers

In the Philippines, Rappler says that the emphasis on virality is a big problem, as reporting can be gamed by cyber armies. Rappler also argues that there should be mechanisms to punish pages that publish a lot of misinformation over a long period, which slowly accumulate audiences over time. "These pages don't meet the metrics that the tool is using. It's a concern: if the tool doesn't catch that, they're not issuing corrections. We want their circulation reduced."

We also spoke to Trendolizer, who described a process they have seen in the Philippines which made the case for Facebook reducing its apparent dependency on shares and reach as a measure of virality. Trendolizer described a common type of death hoax on Filipino sites, where someone will make a short video clip of a real news anchor announcing a celebrity death, for example claiming that Rowan Atikinson died in a car accident. A real video starts when the user clicks play. A voiceover warns that there is a sad announcement, then the video stops and a "sensitive content warning" appears, seemingly from Facebook. Users are asked to share the video to keep watching. This generates a variation of a URL taking users to an ad-ridden page with lots of pop ups – but due to a javascript redirect Facebook sees this as a new URL. This can result in hundreds of different URLs for the same site all going viral at the same time. If a fact checker flags one, there could be 600 others going – even if you flag one there are 600 others going viral. Trendolizer says, "By removing the low engagement content from the queue Facebook forces fact checkers to wait for this type of content to go viral. With Trendolizer we can spot the duplicates: it's like shooting fish in a barrel."

Algorithm transparency

As well as this, some fact checkers said they see viral content on CrowdTangle, which they don't see surfaced by Facebook's fact checking product, and vice versa. It's not clear what Facebook's algorithm is looking for, or whether it is even looking for the same indicators as CrowdTangle. Fact checkers would like more transparency about how the algorithm works.

> *I don't think I have a good handle on how Facebook and Google use AI to tackle misinformation.* – **Fact checker working with Facebook's fact checking product and ClaimReview on a daily basis.**

Languages

The proportion of irrelevant content (such as music videos and celebrity news) varies from country to country, but size of language seems to play a role in both volume and relevance. Africa Check's South African office said that there might be a thousand items of content in English at any given time, and just 50 items in isiZulu. Africa Check's Senegal office echoed this: "Facebook wouldn't understand a claim in Wolof [Senegal's local language]. Mast of the content is ads or opinion – you can't check it. We have to manually look for topics to check. Facebook should improve the tool in Wolof." Fact Crescendo said that there can be "a lot of spam" in Indian regional languages, and that "40-50% of the data in regional languages is unrelated to fact checking," while Factly said, "Regional languages have a long way to go. We assume it's a priority, as we are seeing an improvement."

Some fact checkers reported seeing content from other countries which speak the same language (e.g. another Spanish-speaking country), and some said they see US-focused content that was not relevant to their country's context.

Other tools

While most fact checkers' preferred monitoring tools are CrowdTangle and Facebook's fact checking product, others include Google Alerts, Brand24, Twitter advanced search, Buzzsumo and (paid-for toal) Trendolizer.

Fact checkers would benefit from subsidised or fully-paid subscriptions to Trendolizer, which can help fact checkers to identify coordinated activity, as well as identifying links to content removed by YouTube but still being shared on the internet.

Automated claim spotting tools

Some fact checkers use automated toals developed in hause or by partners. Full Fact has claim-spotting tools that search media outlets, some social media accounts, and UK Parliamentary transcripts. Chequeada's Chequeabot scans media outlets across the country. PolitiFact uses ClaimBuster, which delivers a weekly run-down of checkable claims which appeared in a transcript or other text.

We go into more detail about automation, technology and fact checking later in this report.

Monitoring across platforms

There is not a consensus on how to monitor whether a claim is appearing across different platforms. Misinformation can and does spread from one platform to another; it's common to see the same posts, or versions of the same post, popping up in multiple places at once, spread organically by users. Fact checkers reported seeing repeated patterns of claims spreading from one platform to another in different countries – for example, a claim appears first on Twitter, then Facebook then Instagram, or a claim circulating on WhatsApp appears days later on Facebook. Sometimes multiple instances of the same message might come in via WhatsApp tips, but that same text is nowhere to be found on Twitter or Facebook.

Many fact checkers said they do look for identical claims on other platforms, but as part of the research process rather than as partof the monitoring process: finding the earliest version of a claim or photo can often form the basis of a fact check.

Monitoring across countries

Many fact checkers raised the fact that claims often get translated from other languages – something that the International Fact-Checking Network has reported on.[7] For example, in 2019, an anti-vaccine conspiracy theory appeared on Facebook in French a week after PolitiFact debunked the same hoax in English. Fact checkers saw the International Fact-Checking Network's coronavirus collaboration as one useful way of tackling this challenge: fact checkers can keep track of what their colleagues are seeing, and get a head start on research if a claim begins to circulate which has already been fact checked in another country. During interviews, fact checkers did not seem to see this as the most pressing monitoring challenge, but Full Fact's survey for this report showed that there is a sizable minority – 27% of respondents – who were interested in a database of fact checks on claims that cross borders and languages, with internal translation capability.

7 poynter.org/fact-checking/2019/misinformation-transcends-platforms-languages-and-countries-how-can-fact-checkers-stop-it

The main online platforms monitored by fact checkers

Facebook

Facebook is the easiest platform to monitor, as fact checkers can find claims through CrowdTangle and the fact checking product. Perhaps as a result of this, as well as the fact that lots of fact checkers are paid by Facebook to check content on its platform,[8] many organisations focus their online work more on Facebook compared to other platforms.

Facebook's importance doesn't seem likely to change. "Facebook will always be there," says Factly, while Fatabyyano says, "Facebook will continue to rise. People don't like to change their habits, and Facebook allows you to write and share whatever yau want."

Instagram

Many fact checkers including PesaCheck and PolitiFact recently started monitoring Instagram as part of their partnership with Facebook, after Instagram was added to Facebook's fact checking product queue in late 2019. These interviewees believe that Instagram will continue to be an important source of claims that need to be checked. PolitiFact said, "We often see viral videos and memes after certain events. Kobe Bryant's death drove a lot of conspiracy theories on Instagram. A lot of adults see Instagram as a place where influencers sell stuff, but there are a lot of political discussions happening there." Full Fact says, "Instagram marketing might become an issue – more politicians will start doing what Michael Bloomberg was doing [paying influencers to hype his campaign]."[9]

But Instagram is hard to monitor, especially for fact checkers those who aren't part of Facebook's partnership. Factnameh says, "Twitter is easy: you can just do a text search on Tweetdeck and monitor keywords. We don't have that ability on Instagram. You can't intercept stuff because it's visual, and you can't search URLs because of the design. Stories are also a bit frustrating [they disappear after 24 hours]. But at the same time, it's very popular."

8 facebook.com/business/help/182222309230722

9 engadget.com/2020/02/13/mike-bloomberg-instagram-ad-campaign

Some fact checkers said that they would like to hire more staff so that they can monitor Instagram better: monitoring Facebook fairly and thoroughly is a huge task in itself.

Separately to this, many said that visual search capacity would help them to monitor Instagram better.

WhatsApp

The main way fact checkers monitor WhatsApp is through reader suggestions. Some interviewees explained that the volume of messages involved has been challenging. At the height of Spain's 2019 elections, Maldita.es received a WhatsApp tip every 30 seconds, ending up with a huge pool of potential claims to trawl through and select from. In Colombia, La Silla Vacía had to close down its WhatsApp hotline after being overwhelmed with reader requests. People who had sent in requests became annoyed when they got no reply, and at the time La Silla Vacía didn't have the capacity to manage a fast growing community.

As a closed platform, WhatsApp is hard to monitor, leaving fact checkers heavily reliant on user tips. For those that take reader tips, looking through requests is a time-consuming process. Fact checkers described a painstaking manual process of looking through a mass of tips on a phone, copying them into a Google Doc, and manually classifying messages to identify repeat claims and prioritise them for selection. Aos Fatos says it is "a very human process, not automatic: it's very difficult to monitor WhatsApp systematically".

PesaCheck ran a project looking at misinformation circulating on WhatsApp and Telegram.[10] They received about 300 or 400 WhatsApp tips each month while the project was running. Researchers collected the messages manually and put them in a Google Sheet, including detailed information about the messages such as when they were sent, the language and the country they originated from. The researchers were able to identify trends and get a feel for what type of misinformation was circulating on WhatsApp – such as health and security claims – but this system was not fast enough to function as a daily monitoring method.

10 pesacheck.org/spotting-and-stopping-false-information-on-messaging-platforms-7e3f6bed3de2

How Covid-19 has changed the way fact checkers monitor WhatsApp

Since we conducted the interviews for this report in early 2020, the way fact checkers monitor WhatsApp has evolved. Fact checkers have seen an increase in requests, with Maldita.es receiving between 1,500 and 2,000 reader requests per day, Aos Fatos receiving 1,550 requests via WhatsApp in just one week in March, and Chequeado receiving 70% more WhatsApp requests than it usually receives each day.[11] Paynter reported that almost half of the claims fact checked as part af its CoronaVirusFacts alliance came from WhatsApp.[12]

Meanwhile, WhatsApp has responded ta the pandemic and surraunding information crisis with grants for fact checkers to build community management taols which might be permitted to connect to WhatsApp's API, and by opening its API so that fact checkers can connect customer relationship management software and introduce WhatsApp chatbots to their warking processes. To date, WhatsApp (both the Business App and API) is cannected to 47 fact checking organizations in 26 countries around the world.[13] WhatsApp also lists more than 40 fact checking organisations on its FAQ page, where it encourages users to "double-check informatian with these official IFCN [International Fact-Checking Network] Fact Checking Organizations".[14]

During interviews, fact checkers such as Teyit and Maldita.es originally described the process of manually gathering reader requests from WhatsApp as "hard work for our engagement editor" and "a waste of journalists' time".

Three months on, many fact checkers have been granted access to WhatsApp's API, which has helped to reduce the amaunt af journalist time that needs to be devoted to processing reader requests. Maldita.es said, "During the first month of the Spanish lockdown we received 1500 ta 2000 messages a day and at that point it was absolutely impossible ta

11 poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/the-demand-for-covid-19-facts-on-whatsapp-is-skyrocketing

12 poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/the-demand-for-covid-19-facts-on-whatsapp-is-skyrocketing

13 faq.whatsapp.com/general/ifc-n-fact-checking-organizations-on-whatsapp

14 faq.whatsapp.com/126787958113983?lang=nb

manage – plus moving the Whatsapp phone from one house to another under lockdown".

Aos Fatos has launched a chatbot called Fátima on WhatsApp, with a focus on fact checks about Covid-19.[15] Aos Fatos says, "The bot hasn't yet eliminated or even reduced the manual work on the transmission list: on the contrary, we've seen an increase in requests for registration to receive articles and send suggestions in our existing whatsapp channel." Aos Fatos said its subscriber base grew by 44% between 24 March and 18 May, reflecting increased interest from Brazilians for reliable information about the pandemic. Maldita.es also has chatbot up and running, which has reduced the resources needed to monitor WhatsApp.

Twitter

Many fact checkers also monitor Twitter for misleading information, depending on how popular the platform is in their country. Twitter is often seen as an acceleration platform. Full Fact says, "If it's on Twitter it means it's more pressing and we need to get it sorted", while Fact Crescendo says often, "Misinformation starts on Twitter and spreads to other platforms."

Most fact checkers monitor Twitter via advanced search and on Tweetdeck, using keyword searches and building lists, and also look at what readers are sending in via Direct Messages. A few fact checkers said that Twitter's removal from the CrowdTangle dashboard in September 2019 was a loss as it means they have to monitor Twitter separately.

Other websites and apps

In the Philippines, Viber and Facebook Messenger are much more important than WhatsApp. Rappler spots a lot of claims circulating through Messenger, especially during big events like the recent volcanic eruption and coronavirus pandemic. Rappler relies on readers to send screenshots and tips, as all these messaging apps are closed platforms, making them hard to monitor.

Factly and Fact Crescendo receive tips in local languages or from local regions which have been shared on Sharechat and Helo. PolitiFact has a

15 aosfatos.org/noticias/com-foco-na-pandemia-aos-fotos-lanca-robo-checadora-fatima-no-whatsapp

partnership with Mediawise to monitor TikTok, and also monitors 4Chan and Reddit from time to time to spot cross-platform pollination of claims.

With more capacity, Full Fact would like to branch out to monitoring Pinterest, which despite its early action on anti-vaccine content[16] seems to have a potential problem in its recommendation algorithm. Full Fact's fact checkers describe how the algorithm has taken them from pins about 60s hairstyles onto 9/11 conspiracies, or from recipe pins to content about alkaline diets and home contraception remedies.

More specialist platforms are also of interest. Mumsnet, a website for parents in the UK, is also seen as a potentially rich seam: Full Fact's fact checkers have seen health misinformation related to pregnancy and childhood health, such as claims about the flavour of radox inducing labour and giving vitamin K injections to babies to prevent blood clots.

Platforms to monitor in future

We asked fact checkers what platforms they thought would be important to monitor more in future. The majority said that existing platforms such as Facebook and Instagram would continue to be important. Other platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp were seen as increasingly important sources of misinformation. There were also region-specific platforms which fact checkers thought would become increasingly important to monitor.

In some countries, fact checkers predicted that TikTok would need to be monitored more: Africa Check says, "We know misinformation is spreading there", while Aos Fatos sees it used among younger people in Brazil. Fact Crescendo says, "TikTok is gaining new followers fast and there are lots of influencers on it."

On WhatsApp, Factly said it, "could remain private but very easily introduce a report feature," while Rappler believes that YouTube will become a bigger source of misinformation as the internet in the Philippines gets cheaper.

Other platforms mentioned as possible future sources to monitor included Telegram, Helo (owned by TikTok's current parent company ByteDance

16 newsroom.pinterest.com/en/post/bringing-authoritative-vaccine-results-to-pinterest-search

Ltd), and Sharechat. Fact Crescendo believes that a new crop of platforms might appear following crackdowns on existing platforms. "If Facebook stops people from disseminating misinformation, they'll move somewhere else".

How fact checkers select claims

Once monitoring is complete, the next step is to select a claim to investigate. Selection is done independently by fact checkers within the Facebook partnership. Facebook does not discuss selection choices with fact checkers or contribute to editorial decision making.

The first and most obvious consideration is whether a claim can be checked. Within Facebook's fact checking product and among reader requests are a lot of opinions or commentary articles that fact checkers can't verify. Sometimes data or evidence isn't available for certain topics, or is of such low quality that it isn't usable.

Every organisation we spoke to was able to clearly articulate its selection criteria. Nearly all of these criteria prioritised potential for harm. Questions fact checkers ask themselves about harm include:

- If someone believed a claim, what damage could it cause to their and others' health, lives or finances?
- Could the claim threaten democratic processes or minority groups?
- What is the implication for public discourse and national security?
- Who and how will this claim hurt if people believe it?
- Is life at risk?
- Does the claim relate to an urgent situation (e.g. floods, bombings) and require a quick response to stop the misinformation from exacerbating that situation?

Some fact checkers highlighted the need to maintain balance, starting with a balanced approach to monitoring, and aiming to lead to a balanced pool of possible claims to check.

Virality and reach are important, but almost all the fact checkers we interviewed had a skeptical view of virality and how to define it. Shares and views are seen as a good indicator that lots of people have seen something, but these numbers can also be gamed. Rappler sees this frequently in the Philippines and counteracts it by monitoring sharing activity by accounts it has previously identified as real people. The focus on virality by social listening tools often throws up false positives, such as news stories that are popular and accurate.

Fact checkers tend to see two forms of virality: a single item of content getting thousands of shares or views, or many instances of the same or similar claims popping up with smaller share numbers (e.g. less than one hundred). The second type of viral content is harder to identify on Facebook's fact checking product, which does not consider this type of virality.

Here are a few of the ways fact checkers consider reach and virality as part of their selection criteria:

- Number and speed of shares on social platform
- A piece of content has reached a threshold of engagement (e.g. 3,000 retweets, 5,000 shares, 1,000+ reactions or comments)
- A claim is getting reported to the WhatsApp tipline multiple times
- The publisher (e.g. page or account) has lots of followers

Other considerations included the need to avoid amplifying content that was never destined to gain widespread attention – such as shocking claims which only have 15 likes, or single WhatsApp user tips – and considering whether a fact check will add unnecessary coverage to a news story, or help to clear up confusion.

Finally, fact checkers talked about the need to meet monthly targets, for example for their Facebook partnership, which can make straightforward claims attractive.

Other selection criteria include whether the topic might be interesting to the audience and help to draw in new readers, or whether a topic fits a focus (for example it could be part of a project about vaccine misinformation). Sometimes, claims might be ruled out because they are

not checkable within the fact checker's political climate, or there's a lack of data available against which to compare the claim.

Summary of main monitoring and selection challenges and possible solutions

There are strategic challenges to monitoring, such as maintaining balance when a divisive public figure is disseminating huge quantities of disinformation, or when agents of misinformation develop new tactics to adapt to the efforts of fact checkers and internet companies.

PolitiFact says, "We spend so much time checking President Trump: he says so many incorrect things. It's really eaten into our time and ability to check more narmal statements. When you have a leader who fabricates to the extent that Trump does it's very hard to deal with. It's exhausting people's capacity to discern."

PesaCheck says that the trickiest part of monitoring is uncovering claims from people who've found "creative ways to hide." While they initially caught people "off guard", now PesaCheck's monitoring researchers "have to do more work to find false claims and get people to talk to them".

There is no quick fix to these types monitoring challenges, and as PolitiFact points out, "the response needs to come from many parts of society." But there are many areas where technology and tools could help fact checkers to monitor faster, more fairly, and more thoroughly.

Volume and relevance. Fact checkers must parse and discard huge amounts of irrelevant information from different sources, differentiating opinion from claim and sometimes encountering distressing or dehumanising images and text. Internet companies should continue to develop AIs for identifying claims, and offer a standardised way of evaluating this technology that will probe different kinds of claims, topics, languages, formats, and different political, media, and cultural contexts. Grant makers should consider offering funds specifically to increase monitoring capacity, especially as sources of misinformation increase along with new or increasingly popular communication platforms.

Overemphasis on virality. Content surfaced by algorithms with high engagement may not necessarily be checkable, and a focus

on high engagement does not capture low-engagement but widely-posted claims. Sometimes reporting is gamed. Monitoring systems should highlight low-engagement but widely-posted claims, and work with fact checkers to increase emphasis on claiminess as well as virality, and to continue to weed out attempts to game or manipulate reporting.

- **Audience requests.** Fact checkers receive too many audience requests to respond to individual messages, and the manual labour required to copy, paste and analyse audience requests is repetitive and time consuming. WhatsApp should continue to open up its API to enable fact checkers to connect customer relationship management software and automate some aspects of working with audience requests.
- **Monitoring YouTube.** There is no tool to monitor trending content on YouTube, and identifying claims within videos is a difficult task requiring strong editorial judgement and time. YouTube should create a public-facing tool using existing systems to surface popular videos, videos reported as misleading or inaccurate, and multiple versions of the same video being posted from different accounts (including with low engagement).
- **Image searching.** Searching by image or video stills rather than text is in early stages. This means it is hard to search Instagram or find matches for visual claims. CrowdTangle and internet platforms should continue to develop image and video-searching capabilities and aim to release products or updates responding to fact checkers' need for visual search technology as soon as possible.

Researching, writing and reviewing a fact check

The International Fact-Checking Network's Code of Principles states that fact checkers must publish their method online, although it is up to assessors and the International Fact-Checking Network to determine what is a sufficient level of detail.[17] Facebook and other internet companies are not involved in assessments, and no interviewees reported interference by an internet company in the research, writing and editing process.

The principles of monitoring and verifying online claims are fundamentally the same as those for checking statements made by politicians and public figures – such as transparency of sources, providing links to evidence, political balance – but the practicalities diverge.

Overview of the research, writing and review process

Credible fact checking is a meticulous, time consuming, deliberate, professional process. While most fact checkers we spoke to did not have a detailed written methodology for checking online claims, all were readily able to talk through the main aspects of research, writing and editing.

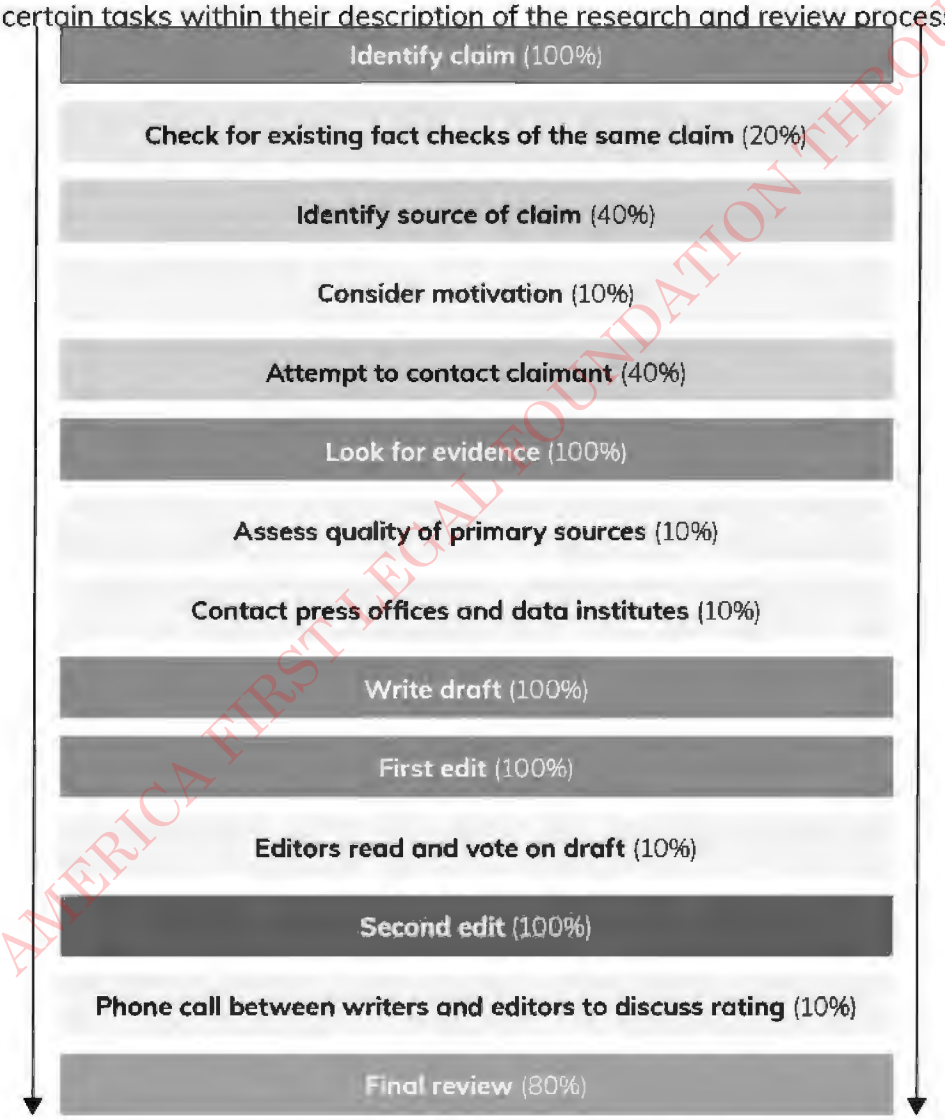
There are many similarities across organisations and national contexts. Every fact checker we spoke to had a review process involving at least one other editor checking the quality of evidence, logic of argument, clarity of prose and political balance. Most use Google Docs and Slack as part of a collaborative workflow, regardless of whether they have remote workers or not.

There are also many differences in the ways fact checkers research, write and review fact checks. Some of these are down to national context: in some countries, data is theoretically public but in practice has to be

17 ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/know-more/the-commitments-of-the-code-of-principles

requested from slow-to-respond government agencies; in others, data is promptly published online in well-presented formats. Organisations have different types and levels of checks in place, ranging from up to six layers of editing to a voting system where a minimum of four editors must approve a draft. Some organisations' directors are involved in the editing process daily, whereas in others the director is only involved for contraversial topics or tricky fact checks.

Below you can see how frequently interviewees specifically mentioned certain tasks within their description of the research and review process.



Extra steps which are taken when needed include, using freedom of information requests, contacting international colleagues, or seeking expert input

How fact checkers treat the source of an online claim

Many, but not all, fact checkers reach out to the person who created or shared the claim. Although this can have a negative impact on the timeliness of publishing a fact check (an early fact check can help slow down the spread of a claim), the majority of interviewees believe it is important to attempt to contact claimants. Aos Fatos says, "Our protocol is to try to reach them", while Ellinika Hoaxes sees it as an "extremely important" part of the process, as a claim can be ambiguous or interpreted in different ways.

Generally, the fact checkers we interviewed make a distinction between private citizens and public figures, and only identify the latter. There is a difference between someone with a few hundred followers who posts an inaccurate image which accidentally goes viral, and misinformers who repeatedly share false information. Full Fact tends towards "giving people the benefit of the doubt", and PolitiFact and Africa Check try to avoid public shaming. Teyit and Aos Fatos redacts user names, saying, "We take names off when we produce social media cards to protect privacy."

However, almost all fact checkers see identifying the source of a claim as the key to fact checking it. Africa Check in Senegal describes identifying the source as "50% of the work", while Full Fact says it is "Number 1" in the process. Fact Crescendo says, "Once the source is known, you can easily debunk a piece of misinformation. You can see where the post travelled and how it propagated." PesaCheck describes the source as "an important starting point – it helps you understand who to reach out to for clarification". Knowing the history of a public figure – for example if they have made a lot of inflammatory statements – "helps us know what tone to take."

Sometimes, though, it is not possible to find the source of a claim – for example viral posts which pop up in multiple places, or posts from WhatsApp. Maldita.es says, "Most of the misinformation we check starts in WhatsApp. Sometimes you can guess whose agenda it is, but you can't track the source down." Dubawa says, "We usually prioritise identifying the source, but because of how misinformation morphs it can be really difficult to track."

> *We like to find the source to understand intentions and help readers judge whether to believe it.* – **Dubawa**

Intention is hard to prove, but fact checkers do look at what motivation someone might have for sharing or creating a post. Full Fact described checking an apparently-straightforward post parodying Extinction Rebellion.[18] Later, the fact checker found that the account that had posted it was a white nationalist group: context which readers may want to help them judge claims. "A source can give vital context – people hide behind claims", says Full Fact. Another example is Russian Internet Research Agency operatives posing as Black Lives Matter activists to drum up a civil unrest narrative during the 2016 US Presidential election.[19]

On other occasions, fact checkers discover that the sharing of misinformation is less intentionally deceptive, or at least more complex. During the UK 2019 election, a picture began to circulate of a child on the floor of a hospital.[20] There were accusations on Twitter that the Conservative party had bought bots to spread counter-stories claiming that the picture was staged. When Full Fact reached out to some of these 'bots', they found that these accounts were actually a combination of older users sharing the Conservative message, as well as some anti-government users who were pretending to be bots.

Tracing the origin also reveals where a post has travelled and how it propagated, which can add useful context for both fact checkers and readers. Some fact checkers, such as Animal Politico and Rappler, follow the rabbit hole down to establish whether there is a coordinated network behind a piece of misinformation. Animal Politico says, "During the 2018 elections in Mexico, we found a large network of Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups run by the same people, posting at the same time". Animal Politico says it had to debunk claims from this network several times before Facebook took it down. On the process of identifying networks, Rappler says, "What if they got it wrong multiple times after being fact checked, and seem to be aided by a group of other pages – who

18 fullfact.org/online/Extinction-Rebellion-Sticker

19 comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2018/12/Appendices-for-The-IRA-Social-Media-and-Political-Polarization.pdf#page=17

20 fullfact.org/online/LGI-photo-boy-facebook

is behind those pages? The same people? Are they connected? You have to go beyond the specific claim – sometimes it's about the message or the target." As an example, Rappler described their investigation into how the Marcos family paved the way for their return to power using targeted disinformation across a network of websites, social media accounts and influencers.[21]

The review process

Senior or managing editors in most fact checking organisations review the credibility, quality and sufficiency of evidence used in a fact check. The editor looks at the draft from multiple perspectives and removes any bias they see, and considers possible misinterpretations to avoid backlash. Factly says, "We don't want to ascribe motives to people. Acceptance of fact checking will be greater if we are perceived as neutral." Factnameh says that the reviewer sometimes has to play devil's advocate, putting on "the hat of someone who wants to dismantle the fact check, especially if there's anything political in there. I say to my colleagues, 'If I really don't want to accept your fact check, you have to convince me'. It has to be watertight."

Editors also review language and writing style. Some, like Africa Check, have a style guide. Others make an effort to break away from journalistic norms within their country – for example, "the tradition of being a bit ambiguous" in Iran, or the formality of language used by much of the media in Spain. Factnameh says, "We try to talk as if we're explaining it to a friend. It's informal. A lot of fact checkers do this to step away from the elite." Maldita.es says, "We're addressing people that aren't regular readers of the media. To read our work you don't need to have to have high education levels. We want to be understood by people who've been working for 16 hours. So we write in the same way we talk to our friends in the bar."

Editorial materials

Many fact checkers have an established structure or template for drafting articles. Fact Crescendo says, "We don't want people left guessing or wrongly assuming that a claim is true, so we use an inverted pyramid, starting with what's being spread, what is being claimed, and why it's

21 rappler.com/newsbreak/investigative/245290-marcos-networked-propaganda-social-media

wrong. We keep our methodology simple, saying how we searched it on Google, and what keywords we used – then a clear conclusion."

PesaCheck asks writers to answer five questions:

- What is the claim?
- Where was it published?
- Who was it made by, or to wham do we attribute it?
- Why is it deserving of a full fact check? Is it something that could lead to real world harm that can be avoided by fact checking it? And what impact will fact checking have on public conversation – will it just create more buzz and confusion?
- What is the verdict?

Chequeado has an eight step methodology for fact checking misinformation online, developed in collaboration with other Latin American fact checkers and First Draft during a conference in 2019:[22]

- Select suspicious content from the social networks that are monitored
- Weigh its relevance
- Consult, when identifiable, the original source
- Consult, if identifiable, those involved in/affected by the misinformation
- Consult the official source
- Consult alternative sources
- Give context
- Confirm or deny the content

PolitiFact has five standard questions that a fact checker answers as part of the research and writing process:

- What is the claim?

22 chequeado.com/metodo/

- Where was it published?
- Who made the claim?
- What's the significance? (This covers potential for real world harm as well as the possible impact on public conversation of fact checking the claim – sometimes a fact check might just be adding to buzz and confusion.)
- What is our verdict?

Skills and training for fact checking online claims

Social media claims vary in terms of topic, format and source. From one day to another, a fact checker might check text posts, videos, images or audio clips presenting fabricated quotes, bogus cures or overblown claims about the performance of the government. This requires knowledge of a wide range of tools and sources as well as human judgement, curiosity and determination.

> *Each piece of misinformation is different – you need different databases, sources.* – **Animal Politico**

The ideal profile of an online fact checker

In general, journalism schools do not teach students basic online verification techniques such as reverse image searching. Experienced journalists do not necessarily have the skills to do online fact checking, either.

This means fact checkers have to learn a lot when they start checking online claims. Full Fact says, "Traditional fact checking is a lot more statistical, you use databases and you have a clear operating ground. With internet fact checking you need a sense of humour and willingness to jump in headfirst – but also to take claims seriously." PolitiFact's online fact checker says, "I originally had to learn a lot about datasets and how to reach out to campaigns – and in turn had to teach my colleagues things like fotoforensics or how to find the original of a tweet screenshotted to Facebook."

Impartiality is widely seen as the most important trait in a fact checker, and was sometimes linked to humility by interviewees. Fact Crescendo says, "We have to work to overcome our biases. Biases exist in every fact checker. We verify first, then form an opinion." Ellinika Hoaxes says, "The notion of impartiality is sometimes new. We shouldn't express emotions or opinions." Maldita.es says, "Anyone who wanted to become a journalist wants to win a Pulitzer. Every journalist has issues with their ego and the way they perceive themselves and ideas. When you're a fact checker that needs to change: you need to look at whatever you're checking from a different viewpoint."

The skill set of an online fact checker is varied. Here's what many fact checkers will be able to do after several months on the job:

- Identify text-based and non text-based claims – e.g. which part of a meme is being checked.
- Spot when an image has been fabricated or manipulated and find the original.
- Identify edited videos.
- Search screenshots from videos to identify the original source.
- Construct effective keyword searches.
- Find and use basic statistics such as international population figures or voter registration data.
- Spot psychological tricks that attempt to elicit certain audience reactions.
- Look beyond individual claims to spot patterns and learn how misinformers operate.
- Quickly interpret new online environments and judge their credibility.

Online fact checkers have to be flexible and open to any kind of research. Full Fact says, "the scope of information is almost infinite: we have a wide range to operate in." One day, a fact checker could be searching old court case notes or verifying whether a video contains lightning. The next day might involve reaching out to an ex-politician who appears in a photo from the 1980s to verify who is standing next to them in the photo.

Training fact checkers to check online claims

Several fact checkers described their established training systems for new staff or interns.

Teyit: training interns to change the ecosystem

Teyit's training for interns begins with reading translated research, Teyit's own reports, and experts' articles on information disorder and misinformation. This collection of information is called the Teyitpedia.

Then, interns give a presentation on what they understand about misinformation, how Teyit tackles it, and their own ideas for tackling it. After a week, interns are assigned simple fact checks, graduating to harder and more complex claims which require more than simple reverse image searches.

Teyit has a database of over 200 tools with descriptions of their uses which is shared with new staff and interns when they join, including internal training videos. Interns are taught how to use Wordpress and encouraged to try using a wide variety of tools. Teyit also encourages people to pick up the phone: "When they're a little bit introverted, they don't know how to get reactions from people."

Teyit says, "We want to change the media ecosystem. If our interns go onto a job in the media they have these skills and can transform their workplace too."

Fact Crescendo: fifteen days of induction

Fact Crescendo gives new editorial staff a fifteen day structured training induction. It covers:

- Tips on how to spot fake news: critical thinking, looking out for emotional appeals, incomplete details, etc.
- Brief introduction to International Fact-Checking Network's code of conduct and policies.
- Basic tools to analyze content: Simple tools such as reverse image, advanced Google Search, twitter search, translator, etc.
- Monitoring tools such as Crowd Tangle and Tweet Deck.

Like Teyit, Fact Crescendo maintains a list of tools which is regularly updated and is used by new and existing fact checkers.

Fatabyyano: competition to join the team

Fatabyyano has five volunteer team members. People must enter a competition to join the team. Such competitions can involve up to 50 people checking information as quickly as possible. Fatabyyano says, "They have to be able to read English, use basic tools such as reverse image search, and write a short draft of an article. Later we continue to

train people depending on which team they join. But everyone joins with basic skills." Research happens within a Facebook group: "We do all our research in front of our members so that everyone can learn from each other and correct any mistakes."

Evidence: tools, websites, and access to data and institutions

Tools and websites

Fact checkers mentioned a wide range of tools that they use primarily in research, rather than monitoring. These were the most frequently mentioned in interviews:

Searching

- Baidu search
- Bing search
- Google advanced search
- Twitter advanced search
- Facebook Graph Search (not currently operating - fact checkers want this to be reinstated)

Video and image verification

- Amnesty video verification tool
- InVid
- Google reverse image search
- RevEye
- Tin Eye
- Yandex Reverse Images Search
- Fotoforensics

Archiving pages or locating previously-archived pages

- Internet Archive
- Archive.is
- eyeWitness

Evaluating web pages

- Website Informer
- Who.is
- CrowdTangle Chrome extensian

Other

- Google Dataset search
- Google Translate
- News agencies
- Newspaper archives

Accessing and using public data

Fact checkers use a wide range of data to check online claims, for example international sources such as the World Bank and the World Health Organisation, national statistics bureaus, data produced by NGOs, data obtained through freedom of information laws, archives and legal documents. Access to data, quality of data and publication formats vary from country to country.

Governments' impact on the accessibility of information

In 2012, Brazil's Congress passed a law creating rules for access to public information in Brazil. Aos Fatos describes the change after Dilma Rousseff's impeachment. "[The law] functioned well, with some irregularities, until the government turned after the impeachment in 2017. Then it became difficult to obtain information. People don't respond on time, there are delays in delivery, people send us information that's incomplete."

In Tanzania, the government came out against fact checking, saying that the only data that is usable and should be referenced is government data. Fact checkers were banned from collecting their own data. PesaCheck says, "We had to move away from public finance claims to things related to health and education, as the government doesn't mind sharing data on these topics so much."

In India, getting hold of data varies from region to region. Fact Crescendo says, "Getting hold of governments in a country as big as India can be hard. We're many big countries rolled into one." Government statistics are published online, and Factly says there is a culture of data sharing at a national level. However, such a uniform data sharing culture is absent at the regional government level. "If something is not published, it's hard to procure", according to Fact Crescendo. Factly echoes this, saying that, "When misinformation has a local context, sometimes it is very difficult to find relevant data."

> *Government programmes and interventions are shrouded in secrecy and you can't find out the numbers, especially when people in government are beneficiaries. We can't take their word for it.* – **Dubawa**

Many fact checkers, including Teyit, Maldita.es, La Silla Vacía, described using their country's transparency acts, sometimes successfully, but always with the result that important fact checks are delayed by months. When Teyit uses freedom of information laws, they are often not successful. "When we request important data they say something like, 'For this kind of data we would have to do further research, so we can't answer your questions'". Rappler has also experienced this type of brush-off from authorities in the Philippines: requests for information are sometimes denied, with the reason that the request was not specific enough.

Bad quality, inaccurate or incomplete public data

Even where data is accessible, it is not always good quality. South Africa has an independent statutory statistics body, but it still has flaws. For example, Africa Check says, data isn't always up to date, so some claims can't be fully refuted. La Silla Vacía agrees that quality is more challenging than access. "We're better off here than most countries because there's an understanding that public data is public, but sometimes it's not easy to get

hold of data. Even people in government can't access it – because it wasn't stored properly."

Dubawa says that population figures aren't accurate. "The last census was in 2006 and people contested the credibility even of that. So we do a lot with that data, but we really question its trustworthiness."
In January, Aos Fatos fact checked a claim about whether President Bolsonaro had appointed an actress as cultural secretary who was also receiving a pension (a privilege based on her status as the daughter of a military official). Aos Fatos accessed a Ministry of Economy database which contained all the names of people receiving a pension and could not find the actress there. However, it later emerged that the database was incomplete, and the government reached out with new information. Aos Fatos had to remove the article and apologise.[23] "You cannot blindly believe an official database," they say.

In the Philippines, a lot of information and data requested under freedom of information policies takes time to produce, process and release. Even then, answers are not necessarily relevant to the information fact checkers ask for. For example, when Rappler was fact checking a claim about the government's building infrastructure programme, it took months to get a list of the projects that were supposed to be part of the programme. "To this date we don't have start and end dates," Rappler says. Sometimes the statistics themselves are not even correct. "Data on government budgets and crime statistics are really debatable."

Accessible formats: PDFs and national statistics portals

When fact checkers do manage to obtain information, it is often sent in formats that are difficult to use. Whether this is intentional or not, the effect is that it slows down the publication of fact checks, sometimes so that public attention has moved on so the topic is no longer relevant.

Rappler and Dubawa both described being sent huge PDF files running to "thousands of pages" in the course of an online fact check, from which it is hard to extract the data. In Spain, Maldita.es has also experienced problems with datasets published in inaccessible formats. "A dataset

23 aosfatos.org/noticias/correcao-regina-duarte-recebe-pensao-por-ser-filha-de-militar-mas-de-r-68-mil-nao-r-20-mil

might not be made available so you can't analyse the information. You often get a PDF."

In the UK, fact checkers have good access to data, and data is increasingly published in accessible and machine readable formats. Statistics are produced independently and overseen by a body that operates at arm's length from the government, called the UK Statistics Authority. However, fact checkers still experience accessibility issues on certain topics. For example, during a fact check about voter ID trials, Full Fact needed information from the Electoral Commission regulator, but this was provided only in image format and could only be downloaded as a PDF or image file.[24]

Some fact checkers also talked about their country's national statistics portals being difficult to use. For example, Ellinika Hoaxes says, "The platform for accessing ministry and public agency expenditure is not user friendly."

Responsiveness of government and institution press offices

Fact checkers frequently contact officials and institutions to obtain evidence, as well as for official statements on the government's position, or whether something was said, or actually happened. Press offices are often helpful, but fact checkers still experience huge challenges with press offices dragging their feet, or authorities refusing to take responsibility for answering questions, and redirecting a fact checker's enquiry to different departments in an endless game of pinball.

In Senegal, Africa Check's main challenge is delayed responses – sometimes intentionally, it seems. "Institutions make it hard to get a fact check going. You might wait a week or two. They don't outright refuse, but they know us. We had more difficulty accessing evidence this year than before." The story is the same when contacting professors: "It's sometimes easier to get information from the EU than Dakar universities." Partly in response to this problem, Africa Check worked with independent experts to build Infofinder: a list of existing public databases, sources and facts

24 fullfact.org/media/uploads/fullfactreport2020.pdf#page=24

about a particular subject.[25] "It's not only for fact checkers, but for our followers too", they say.

Many other fact checkers mentioned delays as a challenge. Ellinika Hoaxes contrasted the Greek authorities' slow and evasive style of engagement with fact checkers with the experience of German colleagues. "Correctiv's experience of getting a reply in a few hours was unbelievable. They contacted the German Ministry of Interior and got a reply right away."

It is common to be fobbed off or redirected by government departments which do not want to take responsibility for giving an answer. Full Fact described looking into a claim about the bath product Radox and being bounced around thirteen different government press offices during their search for answers.[26] In Greece, Ellinika Hoaxes says, "Things are pretty weird. If you ask for supposedly publicly available information from ministries, you might not get it. People don't want to take responsibility for saying something inaccurate. When you try to check whether a political figure made a statement, you won't get an answer, or you won't get a clear answer."

Sometimes authorities can be helpful when fact checkers least expect. Animal Politico checked a claim about children being kidnapped from a small Mexican state. "It was complicated to get in touch with the authorities, because justice departments are really small. But once we got in touch and explained, they were pretty open about it." Animal Politico also says that although delayed responses can be a problem in Mexico, sometimes delaying a fact check by over a month, his team often finds it easier to get answers from government press offices than his political fact checking colleagues. "Many government press offices have a problem with political fact checking, but we don't experience this as much for online fact checking. Our colleagues [in the political fact checking team] find it hard to get the phone picked up, but the health department is one of our frequent sources."

25 africacheck.org/infofinder

26 fullfact.org/media/uploads/fullfactreport2020.pdf#page=25

Summary of main research, writing and reviewing challenges and possible solutions

In comparison to monitoring and selection, many research, writing and reviewing challenges are less susceptible to being tackled by tools and technology.

- **Repetitive claims.** Common recurring misinformation includes scams such as those involving fake job adverts, or claims which appear at predictable moments, for example after natural disasters or protests. Technologists and fact checkers with technical resources could explore the possibility of auto-generating some parts of articles; internet companies should continue to feed data to their algorithms to detect these and in time remove them automatically. Both of these potential solutions would need rigorous testing and evaluation.
- **Repetitive tasks.** Examples of this include carrying out many reverse image searches every day, or giving the same answer for 30 different claims such as false cures for COVID-19. Technologists and fact checkers with technical resources could explore the possibility of robochecking for some types of claims (e.g. claims which use the same sources) and of using structured data within websites, so that the same conclusion can be added to multiple articles, avoiding the need for reviewing and editing. However, human oversight or judgement is always needed.
- **Transparency, quality and accessibility of information.** This includes delays from officials and other information sources, governments that refuse to share data on certain issues or suppress information at election time, long PDF documents and badly-designed user interfaces, and out-of-date data. In general, these types of issues are dependent on the political contexts in which fact checkers are working in and there is no quick fix. Fact checkers should keep an open dialogue on these issues and learn from each other, as well as seeking opportunities to work with information producers to improve the provision and accessibility of information, if they judge this to be appropriate and constructive in their local context.

Training editoriol stoff. Staff must often be trained from scratch, yet many organisations do not have a codified training system. Fact checkers should ask to examine training outlines and materials from Teyit and Fact Crescendo and consider whether these could be translated and adapted for different local contexts.

Finding the source of cloims in closed platforms. In closed platforms like WhatsApp, it is sometimes not possible to find the source of the claim, which can considerably slow down the research process or result in a conclusion that the claim can be neither proved nor disproved. Possible solutions to explore include developing image searching software, and introducing user reporting on WhatsApp and providing fact checkers with anonymised information about when claims began to emerge on the platform.

Publication and distribution of online fact checks

Fact checkers distribute and publish online fact checks in multiple places. First of all, they publish fact checks on their own websites and promote them through their own social media channels. Most fact checkers have Facebook pages and a Twitter account, and some have WhatsApp distribution lists, a YouTube or Telegram channel, or an Instagram account.

Most also distribute their online fact checks more widely to reach a bigger audience, for example through media partnerships: sometimes media pay fees and others have arrangements where they republish and reuse fact checks free of charge. Fact checkers sometimes run online advertisements, and many have received ad credits from internet companies, particularly during elections and during the coronavirus pandemic.

A third distribution method is technology set up by internet companies, such as Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme, which shows fact checks and fact checkers' ratings to Facebook users, and ClaimReview, which enables Google, YouTube, Bing and others to highlight fact checks in search results and in apps.

The main challenges fact checkers experience in this part of the process include: getting set up on new social media channels with limited staff resources, presentation of fact checks, knowing too little about audiences, managing media partnerships, internet censorship, online harassment, getting clear answers and support about how to use ClaimReview and how internet companies use it in their products. It is notable that Facebook is the only internet company with any systematic programme for funding fact checking of content on their products.

Online promotion and presentation of fact checks

The main social media channels fact checkers use to distribute their work include:

- **Facebook:** fact checkers use Facebook to post videos, images and text, to advertise, to conduct live shows or Q&As, and to message users.
- **Instagram:** fact checkers post images summarising fact checks as well as creating swipeable Stories content. Some fact checkers are experimenting with a step-by-step storytelling format and more informal tone on Stories, which expire after 24 hours.
- **Twitter:** fact checkers create threads, moments, and sometimes interact with people they've checked. Twitter is also popular for live fact checking (tweeting fact checks live alongside a programme or debate). Some fact checkers actively confront Twitter accounts which spread misinformation as part of their distribution strategy.
- **YouTube:** a minority of interviewees post regularly on YouTube.
- **WhatsApp:** some fact checkers have WhatsApp distribution lists, which can be topic- or language-specific.

Fact checkers also try to optimise their ranking in Google Search results by making sure they use relevant keywords. Some also advertise on Search as well. Several said that they do not know enough about search engine optimisation and suggested that Google could increase support for fact checkers via troubleshooting, ads training and ad credits.

Many fact checkers also have a mailing list used as part of their distribution strategy.

Adapting the presentation of fact checks for different channels

Fact checkers publish their online checks in a range of presentation styles. Online fact checks can come in long-form written articles accompanied by rating scales, images and other additions such as bullet points or "claims and conclusions", as well as images, GIFs, videos, and audio clips.

Full Fact's 2020 research briefing on communicating fact checks online identifies three factors influenced by presentation:

- **Reach:** presentation, for example adding an image to a post, can make the difference between a fact check that gets seen, and one that is outranked by more attention-grabbing posts.
- **Learning:** presentation affects what audiences learn and what they believe to be true.
- **Credibility:** certain media, such as pictures and videos, have an intrinsic ability to make text appear more believable.[27]

There is potential for fact checkers to do much more with presentation, based on research covered in briefings like this, which have detailed practical recommendations. However, adapting promotional materials for different channels is a time-consuming and expensive process: an in-house designer is a big strategic choice, which many fact checkers cannot afford. La Silla Vacía said that if they won core funding they would likely spend this on creative presentation and design that engages their audiences, rather than technology and automation.

Digesting research and applying it into daily working processes takes time and brain power, even when the research is presented concisely and tailored to the world of fact checking, as Full Fact's is.[28] What works for an American audience does not necessarily work in Nigeria or Argentina, and the majority of studies on learning and veracity consist of lab experiments with US participants, who may resemble but are not representative of audiences worldwide. This is one reason why Africa Check, Chequeado, and Full Fact launched a joint research programme funded by Luminate to turn research into practical recommendations with global relevance.[29] This kind of work, building a stronger evidence base for more effectively tackling harmful false information, needs more support from funders.

27 fullfact.org/media/uploads/how-communicate-fact-checks-online.pdf

28 fullfact.org/research

29 fullfact.org/research

What do fact checkers know about their audience?

In addition to the challenge of cost involved in presenting fact checks effectively, fact checkers do not know enough about their audiences to tailor their online presentation as effectively as they would like.

The majority of information fact checkers have about their audience comes from Google and Facebook analytics, or anecdotal evidence from readers who have emailed in or interacted online. However, multiple fact checkers expressed suspicion of social media metrics as a way to understand audiences and measure impact. One says, "We don't care about online metrics that much: we know there's more to impact than this. We want to find proper impact analysers to track impact. It's important to fight disinformation in a way that spreads to offline places."

Several interviewees have conducted audience research for editorial purposes (as opposed to research primarily intended to inform fundraising activities), including Full Fact and Africa Check. Africa Check's impetus for this was a funder asking for information about referrals and average time on page.[30]

However, most fact checkers have not done audience research, and want to know more about their audiences, including:

- Detailed demographic information
- Political attitudes and interests
- Social media habits
- News consumption trends (especially in under-researched regions e.g. Middle East)
- Search trends
- The places people see misinformation and how they became aware of it
- Types of misinformation people are seeing
- Why users share misinformation

30 reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/risj-review/most-successful-fact-checks-africa-checks-visitors-lessons-kenya-nigeria-and-south

- Why people follow certain pages
- What kinds of people engage with fact checks
- Whether fact checking changes their behaviour and attitudes
- What sort of information people are getting from friends and family
- How online information reaches offline audiences

It is possible that Facebook, Google, Youtube and others such as Twitter could share more information about their users in each country with fact checkers to support the end goals of improving the uptake of accurate information and effectively correcting widespread inaccurate beliefs, such as those identified by Ipsos Mori's Perils of Perception research.[31]

> *We really want to know more about our audience: they have different needs regarding the types of misinformation they face. At the moment we have very limited information about who follows us. For exomple, we know that half of our followers are women – but it doesn't help us to understand who wants what.* – **Teyit**

The challenges of distributing on WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a two-way channel for fact checkers: the audience sends in claims and the fact checker sends out a fact check response. In Colombia, La Silla Vacía fact checks claims sent to them from their audience based on a commitment from the reader that they will post the fact check back in the same group where they spotted the claim. Fact Crescendo has broadcast groups for 11 different languages, and receives 20 to 30 requests each day. Factly runs a WhatsApp broadcast for 3,000-4,000 people, and gets tips back from the audience.

Manually adding subscribers

Distribution via WhatsApp requires fact checkers to manually add individual subscribers to an organisation's phone book. Maldita.es has 71 WhatsApp distribution lists (the group maximum is 256 users), covering

31 perils.ipsos.com

general information and fact checks, as well as sub-topics like science and immigration.

Fitting the whole fact check in a single image, GIF or short video

Fact checkers cannot control where images go once they are published online. This means it's important to make sure that all the important information is in the image – including sources – sa that people can understand the fact check without knowing the fact checker's website address, or even knowing the fact checker at all.

Fact Crescendo, which operates across India, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, ensures the entire fact check is downlaadable in a single image. PesaCheck, operating in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, also designs WhatsApp-friendly content in image, GIF and short video formats. The aim is ta make the fact check self-cantained and avoid making users click on links.

WhatsApp does not provide metrics to track consumption and engagement

Like other fact checkers, PesaCheck says they have no idea af the impact of their efforts an WhatsApp, since WhatsApp daes nat allaw publishers to track engagement. Africa Check, which also uses WhatsApp ta distribute fact checks, said that it is not possible to establish a clear picture of impact, since WhatsApp metrics are minimal – for example, there is na way ta tell whether someone has forwarded your voice nate to other groups or individuals.

Press partnerships and syndication

Many af the fact checkers we spoke to have media partnerships with braadcasters and print media. Their media will take online fact checks just as happily as fact checks of politicians' claims. Challenges include sustaining a long term partnership and drop aff of media interest outside of election periods.

Maldita.es has collaborations with radio, TV and digital media, and saves these spaces ta pramote fact checks of the misinfarmation with the highest impact. PesaCheck has a syndication partnership with The Star,

one of Kenya's largest newspapers.[32] PolitiFact also has state partners such as TV stations and newspapers around the country, which are permitted to repost content from PolitiFact's main site. This is great for reach: "a fact check can end up all across the country," says Politifact.

For some, it is not easy to sustain a long term partnership. For example, one fact checking organisation had a partnership with a European broadcaster's international bureau. After an initially promising start, where twelve fact checks were published, there was a sudden silence. Despite repeated emails, the fact checker heard nothing.

Media interest in social media fact checks often picks up around news events or elections, when journalists want to capitalise on public interest and generate more content on their site to increase advertising revenue, as well as to set the record straight and improve voter access to information. The other side of this is that interest can drop off outside of election time: fact checkers struggle to make the most of any opportunities to reach new audiences through news media at times when they are already operating at full capacity.

Internet companies: distributing fact checks online automatically to mass audiences

ClaimReview schema

ClaimReview schema is a tagging system that lets search engines, apps and social media platforms find fact checks and show them in other places, like newsfeed or search results.[33] ClaimReview is one of many schema, such as Movie, MusicRecording, or Recipe,[34] which give signals to search engines and apps about the type of content they are attached to.

Fact checkers add ClaimReview schema to their fact checks to increase the likelihood that their work will be highlighted by Bing or Google, as well

32 the-star.co.ke/news/fact-checker/

33 developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/factcheck

34 schema.org/docs/schemas.html

as apps like the US-focused Fact Stream, which sends push notifications when a new fact check is published by the Washington Post, PolitiFact or FactCheck.org. Youtube has published blogs describing how it is using ClaimReview in Brazil and the US,[35] but based on our interviews there does not seem to be widespread knowledge among fact checkers of how ClaimReview is being used by Google and Facebook in their products.

Google recently revealed that thanks to ClaimReview schema "these fact checks appear more than 11 million times a day in Search results globally and in Google News in five countries (Brazil, France, India, U.K. and U.S.). That adds up to roughly 4 billion impressions a year."[36]

Describing fact checks consistently, as a specific type of content with inherent structure that is universally understood by fact checkers and distribution platforms, is vital for fact checking to operate at internet scale.

Despite its importance and potential to help fact checkers reach new audiences on a much larger scale, fact checkers do not, by and large, have a good handle on the governance structure surrounding ClaimReview, exactly how the schema works, or how it is used by internet companies.

How do fact checkers add ClaimReview?

The majority of fact checkers we interviewed add ClaimReview to their fact checks either by using either Google's form, via Full Fact's WordPress plugin, or by integrating it into a custom-built CMS. Many mentioned that Full Fact's plugin had made it easier to add ClaimReview. Some said that they don't use it as their work is more image based, but if there were an image or video-focused version of ClaimReview, they would consider it. At the time of writing, Duke Reporters Lab is developing a proposal for a similar format called MediaReview, which may address some of these concerns.

35 youtube.googleblog.com/2020/04/expanding-fact-checks-on-youtube-to-united-states.html; brasil.googleblog.com/2019/11/trazendo-mais-transparencia-e-contexto.html

36 blog.google/outreach-initiatives/google-news-initiative/how-we-highlight-fact-checks-search-and-google-news

Who is in charge of ClaimReview?

Many fact checkers were not clear on who is in charge of ClaimReview schema, or who can make changes to it and resolve implementation or technical issues. This may be because no single organisation is in charge: there are multiple centres of gravity within ClaimReview, whose design reflects the interplay between Schema.org as the maintainer of its standard definition, and the voices of community contributors and advocates who have shaped its design and contributed to its success.

Schema.org was founded by Google, Microsoft, Yahoo and Yandex, and is run as an open collaboration,[37] meaning that it is possible for anyone to view and engage with the development process. Schema.org's webmaster, who is responsible for technical changes, has engaged with fact checkers over several years to build a community around the standard. However, since this is a highly technical discussion, there are concerns – including from Schema.org – that fact checkers without technical experts on their teams are less engaged in conversations about ClaimReview.

Duke University's Reporter's Lab, which houses claimreviewproject.org, was one of the first voices in this community, having initially helped to develop ClaimReview and work with Google to highlight fact checks with ClaimReview in Search results. It carries out training and provides dedicated guidance to fact checkers in setting up and implementing ClaimReview.

Google has been actively engaged in the ClaimReview community for several years, both in terms of funding training (including via claimreviewproject.org) and bringing fact checkers together. Google has used ClaimReview to contextualise information on some of its products, such as Snippets and Search results on Google, and on YouTube in Brazil, India and the US. The International Fact-Checking Network and Google held a meeting in January 2020 with representatives from twenty fact checking organisations to discuss ClaimReview. This type of engagement is seen as valuable and fact checkers would like to see Google invest more in this, including by expanding its team to enable more regional conversations about the development and effectiveness of Google products that rely on ClaimReview.

37 github.com/schemaorg/schemaorg/issues

Full Fact received funding from Facebook in 2019 to deliver training to fact checkers to support takeup of ClaimReview and resolve related technical issues. As part of this project, Full Fact built a WordPress plugin to streamline the process of adding ClaimReview, after estimating that WordPress was used by more than half of fact checkers collected in Duke Reporter's Lab's database.[38]

Given this interconnecting network, it is understandable that many interviewees were not clear about the ideal person to contact to resolve issues or become involved in technical discussions about ClaimReview. During interviews, one fact checker told us they had problems setting up ClaimReview, and sought help from Google. They described being bounced between different departments, including a marketing department, none of which managed to resolve the fact checker's questions.

The challenges faced by fact checkers around ClaimReview

Interviewees mentioned other challenges related to ClaimReview, including confusion over how ClaimReview interacts with search results, questions over language capability, perceived lack of coordination between Google and Facebook, and training.

North America focus

We heard concerns that ClaimReview has had a focus on North America, and that only fact checkers with significant technical resources are meaningfully able to be involved in decision making about the schema.

The development of a new schema called MediaReview may offer an opportunity to help address this. MediaReview is similar to ClaimReview in style but aimed at describing manipulated media. The engagement process so far for MediaReview's development, being based on thinking from the Washington Post and strongly led by the leadership of Duke Reporters Lab, suggests the project has North American origins. During interviews, some interviewees asked us whether we, Full Fact, knew the latest news about MediaReview schema and when it would be rolled out, suggesting that some wider engagement has taken place, but possibly in an early or inconsistent way. Full Fact has been involved in these conversations but does not have a leading role. Taking the time to think now about how fact checkers around the world can be connected with

38 wordpress.org/plugins/claim-review-schema

such important schemas will hopefully ensure they have the greatest impact when operating at a global scale.

While it is questionable that every fact checking organisatian would want to engage with these discussions if given the chance, and acknowledging that these conversations are fast moving, there is roam for improvement on the current approach. Those in active positions in this cammunity should work together to create a public roadmap for engagement with the international community on ClaimReview, MediaReview and any future schemas under discussian, and consider the risks of engaging only with small groups of fact checkers in a single political context. In line with this, Full Fact is supporting the work currently being led by the International Fact-Checking Network ta initiate a structured canversatian among fact checkers from all over the world, to ensure everyone can contribute equally to decisions that affect all of us.

Technical resources

In 2019, Full Fact talked to around 80 fact checkers about their training needs around ClaimReview and autamation in general. As part af this project, Full Fact helped one organisation to recover control of their website after they were held hostage by their former developers, and also helped several fact checkers upgrade their sites, since they didn't have the resources to complete this themselves.

One fact checker says that an tap of their normal wark, implementing ClaimReview is one thing too many to learn: "Most of our journalists are not tech savvy – they don't even work with HTML. And we don't have a technical staffer who con teach us."

Fact checkers with fewer technical resources and skills should be supported to gain confidence and contribute to discussions about Schema.org, so that perspectives from multiple political and linguistic contexts are considered.

Confusion over how ClaimReview interacts with search results

Fact checkers expressed confusion about if ClaimReview interacts with SEO. One organisation said, "We assumed that ClaimReview would improve our SEO. But sometimes our fact checks don't get highlighted in search results – we don't really understand why." Another described adding ClaimReview correctly to a fact check, checking what search results came up for keywords a user might be searching for, and seeing that the top five search results were for false news websites. Another said

that their fact checks were only being highlighted on the seventh page of results.

This information is published on Google's developer page for ClaimReview and Search, which states that "Fact checks are not guaranteed to be shown" and explains that fact checking sites are scored programmatically, in a similar way to general page ranking.[39] This information would benefit from being publicised to fact checkers, since it is clear that not everyone has seen and understood it.

Language capability

There are also questions about language capability. For example, Factly describes "teething problems" including that ClaimReview seems to perform better in English than Telugu, and that local language content does not show up in English search results. This means that people searching in local languages might not see a fact check about their region published in English, and vice versa. This is an area that could benefit from collaboration between Google and fact checkers working in multiple languages.

Coordination between Google and Facebook

There is a perceived lack of coordination between Facebook and Google in terms of the data needed to automatically distribute fact checks across the web via ClaimReview. Fact checkers are already stretched and it would be helpful to coordinate on necessary information for products like Facebook's fact checking product and ClaimReview, so that more time can be spent on skilled activities like research, rather than manually entering similar but not identical data into third-party products. One fact checker said they aren't using ClaimReview because it was "initially tricky to match the verdicts to Facebook's".

The need for a different approach to training for ClaimReview

Some interviewees talked about their training needs in relation to ClaimReview. There is a mix of training on offer already: claimreviewproject.org runs training, including for new fact checkers; Google has a dedicated online training platform; Full Fact ran a Facebook-supported training project in 2019/20, and as part of this created the WordPress plugin.[40] Our conversations with interviewees suggest that

39 developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/factcheck

40 newsinitiative.withgoogle.com/training/lesson/5684021820391424?course=verification

an approach focused on troubleshooting on an individual basis could have more impact than one-hour 'basics' sessions with lots of other participants. Duke Reporters Lab and Full Fact have gone some way towards this by offering individual training sessions, but it seems as if more is needed to help fact checkers become fully confident in using and understanding ClaimReview. The International Fact-Checking Network should explore this question further and report back on the results to those offering ClaimReview training.

The future of ClaimReview

ClaimReview has had a huge impact already, and has potential to grow and help more people find reliable, impartial information online. The many people and organisations who have brought ClaimReview into use now need to consider how to help ClaimReview grow, and to reflect on what set up can best enable this.

Potential routes to explore in future include:

- A joint roadmap and programme of engagement between the International Fact-Checking Network, Schema.org, claimreviewproject.org, Google, Facebook and others, to make it easier for more fact checkers to engage with the future of the ClaimReview and related schemas, should they wish to do so.
- Increased communication to fact checkers about technical developments to ClaimReview and other relevant schema, for example a quarterly email from Schema.org to the international fact checking community on live discussions and planned changes, with information on how to get involved.
- Increasing technical capacity within the International Fact-Checking Network to more proactively connect the dots between different aspects of ClaimReview – enabling it to scale and have more impact – such as training and implementation, representation of the global community, and liaison with relevant organisations to ensure fact checkers' feedback is acted upon in a constructive and timely way.
- A collaboration between the International Fact-Checking Network, claimreviewproject.org and internet companies such as Google, Facebook and Microsoft, with the mission of providing

answers about how online products are using and interacting with ClaimReview. For example:

- Internal translation capabilities of platforms' products
- Products' ability to cope with regional languages
- How ClaimReview interacts with algorithms, eg. interaction with search results ranking
- Why ClaimReview seems to work so intermittently in Google search
- How (if at all) Facebook is using ClaimReview to conduct claim matching
- What criteria Google is using to pick which fact checking organisations are treated as authoritative sources within Search

Facebook's fact checking product

Fact checkers add data to Facebook's fact checking product so that Facebook can act on false claims, for example by reducing the circulation of a Page, and so that ratings can be displayed to users.

The monitoring and selection challenges of Facebook's fact checking product are covered earlier in this report. In terms of publication and distribution, the main challenges are ratings and persistent bugs which do not get fixed after repeated reporting.

Ratings

The ratings system has not been universally popular, and can present challenges when the right option is not available to accurately and fairly describe the claim being checked: for example, Facebook removed the Satire rating and reintroduced it in September 2020, which presented fact checkers with a challenge during the interim period when trying to accurately describe and contextualise satirical content. In response to feedback, Facebook has also introduced a "Missing Context" rating option.

Facebook should continue to discuss changes to ratings with fact checkers before they happen, and listen carefully to feedback from partners, who have the best grasp of the level of how much nuance is needed to accurately and fairly describe the claims they work with each day, and what sorts of categories of claims they see in their country.

Bugs which are not guaranteed to be fixed

Many interviewees said that they come across bugs in the tool, which do not necessarily get fixed even after giving repeated feedback. One fact checker describes manually changing the ordering of content in the queue each day so they are ranked by a metric that can be publicly quoted, rather than one that can't be used publicly. "It would save me time every day if I didn't have to change the view. I've sent feedback but no one ever responds. I wonder whether there are even any established developers on this project."

While it is clear that Facebook has many issues to prioritise, it appears that this is an area where additional development resourcing by Facebook could have a major positive impact on partners' day-to-day work. Facebook should continue to explain its prioritisation principles for fixing bugs, and provide more visibility about what it is aiming to fix (and not to fix) within a certain time period, in order to better manage partners' expectations.

Distributing fact checks when you are not a Facebook partner

Factnameh is not a Facebook partner because it is not able to provide transparency about its staff identities, as this would endanger them and their families in Iran. That means it cannot be a Code of Principles signatory. Factnameh described having to do manual claim matching – which within a Facebook partnership could be sped up by Facebook's AI surfacing similar content.[41] Factnameh says, "First of all we have to find the posts, and check them, and go on a tour of who shared them, copy and paste our fact check under each of those posts. It's just us doing this: nothing comes from Facebook or Twitter. We can do five or ten manually on those platforms, but it's too hard on Instagram."

41 ai.facebook.com/blog/using-ai-to-detect-covid-19-misinformation-and-exploitative-content

Internet shutdowns

When governments shut down or censor the internet, fact checkers are not only hampered in their research, but also in their ability to reach their audience with fact-checked information.

Iran

Factnameh's website is blocked in Iran, and Iranian internet is filtered and slow. To distribute fact checks, Factnameh relies on a mixture of readers having access to a VPN, and distributing fact checks on Telegram, which Factnameh describes as 'like the Iranian internet'. Now Telegram is blocked too, meaning that only Iranians with a VPN can access Factnameh's fact checks. Nevertheless, Factnameh continues to publish on its site, post on Twitter and Telegram, and partner with media outlets such as BBC Farsi and Deutsche Welle. In November 2019, Iranians faced a week-long internet shutdown amid fuel price protests. Factnameh could still fact check claims, having previously downloaded various statistical databases, but could not get their fact checks to readers in Iran, except via a satellite service called Toosheh used by a tiny fraction of Iran's population.[42]

Indonesia

The internet was shut down three times in Indonesia in 2019.[43] Tempo, which operates in Indonesia, struggled to keep its team together and to publish debunks. They told Poynter, "We have many pieces of content about Papua [one city where a shutdown occurred][44] that are allegedly false and provocative. But because of internet restriction, our work has been hampered... We cannot contact or dig up information from several sources in Papua and the telephone network is also difficult in some areas."[45]

42 poynter.org/fact-checking/2019/this-is-what-it-takes-to-send-a-fact-check-to-iran

43 accessnow.org/indonesians-seek-justice-after-internet-shutdown

44 thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/09/02/the-internet-shutdown-in-papua-threatens-indonesias-democracy-and-its-peoples-right-to-free-speech.html

45 poynter.org/fact-checking/2019/indonesia-faces-two-waves-of-misinformation-and-an-internet-shutdown-at-the-same-time/

Criticism and harassment

Politically motivated attacks

Interviewees felt that criticism more often originated from political dogma than concern about the accuracy of a fact check. Aos Fatos says, "people on the left and right act the same when it comes to criticising a fact check they don't like." Ellinika Hoaxes says "We get mentioned positively or negatively depending on the direction of polarisation."

In some regions there is outright hostility to fact checking – including both the principle of fact checking and specific fact checks. Ellinika Hoaxes, Africa Check, Rappler, Aos Fatos, Full Fact, Teyit and Lupa have all experienced harassment to some degree, ranging from death threats to coordinated, aggressive attacks.[46] In the Middle Eastern countries where Fatabyyano operates,[47] fact checking is not an accepted part of the political ecosystem. "We check a lot of political and religious claims", says Fatabyyano. "Some people say we're disturbing society by sharing accurate information."

In 2016 Rappler published a series of articles describing how President Radrigo Duterte had won the elections by exploiting Facebook's algorithms and flooding social media with content from fake accounts.[48] Rappler's CEO Maria Ressa and many of her employees were directly targeted and attacked. At one point Ressa received 90 hate messages an hour through social media.[49] The government has filed 11 legal cases against the Rappler team since 2018.[50]

Fact Crescendo has also been harassed by politicians' online armies. "Fact checkers are easy targets when they realise we're checking claims they want to propagate. The trolls gang up. We get political parties threatening

46 poynter.org/fact-checking/2018/these-fact-checkers-were-attacked-online-after-partnering-with-facebook

47 Based in Jordan but serves Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Libya, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan and Lebanon: dailynewssegypt.com/2020/03/19/facebook-launches-arabic-third-party-fact-checking-programme-in-partnership-with-fatabyyano-in-mena

48 rappler.com/nation/propaganda-war-weaponizing-internet, rappler.com/newsbreak/facebook-algorithms-impact-democracy, rappler.com/newsbreak/investigative/fake-accounts-manufactured-reality-social-media

49 journodefender.org/media/Journodefender_short_v1.pdf

50 cpj.org/2019/07/cyber-libel-trial-opens-against-philippine-journal

to reveal our location, house, number. We asked the IFCN (International Fact-Checking Network) if we can use pseudonyms and submit a private list to the IFCN – that will help our fact checkers work in peace." Fact Crescendo also said that on WhatsApp they experience different types of harassment, far example spam calls and requests for security codes to hack into their account.

Aggressive spamming

When Africa Check in South Africa began to fact check Instagram, it was unprepared for a surprising reaction from Instagram users. In September, the team checked a meme seen on Facebook falsely claiming that the rowl cap on tyres is a piece of spyware.[51] Months after, the team rated an identical piece of content on Instagram. Unexpectedly, thousands of people started messaging Africa Check and commenting incredulously. Parody accounts, memes about Africa Check sprang up, and a #snipthechip hashtag was posted an any content Africa Check put out on their Instagram.

Africa Check had to block certain keywords in its mentions and reached out to Facebook for assistance. Africa Check says, "We lay low for a month and hoped that the trolls would go away. We turned camments off. The Instagram audience is so different - we got a lot of racist comments and people ridiculing us for checking something so obvious."

Full Fact received hostile attention from online activists during an election campaign, after a fact checker queried a claim from a highly partisan Facebook page. Inflammatory comments progressed to increasingly aggressive phone calls and threats to provoke regulatory action against Full Fact. Full Fact responded by temporarily suspending some Facebook adverts and pasting a summary of its funding, partnerships and governance structure as the first comment of each new post, as well as adding the same comment to existing posts, until these users lost interest.

Attacks after announcing Facebook partnership

Multiple fact checkers experienced online attacks after annauncing they were joining Facebook's fact checking partnership, including Vera Files, Rappler, Ellinika Hoaxes, Aos Fatos and Agencia Lupa.

51 africacheck.org/fbcheck/id-chips-not-in-tyres-valve-stem-so-dont-snip

Vera Files has said in an interview with Poytner that these attacks came mainly from supporters of the president of the Philippines, who accused fact checkers of being censors biased against the administration. It was not the first time they had been attacked, "but this was more sustained — every day for more than two weeks, three weeks."[52] In Brazil, fact checkers were accused of censoring the internet and became the subjects of misogynistic cartoons as well as death threats. One fact checker told Poynter, "I got a lot of DMs saying, 'You're not going to see the next president of Brazil,' 'We're going to get you one by one.'"[53]

In Greece, Ellinika Hoaxes' announcement about their partnership with Facebook was followed by a wave of partisan attacks, both online and from state media and officials. One Facebook page posted pictures of Ellinika Hoaxes staff claiming that they worked for George Soros and that Facebook was censoring the internet. A digital mob began building up and asking for staff addresses, and posting images of guns. The then government also attacked Ellinika Hoaxes, painting them as incompetent, and threatening to raise the issue at an EU level.[54] Meanwhile, the media publicised staff addresses (which were available on the chamber of commerce website, but were made highly visible through being publicised). Ellinika Hoaxes even went as far as requesting to be reassessed by the International Fact-Checking Network to prove their credentials.

Ellinika Hoaxes says that online criticism has become more intense during the coronavirus pandemic: "Although we have become somewhat accustomed to hate speech and threats, including physical and legal, in the last two months this phenomenon has increased exponentially. False claims can be dismissed with a single of our fact-checks, so all the thousands of people who have shared it will receive a notification that the content is false. Some of these people will react badly, and some of them will become extremely aggressive, through hate speech and direct threats. Conspiracy theorists we have exposed have undertaken the task of 'exposing' us in return, by disseminating fake and provocative claims (Soros collaborators, censors working for Facebook, etc.), and target us individually. These posts create echo chambers and digital 'mobs'

52 poynter.org/fact-checking/2018/these-fact-checkers-were-attacked-online-after-partnering-with-facebook

53 poynter.org/fact-checking/2018/these-fact-checkers-were-attacked-online-after-partnering-with-facebook

54 euractiv.com/section/digital/news/thurs-ready-greece-threatens-to-raise-facebooks-fact-checker-issue-at-eu-council

and some of them reach out to us via email, Page messages or direct messages to our profiles, making all sorts of threats."

Other interviewees described experiencing online attacks but did not want details of the attacks to be included in this report.

The International Fact-Checking Network has set up a legal defense fund in partnership with the Media Legal Defence Initiative and the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. Facebook has funded this since 2019, in response to the harassment issues outlined above. Some fact checkers have been taken to court over their fact checks, and say that this fund has been useful in those situations, and that it is appropriate for Facebook to keep a distance from proceedings. Ellinika Hoaxes says the fund has been helpful assisting them with legal fees in two lawsuits for defamation. However, it is clear that fact checkers do not have enough support or resources to deal with attacks.

Freedom of the press is under threat or non-existent in many countries, with journalists being intimidated, imprisoned and murdered.[55] It is impossible to know when or whether online attacks will spill over into physical violence. In any case, regardless of physical harm, no journalist should be attacked for asking questions or publishing information

Protecting fact checkers from online harassment, attacks and trolling

Stronger action from internet companies and International Fact-Checking Network

Some felt that the internet companies and the International Fact-Checking Network could do more, especially regarding abusive content. Ideas included:

- Amend policies to ban content that abuses fact checkers on their platforms without following relevant appeals and correction processes.
- Introduce a "red button" or emergency reporting system to fast track removal of hate speech content, direct or veiled threats,

55 journodefender.org/media/SE_journodefender_public_v1.pdf; rsf.org/en; forbiddenstories.org

"exposing" content such as staff photos accompanied by unfounded claims.

- Stronger public statements denouncing attackers and linking this to press freedom from the International Fact-Checking Network, internet companies, and the wider fact checking community.
- More public backup from the International Fact-Checking Network emphasising signatory members' credentials.

Advice from fact checkers on responding to harassment, threats and attacks

Fact checkers have to use their judgement and own experiences: every situation and country is different, and the motives and nature of attacks vary. However, fact checkers gave the following advice and possible options for dealing with online harassment and threats:

- Rebut the criticism where it was made, e.g. in comments or Twitter thread.
- Publish an article on the attacks.
- Save screenshots or copies of posts and comments to prevent them being lost if they are deleted.
- Report cases to media industry bodies and unions (e.g. Abraji or Fenaj in Brazil, CIJ or NUJ in the UK, or the International Fact-Checking Network internationally).
- Consult lawyers to find out whether there is scope for legal action.
- Register cases with the police.
- File a lawsuit.

Advice from fact checkers on responding to nuisance trolling and spamming

For attacks that are less aggressive but still a nuisance, fact checkers gave the following advice:

- Remember that it's more painful and visible to you than any of your readers: it's not usually interfering with people's first impressions of your posts.
- Don't over-respond and don't block people - this might encourage them to send for fresh reinforcements.
- Try to make sure your organisation's comment is the top one on a post/thread.
- Stick to your organisation's normal tone with a simple point and keep saying it - this helps them to lose interest.
- Invest in responding to and engaging with people who are not trolls: don't let critics sour the mood or make you look like you've been silenced.

- Counter claims from Facebook users that their content is being censored with a reminder that it is only being flagged and that Facebook users have a responsibility to check their content before publishing or sharing.

Summary of main publishing and distribution challenges and possible solutions

Fact checkers face various challenges around publishing and distribution. There is an opportunity for better technology to help resolve some of these. Other possible solutions include investment in design, and audience research. Some challenges, such as government control over internet access, are harder for fact checkers and technology companies to resolve.

- **Setting up new social media channels.** Adding a new distribution channel is a resource-intensive undertaking even in organisations with a dedicated communications team. Fact checkers should seek additional funds to hire community managers or audience engagement specialists, and grantmakers should make funds available to help fact checkers grow their audiences and earn trust as part of long-term sustainability plans.
- **Media partnerships.** Media partnerships can help build audiences and profile, but can be hard to sustain in the long term and are not easy to build in highly competitive news environments. It is not always possible to persuade the media to pay for content.
- **Presenting fact checks with limited space and design resources.** Many fact checkers do not have a designer, it is hard to fit all necessary information into one small image, adapting promotional materials for different channels is time consuming, and country-specific research on presenting factual information and belief formation is rare outside the USA. Grantmakers should support investment in distribution (e.g. design templates) and audience research. Facebook, Google and YouTube should share information about their users in each country to support uptake of accurate information and to help fact checkers more effectively correct widespread inaccurate beliefs.

Internet shutdowns. It is hard or impossible to reach your audience when governments close the internet or block your website. Grantmakers should fund tools to unblock the internet and effective campaigns for internet freedom.

Online harassment. This can range from trolls flooding comments and spamming fact checkers accounts, to serious threats of violence, sexual assault and death, or coordinated attacks from cyber armies. Internet companies should provide fast-track reporting mechanisms for fact checkers, and the International Fact-Checking Network should work with fact checkers in different regions to develop private guidance to support those experiencing harassment.

Variation in fact check data requirements of different internet companies' products. Facebook's fact checking product and ClaimReview have similar but not identical data fields, meaning that any fact checker using both to scale their work online must carry out separate data entry and adapt their fact checks twice for these products. As other internet companies increasingly become interested in fact checks as a way to identify, contextualise and reduce the spread of misinformation on their platforms, it is important for fact checkers to protect staff time and resources from being spent unnecessarily on manual data entry. This requires a collective discussion within the industry.

Fact checkers and the internet companies

Internet companies including Facebook and Google work with independent fact checking in different ways as part of their efforts to tackle misinformation on the platforms they own (WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram, as well as Facebook's main app and Google Search), whether by funding fact checkers directly or in kind, surfacing fact checks in search results, or using fact check ratings to downrank certain content. However, there are differences in how the companies approach their relationships with fact checkers.

Facebook has the most advanced approach, including a structured, paid programme and a team devoted to engaging and consulting with fact checking organisations. There are many ways in which the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme could be improved and built upon, but its benefits and achievements to date should also be recognised.

Other long-established companies such as Google and Twitter do have measures in place to tackle misinformation on their platforms, some of which have been ramped up in response to coronavirus,[56] but these measures do not involve partnerships with fact checkers. Internet companies have had ample opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges of Facebook's programme, yet none have so far set up a similar programme. One consequence of this is that since only Facebook's programme exists, only Facebook's programme has been subjected to scrutiny and (often legitimate) criticism. Some interviewees questioned whether the media's often harsh criticism had discouraged other internet companies from being bolder.

In general, internet companies have not been open about the scale of misinformation on their platforms, the full scope of their efforts to identify and tackle misinformation, and the impact of these efforts. While some companies publish transparency reports on the enforcement of their standards at regular periods, these include information that is months out of date and with a substantial lack of detail (for example providing

56 about.fb.com/news/2020/04/covid-19-misinfo-update; covid19.twitter.com; blog.google/inside-google/company-announcements/covid-19-how-were-continuing-to-help; whatsapp.com/coronavirus; support.google.com/youtube/answer/9777243; redditblog.com/2020/03/02/expert-conversation-on-coronavirus

global statistics).[57] Established and emerging online platforms are having an increasingly important impact on public debate, public attitudes and online information distribution. Much greater transparency is required to ensure that efforts to tackle misinformation and related issues are ethical and effective.

Internet companies rarely work together publicly to tackle misinformation. There are no agreed public standards for tackling misinformation on online platforms among internet companies. Taking user reporting as an example, Facebook and YouTube allow users to report "false news" and "spam or misleading" content respectively, while Twitter, WhatsApp, Bing and Google Search do not provide a system specifically for reporting false or misleading content. A recent example of rare public coordination is a joint statement in March 2020 about tackling coronavirus misinformation, by Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Microsoft, Reddit, Twitter and YouTube.[58] No information about the implementation or impact of these joint efforts has yet been released.

Fact checkers themselves are undecided about how they want to work with internet companies – although a majority of organisations are open to more collaboration. In our survey, a majority of respondents (40 out of 47) said they would like YouTube and Twitter to set up a collaboratively-developed global program partnering with fact checkers to identify, label and downrank misinformation on Youtube and Google products, and notify users who have watched or shared verified misinformation. Some said they would like a feed of suspected false misinformation submitted by users and surfaced by AI. Others wanted to see data about trending searches in their country.

While the International Fact-Checking Network facilitates as much as it can between internet companies and fact checkers, as a small organisation of four people it is tiny in comparison to both the larger fact checking community and the internet companies. There is room to improve coordination among fact checkers, among internet companies, and between those two industries. This presents practical challenges. For example, to push their work to mass audiences automatically online,

57 transparency.facebook.com/community-standards-enforcement#fake-accounts (last report was from March 2020); transparency.twitter.com/en/platform-manipulation.html (last report from June 2019); transparencyreport.google.com/youtube-policy/removals (last report Dec 2019)

58 techcrunch.com/2020/03/16/facebook-reddit-google-linkedin-microsoft-twitter-ond-youtube-issue-joint-statement-on-misinformation

fact checkers must carry out time-consuming basic manual data entry on multiple third party platforms such as Facebook's fact checking product or ClaimReview schema, submitting slightly different data or adapting to different formats each time. This unnecessary duplication is a waste of skilled fact checkers' time, and could be avoided with better coordination between internet companies. There are also missed opportunities to remunerate fact checkers' important contributions towards the reduction of harmful misinformation online.

The coronavirus pandemic has led some internet companies to act more strongly on misinformation and to provide their users better access to reliable information. It is clear that there is plenty of appetite to explore how fact checkers and internet companies can work together to increase their individual effectiveness in identifying and acting upon misinformation, as well as bolstering democracies and freedom of speech.

Internet companies need to increase transparency about how they tackle misinformation, and invest much more in engagement with fact checkers. But fact checkers also need to step up our efforts to proactively, constructively and collectively shape how internet companies respond to the evolving challenges of online misinformation in future.

Inaccurate and misleading content disseminated by politicians

In many countries, politicians have large presences on Facebook or other social media platforms, carry out extensive online campaigning, and in some cases employ unofficial cyber armies to push messages.

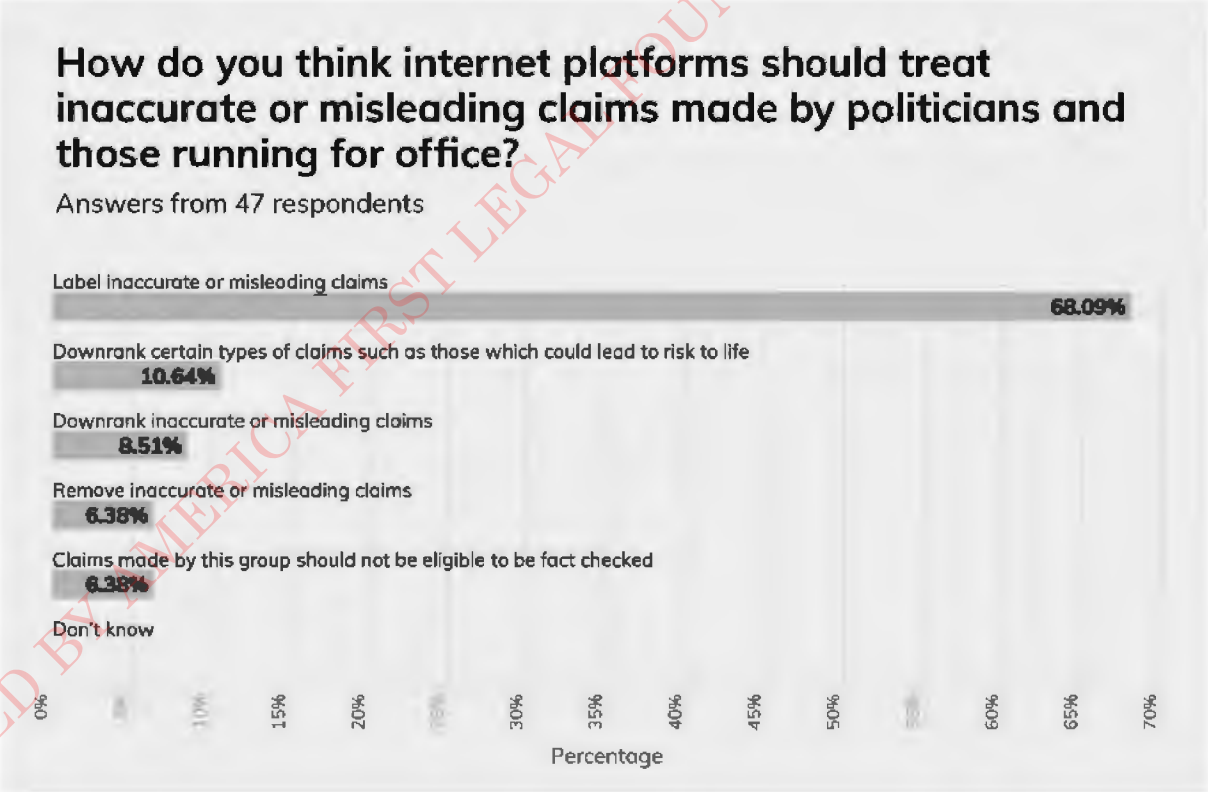
Many interviewees said they see claims from politicians as part of the online information ecosystem. Aos Fatos says that in Brazil, "We're living in an environment where political discourse is tight with misinformation. When we fact check one part of this equation and leave the other free, we don't really solve the problem." Rappler echoes this, saying, "A lot of things here are political – the lines between misinformation and politics are very blurred."

Facebook currently exempts speech by politicians from its fact checking programme. This exemption is based on Facebook's belief in free expression and respect for the democratic process: the company does not want to adjudicate political debates or stop politicians' speech from reaching audiences. Facebook argues that this would leave people less

informed about what elected officials and candidates are saying and render politicians less accountable for their words.[59]

Some fact checkers feel that this still privileges freedom of speech by politicians over that of citizens. For example, one interviewee sees the policy as, "effectively just punishing regular people, while politicians get the privilege to say things which are wrong." Others highlighted how the US context is different to other countries. PesaCheck, for example, says, "Kenya is different to California: there are a lot more checks and balances there than there are here."

There are reasonable arguments that can be made for different responses to politicians' inaccurate speech. Even among themselves, fact checkers are not united on how internet companies should treat inaccurate claims from politicians, although a majority of survey respondents said that labelling inaccurate and misleading claims from politicians would be their preferred response.



59 about.fb.com/news/2019/09/elections-and-political-speech

One practical challenge of the exemption of political speech includes defining political figures. Facebook's definition is "candidates running for office, current office holders – and, by extension, many of their cabinet appointees – along with political parties and their leaders". However, in practice, this distinction is not always clear or easy to follow. Factly says, "In a country like India, there are 10 million political figures," while Full Fact points out that, "There are 10,000 local councillors in England. Some of them mention their position on their profile page but there's no whitelist of people we have to avoid."

Interviewees questioned whether a light-touch solution could be found. One said, "Our mission is to contextualise what politicians are saying – which seems to me to be the same as Facebook's mission." Another argued, "If you don't want to reduce circulation, fine – but label them."

In response to criticism of inaccurate content from high profile individuals remaining on the platform, Facebook announced in June 2020 that it would start labelling content that is covered by its exemption for newsworthiness. It will also give users a warning that content might break community standards when they attempt to share it. In the announcement, Mark Zuckerberg reiterated that "there is no newsworthiness exemption for content that incites violence or suppresses voting. Even if a politician or government official says it."[60]

Twitter reportedly removed tweets from the presidents of Brazil and Venezuela and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani that violated its policy on misleading coronavirus-related content.[61] The company has also started to add labels to tweets of public figures such as the American president and Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman.[62] However, it is not clear how Twitter is picking claims to label beyond its statement that it is "relying on trusted partners to identify" harmful content.[63] Nor is it clear what criteria are being used to determine what appears in the results when a user clicks the "get the facts" button.

60 facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10112048980882521&id=4

61 theverge.com/2020/3/30/21199845/twitter-tweets-brazil-venezuela-presidents-covid-19-coronavirus-jair-bolsanaro-maduro

62 archive.is/NtbND; archive.is/3Q2Un; twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1306557587375128576

63 blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2020/updating-our-approach-to-misleading-information.html

Meanwhile, YouTube adjusted its policy on political misinformation in February 2020, in preparation for the US elections, but did not explicitly mention whether certain content published by politicians would be exempted, apart from a statement in August 2020 saying that policies would be enforced "without regard to political ideology".[64] Its promise to remove false claims about technical eligibility requirements for current political candidates includes an example of "claims that a candidate is not eligible to hold office based on false information about citizenship status requirements to hold office in that country".[65]

How fact checkers feel internet companies communicate with them

In general, there is scope for improvement on how internet companies communicate with fact checkers. We go into more detail on this later in this section, particularly regarding Facebook, which maintains partnerships with many fact checkers, so there is more substance on which to comment in comparison to other companies.

One major theme that came out of interviews was fact checkers' wish to be consulted about new or updated products and policies before they are publicly announced. Factly said, "We would like it if the platforms believed we can add value: for example explaining how and why something spreads. We're not asking them to seek agreement or deliberate with us, but to ask us about these issues because they have a public impact." La Silla Vacía said, "We need to know what they're going to tell everyone in advance, and be able to have an input on the conversation before decisions are made instead of reacting after." Chequeado said, "If we're in the creation stage of a product, we can see how it's working, and what information and data we'll use."

Others echoed Factly's suggestion that fact checkers can add value. Fatabyyano said, "AI needs data. If you put garbage in, you get garbage out. We'd like to help them sort the data in Arabic." Aos Fatos said, "We could play an important role: we're in the front line and we have a lot to contribute. It's a mistake for the platforms to fail to hear what we're saying."

64 youtube.googleblog.com/2020/02/how-youtube-supports-elections.html; blog.google/outreach-initiatives/civics/update-our-2020-us-election-efforts

65 factcheck.org/2017/01/eight-years-of-trolling-obama

Some fact checkers said they are asked to join beta groups and small working groups to test products, and the International Fact-Checking Network's advisory board was seen as a useful feedback mechanism. Many organisations felt that their feedback is taken into account, particularly in situations where feedback is given collectively as a group. However, there is a range of attitudes among individual organisations: in our survey, 49% of fact checkers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that, "We get invited to pilot tools and test products", while 36% disagreed. This direction of travel is good, but the responses suggest that internet companies should expand their product testing and consultation to include a wider range of fact checking organisations. In terms of acting upon feedback, there were mixed feelings across the fact checking community. In our survey, 46% of respondents agreed with the statement "Internet platforms act on feedback from my organisation", while 24% disagreed. Based on this sample, it's not clear who the internet companies prefer to work with and why, but there seems to be an inconsistent approach which merits more scrutiny.

Getting answers to questions was another theme in interviews. One organisation said of its partnership with Facebook, "We work very closely but sometimes we don't get answers. We want them to continue to keep the interests of fact checkers in mind, and take input from us about the impact of potential policy changes." To explore this further, we asked fact checkers how far they agreed with the statement "We find it hard to get responses when we ask questions". 30% of survey respondents agreed, and 21% disagreed. 49% said they neither agreed nor disagreed. This range of experiences suggests that there is room for improvement to create a more consistently positive experience.

Facebook and fact checkers

What is Third-Party Fact checking?

Facebook launched its Third-Party Fact-Checking programme in 2016.[66] It now has partnerships with 70 fact checkers in at least 50 languages who can check misinformation on Facebook and Instagram including from posts, links, comments, and advertisements.[67] As many interviewees

66 facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking

67 facebook.com/business/help/182222309230722

acknowledged, Facebook is the only internet company with a robust global programme to tackle misinformation and a mechanism for labelling and acting against false claims. The disproportionate length of this section of the report should not be taken to suggest greater criticism or praise of Facebook's response to the spread of misinformation, but rather reflects the unique extent of Facebook's engagement with fact checkers.

Users can report misinformation, and Facebook's machine learning models also surface content where lots of people are commenting or expressing disbelief in a particular post. Facebook's machine learning models also surface content that may be false based on data from previous fact checker ratings.[68]

This content is compiled in a queue within Facebook's fact checking product, alongside metadata about the post, such as engagement or date posted. Fact checkers can bookmark content that they want to check, rate claims, and attach fact checks (for non-political claims – see below). From September 2020 onwards the options are: False, Altered, Partly False, Missing Context, Satire and True.

Pages are notified when they have received a false rating, and Facebook takes one of five actions including reducing distribution, showing pop-up notices to users who are trying to share false-rated content, sending notifications to users who have shared false-rated content, applying misinformation labels, and reducing distribution or pausing ads and monetisation for an unspecified time period for pages or websites that repeatedly share false-rated content.[69]

Third-Party Fact-Checking is part of a wider strategy to tackle problematic content across Facebook's apps, which also covers removal of content which violates community standards and ads policies, hate speech, fake accounts and terrorist content. Facebook also discusses some of these types of content with fact checking partners, such as misleadingly manipulated videos, voter suppression and misinformation that can contribute to physical harm.[70]

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68 facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking/how-it-works

69 facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking/how-it-works

70 facebook.com/communitystandards/manipulated_media; facebook.com/communitystandards/coordinating_harm_publicizing_crime; facebook.com/communitystandards/credible_violence

There is a wide range of attitudes to the Facebook programme among fact checkers. Most organisations we spoke to reported neither extreme disappointment nor extreme satisfaction with the programme. There is exasperation among fact checkers who are annoyed about Facebook's perceived inability or unwillingness to fix bugs in the tool, to provide more transparency, and to put fact checkers in the driving seat of product changes.

However, the majority af arganisations working with Facebook – and those who are not – see a clear value and impact in the programme itself, and seem to have positive working relationships with their regional points of contact that go beyond seeing Facebook as an important source of income. Many also believe Facebook sees the programme as valuable too.

The programme has a financial and editorial impact on fact checkers' work. There are numerous benefits, including increased visibility of trending misinformation, growth in audience and impact, an open line to Facebook, and a closer-knit community of fact checkers. The areas for improvement include communication, transparency, increased engagement of fact checkers outside the US, the practical challenges and difference in ethas around checking political speech, and more support for fact checkers experiencing partnership-related online or political harassment. The next section of this report goes into more detail on these effects, benefits and areas for improvement.

Financial and editorial effects of Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme

Financial dependency

The money that comes with Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme has been transformative to many organisations. Many have been able to hire more staff, build up reserves, launch in other countries or languages, make longer-term plans, expand offices or buy expensive software.

However, many organisations, in particular newer ones, would be left vulnerable to closure if the programme ended. Some fact checkers said that their jobs are tied to the programme funding.

> *If the scheme ended, we would have to lay off people.*
>
> *It's 50% of our funding.*
>
> *We know it's not going to be forever – it might end this year, next year, or the year after – but it's helping us build products to become more sustainable in the long run.*
>
> **– Various fact checkers**

There was no consensus about how long the programme will run for. Some interviewees thought it would carry on until the end of the US election or that there would at least be a major assessment of the programme; others thought that it would run "as long as Facebook exists".

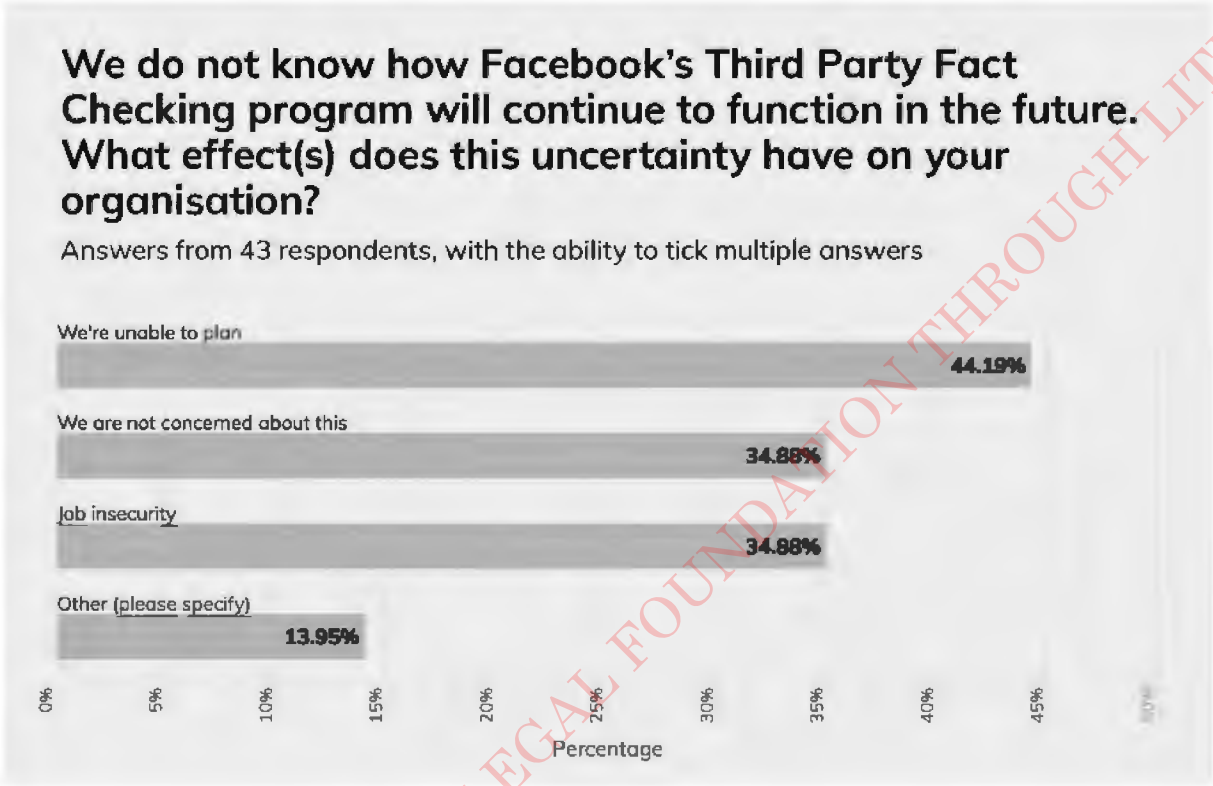
Facebook has responded to this need for clarity among fact checkers by sharing information about the programme in 2021 earlier on in 2020 compared to previous years.

There was some speculation over whether Facebook was or is attempting to develop machine learning in order to automate the process and reduce its dependency on fact checkers at a later date. There is a widespread belief that Facebook has gradually come to appreciate the complexity of fact checking, and that a full automation strategy may never work, because of the judgement, nuance, and types of evidence involved in checking online claims. One fact checker reflected, "I think, if they care, they need to run the programme on a long term basis".

Some fact checkers pointed to a 2019 announcement about introducing community reviewers, in which Facebook said it would pilot using contractors to find information that can contradict or corroborate online claims, and share these ratings with the third-party fact checkers as "additional context as they do their own official review".[71] Some interviewees saw the announcement as an indication that the fact checking programme would end, while others thought the two programmes could exist alongside and complement each other.

71 about.fb.com/news/2019/12/helping-fact-checkers

Either way, as one fact checker commented, "Facebook has to communicate the results of this programme and take a decision about what we will do in the coming years to fight misinformation."



Facebook should discuss its road map for the programme with partners, to help them plan financially and develop plans for sustainability, should the programme be scheduled to end, altered or reduced. Fact checkers should also coordinate among themselves and with the funding community to develop plans for the long term sustainability of fact checking.

Editorial strategy

Some fact checkers, like Teyit and Maldita.es, were set up with online fact checking as their primary function. Others launched with the primary goal of checking political claims as a democratic accountability activity, and did not often publish fact checks of online content.

Organisations which started with a focus on politicians reported a large increase in the volume and proportion of online fact checks – specifically, fact checks of content from Facebook.

Despite Facebook's arm's-length approach to partners' editorial strategy, it is clear that the programme is having an important effect on fact checkers' activity which merits a closer look. Lucas Graves and Alexios Mantzarlis examined the relationship between mission and focus (political versus online rumours) in a 2020 paper for Political Quarterly, and said: "Notably, fact checkers who have partnered with Facebook were three times as likely (30%) as those who haven't to see fighting viral rumors as their main purpose (though even among this group, a majority chose political lying as their main target)."[72] Academics focusing on fact checking, and fact checkers themselves, should take this question seriously and generate a public discussion so that the effects of Third-Party Fact-Checking on editorial output is properly addressed.

Biggest benefits of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme

Aside from the financial benefits of the programme, interviews revealed many positive consequences including better monitoring, improved impact and new readers.

Facebook partnership makes it easier to find important claims

Many fact checkers said that the quality of content in the queue has improved since they began fact checking for Facebook, including an increase in the proportion of checkable claims (rather than opinion and viral non-factual videos). "We get visibility on what people are consuming and what appears to be false", says one fact checker, while another says, "It's valuable: it shows us stuff we wouldn't see before and lets us prioritise it". In particular, fact checkers welcomed the addition of Instagram to the queue, as the platform is harder to monitor even when using CrowdTangle.

More reactions and corrections from those who get checked

Interviewees said publishers have reached out to ask how to correct their content. Africa Check in Senegal said, "Last week, Samba [the editor] got a phone call about a false flag on a Facebook page. This is a good impact – they will pay attention next time." Ellinika Hoaxes says, "publishers will reach out – before that, we would fact check something and no one would give a damn." PesaCheck has seen relationships with

72 onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-923X.12896

media go from antagonistic to positive: "When they get flagged as false, they're not able to monetise. They get scared, but then ask us to come in and train staff in the essentials of verification and fact checking, and how misinformation works."

An open line to Facebook

Fact checkers said that they had initially had problems engaging with Facebook, and that the partnership has helped them to have a more open relationship. One fact checker even cited this as the main reason to keep the partnership: "They need to see what we're seeing, and we need this structured conversation".

Attracting new, different readers

Many fact checkers said that the programme had helped them expand their audience. Politifact says, "every time we rate something, it's essentially a push notification to thousands of people who weren't readers before". Full Fact said, "we're reaching people who don't care about political fact checking or PMQs [Prime Minister's Questions, the weekly parliamentary session where the Prime Minister is questioned by the Leader of the Opposition and other MPs]". Chequeado sees the programme as a gateway: "There are 33 million Facebook users in Argentina: if they start with debunking and then branch out, we're getting readers that we wouldn't get otherwise."

A closer-knit community

Although Facebook's partners are part of the International Fact-Checking Network which runs community-building activities, the programme appears to have brought fact checkers even closer together. La Silla Vacía says: "We do other types of reporting so we aren't as invested in the International Fact-Checking Network as other fact checkers. The programme has increased our feeling of being part of a community of fact checkers." A European fact checker described collaborating on a fact check with a colleague in the same region: "I only know them because Facebook has flown us to the same conference".

Biggest areas for improvement within Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme

Communication with partners

Communicating with fact checkers is widely seen as one of the partnership's biggest areas to improve. Fact checkers understand that not all their recommendations and input can or should be taken into account, and many were at pains to add that they have a good relationship with their regional representative.

However, interviewees talked about a lack of mutual trust, inability to manage crises, lack of prior warning or consultation about changes to policies and policies which affect the programme, and dismissing issues raised by fact checkers in group calls.

One fact checker commented, "If the aim of these calls is to gather information for Facebook rather than engaging with the problems we raise, it's a waste of my time and others'." Another says, "the main result of engagement is that it sucks our energy and time, and takes away from the main process of fact checking."

Following Full Fact's first transparency report on the effectiveness of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme in 2019,[73] Facebook responded saying, "We welcome feedback that draws on the experiences and first-hand knowledge of organisations like Full Fact, which has become a valued partner in the U.K.. We are encouraged that many of the recommendations in the report are being actively pursued by our teams as part of continued dialogue with our partners, and we know there's always room to improve."[74] Full Fact's latest transparency report, published in September 2020, stated that while many of the 2019 report's recommendations have been implemented, "we are disappointed that it has taken over a year for these changes to be put in place", and that there are still issues with transparency and working with experts.

However, many fact checkers we interviewed raised concerns about not being listened to and feedback nat being acted upon, with the result that the partnership can feel one-way. This is perhaps to be expected,

73 fullfact.org/blog/2019/jul/full-fact-publishes-first-report-facebooks-third-party-fact-checking-programme

74 fullfact.org/media/uploads/tpfc-q1q2-2019.pdf#page=7

considering the imbalance of power between Facebook, one of the biggest companies in the world, and small fact checking organisations with comparatively tiny budgets and public profile. In some cases, this lack of trust has resulted in a transactional view of the partnership, where fact checkers see their job as providing a service rather than being part of a common cause. The onus is on Facebook to do better on this front and reap the rewards of a genuinely two-way partnership.

Facebook should discuss ways of building trust and two-way communication directly with fact checking partners, but possible routes to explore include:

- Sharing information about feedback, including how it has been prioritised, who has and hasn't heard it, and why it will or won't be acted upon.
- Sharing a road map for the future of the programme.
- Working together to set shared goals with explicit commitments from both partners.
- Encouraging fact checkers to discuss challenges and possible solutions privately among themselves as well as with Facebook.
- Sharing information about the impact of individual partners' work.
- Working together to identify non-financial ways of supporting fact checkers, such as reducing online harassment and sharing findings from relevant user research.

Communication about the programme

Many fact checkers also said that Facebook needs to improve its public communication about the programme, including briefing staff better for public speaking engagements, providing a media contact on the Third-Party Fact-Checking landing page, and taking more responsibility for defending policies which fact checkers don't agree with and did not help develop (such as Facebook's policy on treatment of inaccurate content from politicians).

Several described being put in a position of defending or explaining the programme, despite a Facebook representative being present at an event or meeting. One interviewee says, "At a conference, I had to stand up and explain to a member of Facebook staff how the programme

works. I sometimes have to feed spokespeople so they know what to say." Facebook should have frank conversations with partners about how frequently this occurs and, if needed, what steps could be taken to make sure that Facebook staff are equipped to properly represent the programme in public settings.

> *At the moment the page just has our contact information. There's no one from Facebook to talk to about the programme, or who's managing it and what the consequences of being flagged are.* – **Fact checker**

Criticisms were also raised of Facebook's information pages[75] for the programme. Interviewees described getting angry comments and emails from Facebook group admins who get "freaked out", "confused", or "angry" when notified of a false rating. "Mainstream media publishers are not adequately aware of what the programme is about. We've had long conversations with media houses about the merits of deleting posts over corrections. But at the end of the day, I'm aware we couldn't do anything, because it's Facebook's policy."

Since we conducted interviews, Facebook has revamped and restructured information about Third-Party Fact-Checking, including giving clearer information about the actions it takes in response to fact checks.[76] These improvements are welcome, although there is still no generic or staff contact listed, and the list of fact checking partners in different countries is gone.

Similar concerns were raised about users: "It's not been made clear to Facebook users that this is a programme that Facebook has asked us to do. People think we are poking their noses in their business. Facebook needs to make clear that they are playing a role in this and it's a programme they came up with." Facebook should continue to work with partners to establish what further information needs to be published on the programme's information pages. Facebook should also take any necessary further steps to publicise the programme among publishers and

75 facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking/faqs; facebook.com/business/help/182222309230722

76 Comparing old page (web.archive.org/web/20200104205448/https://www.facebook.com/help/publisher/182222309230722) with new (facebook.com/journalismproject/programs/third-party-fact-checking)

users so that they know how it works, and are aware of the consequences of publishing inaccurate information.

Sometimes fact checkers are put in a position in which they must either defend Facebook's policies publicly or else risk undermining the value of the programme and their relationship with the company. One says, "When we get asked about the policy on fact checking politicians, we then have to go out and defend a policy we had no part in formulating. I fundamentally disagree with that policy direction. But we don't want to antagonise Facebook, so we end up having to take their part. I'm not saying we should be dictating policies but we need to be making our voices heard beforehand. Facebook needs to work with fact checking organisations in specific regions and countries, and say we are thinking about this internally, we would like your input." Several Facebook leaders including Mark Zuckerberg and Sir Nick Clegg have made public statements about Facebook's political speech policy.[77] Facebook could build on this by ensuring that fact checking partners in different countries have access to these materials and can redirect questions to Facebook's own statements, rather than carrying the burden of defending these policies themselves.

Communication within Facebook

Rappler explained how fact checks often lead to the discovery of coordinated networks of Facebook accounts, and that these two aspects of tackling misinformation are linked. Yet, within Facebook, the teams that deal with these connected problems are entirely separate. "I would go back to how the whole programme is structured and how it's connected to information operations," Rappler said.

Appetite for more transparency

> *Facebook is at least doing much better than some other companies, but they're not able to communicate what they're doing.*
> **– Fact checker**

77 about.fb.com/news/2019/09/elections-and-political-speech; about.fb.com/news/2019/10/mark-zuckerberg-stands-for-voice-and-free-expression

Fact checkers expressed continued frustration with the low levels of transparency about the impact of the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme. This is a long-running concern.[78] Facebook has released a small number of statistics about the effectiveness of the programme, for example that false-ratings reduced views of articles by 80%,[79] or that people who saw warning labels on Cavid-19 content did nat go ta view the original content 95% of the time.[80] However, the evidence behind these claims has not been released, which makes it hard to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. If Facebaok-style programmes were adopted by other internet companies, it would be valuable to include regular impact statements within the programme design so that independent researchers can compare the effectiveness of different measures, and so that fact checkers can prove their value and improve the effectiveness of their work.

> *We don't know a lot about our impact on the platform. If we had more information, we could do better work, but Facebook doesn't want to show its data.* – **Chequeado**

Teyit says, "We have limited data about how this product works. Facebook shares some information about impact, but it's general. We can't see specifically which article got user reactions, or how many notifications were sent to users for each fact check, or how many people clicked to get more information. We need more data." Africa Check's Senegal office says, "If we had more data from Facebook it would help us organise that work better." Factly also wanted to know more about user behaviour and the impact of the programme not just at a global level but specifically in relation to their organisation.

Teyit also points out that its staff have fed the AI by bookmarking claims, but do not know how or whether Facebook is learning from this. "Facebook is getting feedback from us but they're never really open and transparent. It's hard to sustain such a relationship: we never know why we're doing something. Facebook does research on different markets,

78 poynter.org/fact-checking/2017/its-been-a-year-since-facebook-partnered-with-fact-checkers-hows-it-going

79 about.fb.com/news/2018/06/hard-questions-fact-checking

80 about.fb.cam/news/2020/04/covid-19-misinfo-update

but we never know the details. They learn from us, and we have to learn from them."

One possible route to addressing these concerns is running a quarterly seminar for partners on topics where fact checkers feel more knowledge would help them to work better, such as:

- Introduction to how Facebook uses AI to tackle misinformation.
- How user behavior is affected by individual fact checkers' work within the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme.
- How Facebook is using ClaimReview in its efforts to tackle misinformation, and the implications for fact checkers.

Global inequalities

There is a widespread perception that Facebook makes decisions based on what is happening in the US market. One fact checker says, "The platforms react when something happens in the US. Twitter is trying something new because of the Presidential election. But other countries have huge problems with misinformation which affects people's lives. So it's important to think outside the US perspective." Another echoed this, challenging Facebook to be more collaborative with countries outside the US.

Responding to disinformation about fact checkers

One fact checker raised the issue of defending itself against false claims. Rappler said that a lot of false claims that circulate in the Philippines have to do with fact checkers themselves, and Rappler sees it as a conflict of interest to engage with these. Examples given by Rappler include the false claims that Rappler is in a group of top tax evaders, or that its CEO Maria Ressa is an Indonesian citizen. Rappler said, "There are claims about Rappler and Vera Files [another leading fact checker in the Philippines] circulating and left unchecked. There's a loophole for disinformation about fact checkers to spread, and it's affecting our reputation as fact checkers. How do we defend ourselves? Somebody else has to be doing that."

Facebook and the International Fact-Checking Network should discuss this issue with fact checkers and collaboratively develop a proposal to address it.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp has started to have conversations with fact checkers about working together to identify and respond to misinformation, and has opened up its API to some fact checkers already. To date, WhatsApp (both the Business App and API) is connected to 47 fact-checking organizations in 29 countries around the world. WhatsApp lists these organisations on its FAQ pages, encouraging users to "double-check information with these official IFCN [International Fact-Checking Network] Fact Checking Organizations."[81]

Google, YouTube and fact checkers

Google and YouTube do not have a fact checking partnership programme like Facebook does, but they do use fact checkers' work and support fact checking in some financial and practical ways.

Google provides credits for advertising, G-Suite and Cloud storage for fact checkers, which is seen as very valuable and worth continuing. Similarly, grants were seen as a good way of supporting fact checking, although the question of how and whether this could be extended to benefit more fact checkers was raised.

In 2020, Jigsaw (formerly Google Ideas) and Google Research announced Assembler, an experimental platform bringing together multiple image manipulation detectors from academics into one tool to help fact checkers and journalists identify manipulated media. Assembler is currently being tested with fact checkers.[82]

Information and transparency

While fact checkers warmly welcomed Google's announcements that ClaimReview has enabled roughly four billion impressions of fact checks in 2019 and four billion impressions in the first three quarters of 2020,[83] these

81 faq.whatsapp.com/126787958113983

82 theverge.com/2020/2/4/21122778/alphabet-jigsaw-assembler-tool-news-journalists-deepfakes-images

83 blog.google/outreach-initiatives/google-news-initiative/how-we-highlight-fact-checks-search-and-google-news; blog.google/products/search/our-latest-investments-information-quality-search-and-news

announcements were seen as the beginning rather than the endpoint of more transparency from Google about the impact of fact checkers' work.

Fact checkers wanted more information about how Google and YouTube are using ClaimReview, and how these platforms tap into the Fact Check Explorer database. YouTube also came in for criticism of vague terminology such as "authoritative content" or "borderline content".[84] International media has also attempted to scrutinize what these terms mean and who is evaluating content, with no success.[85]

Google and YouTube should give full information about where fact checks are appearing, how many people are seeing and engaging with these (at country level), and which search queries are causing fact checks to be shown in results. This would help fact checkers to understand how users are seeing and connecting with their work, and make presentational adjustments accordingly, as well as helping fact checkers to prove their impact to funders and supporters, aiding long term sustainability efforts.

Better and more communication

While fact checkers did suggest that there has been a step change in Google's approach to communicating with fact checkers, most recently with a meeting of 30 representatives from 20 verified International Fact-Checking Network signatories in Washington, there is still more that can be done.

Fact checkers would like to contribute to the strategies Google and YouTube are using to fight misinformation. PesaCheck describes the ideal two way relationship: "If we were able to see what sort of work they're doing to respond to misinformation, we could contribute. Also, when we discover trends – such as people trying to monetise false information using ad sense – there's nowhere for us to take this information. We'd like to engage with these platforms and coordinate."

One fact checker, describing their relationships with platform representatives, said, "There's only one person [at Google] in our country we can talk to and he has a lot of work. It takes so long to get in touch.

84 youtube.googleblog.com/2019/12/the-four-rs-of-responsibility-raise-and-reduce.html

85 gizmodo.com/youtube-is-going-to-bury-borderline-content-it-wont-te-1832162383; wired.com/story/youtube-recommendations-crackdown-borderline-content

At Facebook we have a regional product manager. In a sense, Google is missing this: they are not locally approaching fact checkers."

Some fact checkers said they often see bad examples of misinformation on YouTube and Google, but felt they did not know who to reach out to – or if they do reach out they do not always get a response. In particular, fact checkers highlighted the need to fast-track reporting for coordinated activity like click farms.

Gaogle should expand the team that is responsible for working with fact checkers to tackle misinformation – preferably within the Information Credibility team, which seems to be trusted by many fact checkers – to enable more consultation to take place and to build deeper, genuinely two-way relationships with fact checkers.

Harassment

Some fact checkers mentioned they had been kicked out of their YouTube account without any explanation, and asked YouTube to extend better protection to fact checkers against harassment campaigns.

YouTube

It is hard to gauge the extent of misinformation or coordinated activity on YouTube. The company does not have a structured fact checking programme that might provide a baseline of information, and there are limits to the amount of data researchers can extract via the public API.

There is a lot of room for YouTube to be more open about its activities to reduce misinformation, and to engage more proactively with fact checkers. YouTube has published several blogs about its internal efforts to counteract misinformation and harmful content, including its use of external evaluators who use publicly available guidelines to assess content; the fact that each video receives up to nine different opinions, sometimes including expert opinions; and a regular Community Enforcement transparency report.[86] It is not clear whether YouTube is using fact checks to aid these efforts, although anecdotally, fact checkers' say that the same videos they have checked on Facebook are sometimes

86 youtube.googleblog.com/2019/12/the-four-rs-of-responsibility-raise-and-reduce.html; youtube.googleblog.com/2019/09/the-four-rs-of-responsibility-remove.html

removed from YouTube, suggesting that YouTube is using fact checkers' work internally, possibly without appropriate levels of transparency.

The presence of YouTube representatives at a meeting of fact checkers in 2019 and at Global Fact 2020 was noticed and remarked on positively by interviewees.

YouTube came under the spotlight during the coronavirus epidemic, when large volumes of misinformation about 5G and coronavirus circulated on its platform. In early April, news organisations reported that YouTube was banning conspiracy videos linking coronavirus symptoms to 5G networks.[87] YouTube's page states, "Claims that COVID-19 is caused by radiation from 5G networks" are not allowed on the platform.[88]

In April 2020 YouTube announced that it was expanding its use of ClaimReview in search results information panels – previously in use only in Brazil and India – to the US, and later the UK and Germany.[89] YouTube announced a grant of one million dollars to the International Fact Checking Network to support ideas related to video production and improving fact checkers' reach, impact, and institutional capacity. An option that does not seem to have been explored is paying fact checkers directly for their expert assistance in tackling misinformation on YouTube's platform.

Overwhelming support for a paid, structured fact checking programme on YouTube

During interviews, fact checkers expressed an appetite for working with YouTube to combat misinformation in the following ways:

- Develop a misinformation monitoring tool similar to CrowdTangle.
- Label misinformation to feed YouTube's claim spotting and claim matching AI.

87 bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52198946; businessinsider.com/youtube-delete-5g-coronavirus-conspiracy-2020-4; itv.com/news/2020-04-09/facebook-removes-david-icke-coronavirus-5g-conspiracy-video

88 support.google.com/youtube/answer/9891785

89 youtube.googleblog.com/2020/04/expanding-fact-checks-on-youtube-to-united-states.html; brasil.googleblog.com/2019/11/trazendo-mais-transparencia-e-contexto.html; support.google.com/youtube/answer/9229632?hl=en; thedrum.com/news/2020/09/24/youtube-rolls-out-conspiracy-debunking-fact-check-feature-the-uk

- Fact checking misinformation, which can then be downranked and flagged or labelled to users.
- Flag text which been translated from debunked misinformation in another language
- Highlight fact checks in search results.
- Share data with fact checkers about trending videos by topic, language and region.
- Provide transcription and automatic closed captions including for smaller language.
- Recommend relevant fact check videos to people who watched misinformation.
- Add labels to fact checked videos which are embedded or shared outside YouTube.

We followed this up with a survey, which indicated that there is strong interest in a more formal relationship between YouTube and fact checkers along the lines of Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme. 85% out of 47 respondents said they wanted to see a collaboratively-developed global programme partnering with fact checkers to identify, label and downrank misinformation on YouTube and Google products, and notify users who have watched or shared verified misinformation.

Another popular request was developing a CrowdTangle-style tool for monitoring viral misinformation on YouTube and providing access and training to verified fact checkers. Currently there is no equivalent to CrowdTangle to help fact checkers funnel down the massive amounts of content on YouTube into something which is realistically monitorable – everything must be done manually. In our survey, 49% of respondents said that a tool like this would be useful.

Our survey also showed that 40% of respondents thought that country-specific search trends data on YouTube would also be a useful way of supporting fact checking.

Google products

Interviewees spoke in detail about the challenges they encounter with Google products such as Snippets, Search and Translate, as well as issues

with communication and transparency. They also mentioned practical ways Google and YouTube could support fact checkers.

Search

Some fact checkers said they would like more transparency about Google's search engine algorithm and how it surfaces authoritative content. Many would like more information about how search results are ranked: interviewees said that links to misinformation are sometimes ranked higher than fact-checked information.

Snippets

The featured snippet is a Google Search feature that aims to deliver information to users faster.[90] It's not clear exactly how the featured snippet algorithm works, but it appears to select a statement of fact from the search result page that resolves the user's query.

Maldita.es said, "Snippets are full of misinformation. What Google identifies as the most reliable source might work in English but not in Spanish." There are problems in English too. In 2019 UK YouTube users began posting videos of themselves asking Google's voice assistant if Muslims are exempt from paying council tax.[91] Google can be heard responding, incorrectly, "According to petitions, UK government and parliament, Muslims who use their living areas within their homes as a place of worship are exempt from paying council tax. This however does not apply to other religions". Full Fact said its staff also heard 'full fact dot org' being inaccurately quoted. In this case, Google picked a claim Full Fact was citing, not the conclusion written in response to it. Full Fact got in touch with Google, who quickly fixed this instance.

It is possible to add code to either stop a website from ever appearing in Snippets, or to prevent certain bits of text from ever appearing in the Snippet itself.[92] However, while this helps sites solve the problem in the short term, these solutions can only be used reactively.

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90 blog.google/products/search/reintroduction-googles-featured-snippets

91 youtube.com/watch?v=clx1uElCAaU (video removed by YouTube), bitchute.com/video/Fg2l0xOBKZzk/?fbclid=IwAR1Szlc_N4agHpriOPvdw8gyIFYMkgHzQ_ZlxqUbCo_M0KoLZXhF7D3Ro4U, youtube.com/watch?v=rKdY_PHUWxE

92 support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6229325

Featured snippets do not use ClaimReview Schema, which means that despite investing hours of time and money making their fact checks machine-readable, fact checking organisations currently don't have a means of ensuring that the right information from a fact check is surfaced in Google's search results.

Translate

In Iran, Factnameh has had trouble with Google translating numbers correctly in Farsi. This has been a particular problem during the coronavirus pandemic, when there is likely to be an increase in the number of international journalists who will be using Google translate to read about misinformation in Iran, which attempted to cover up the true number of cases.[93]

For example, in an article about flu deaths and coronavirus,[94] Factnameh quotes a claim by Iran's Health Minister. Here is the correct translation of the claim, written as in Persian to show the exact digits that are in the statement:

> *"We have had 13 thousand and 200 cases of influenza in Iran this year of which 108 died. Our population is a quarter of America's. In that country, there are 28 million people affected, 290 thousand hospitalized and 16 thousand dead as a result of influenza. But no one tells you not to travel to America."*

However, Google translated this as:

> *"In Iran this year, we have had 1,400 cases and 2 deaths from the flu. Our population is a quarter of America. There are 3 million people affected, 6,000 hospitalized and 6,000 dead. But nobody says don't travel to America."*

Factnameh says that Facebook doesn't have this problem but Twitter does, since its translation is powered by Google. As well as increasing the likelihood of misinformation being spread by journalists who don't read

93 bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-51930856

94 nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/twitter-testing-new-ways-fight-misinformation-including-community-based-points-n1139931; factnameh.com/fact-checks/2020-02-27-flu-deaths-usa.html

Farsi, this also has the potential to create misinformation and undermine Factnameh's international reputation by making it seem unreliable.

Twitter and fact checkers

Twitter has not yet shown an inclination towards partnering with fact checkers, although the International Fact-Checking Network has communicated the potential benefit of such partnerships, for example the value of local expertise in applying impartiality principles to assessment of content.

Like other platforms, Twitter has expanded its approach to misinformation in several directions in response to COVID-19. In Twitter's case, this includes labelling and sometimes removing misleading, synthetic or manipulated media and tweets containing potentially misleading Covid-19 information,[95] search prompts for users on COVID-19 topics, and making the COVID-19 data corpus available for free through its API, enabling research.

Twitter has not published a methodology for its internal fact checking process – which appears to be done in-house by its curation team using "trusted sources" – beyond its general curation guidelines.[96] Aside from the WHO, trusted sources are not listed publicly, but are described as "public health authorities and governments". Although fact checkers are not currently designated as trusted partners, they have been cited in at least one "get the facts" Moment under a "What you need to know" header.[97] Twitter says that, "Trump's claims are unsubstantiated, according to CNN, Washington Post and other fact checkers". CNN is not an independent verified fact checker working to globally-agreed transparency and impartiality standards, while the relevant tweet from the Washington Post does not link to the Washington Post's Fact Checker (an International Fact-Checking Network signatory) but to a political analysis piece.[98] This is just a single example, but it does indicate that there is room for

95 blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2020/updating-our-approach-to-misleading-information.html; archive.is/NtbND; archive.is/3Q2Un

96 help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/curationstyleguide#:~:text=When%20including%20a%20Twitter%20handle,to%20their%20Tweets%20being%20curated

97 archive.is/bzORG

98 washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/05/26/review-trumps-many-unsubstantiated-allegations-voter-fraud/

improvement in Twitter's understanding of what good fact checking and trusted sources look like.

Beyond coronavirus measures, Twitter also began testing a new feature for Android phones in June 2020, where people are prompted to read articles before they share them.[99]

Unlike many other internet companies, Twitter does not provide grants or paid partnerships to fact checkers or the International Fact-Checking Network. Twitter's financial contributions to fact checking have sometimes taken the form of ad credits – for example, it supported Full Fact and Maldita.es via ad credits during the coronavirus pandemic.[100] These arrangements seem to rely on organisations having an existing relationship with Twitter rather than on a public structured application process. Twitter also sometimes highlights fact checkers' work in Moments.

Themes that emerged from our interviews included the insufficiency and inconsistency of Twitter's approach to tackling misinformation on its platform, its lack of engagement with fact checkers, and skepticism about its recent announcements on labelling content. Fact checkers said they wanted Twitter to be more open: "When you ask them for data they can be really hermetic, for example if we want to know about how a hashtag started", says one. Another says, "We never meet Twitter and that creates tension. They are closed, and it's hard to get information." Others said their accounts had been blocked and that it was difficult to get any response. For example, one said, "Our official account was blocked by Twitter. No explanation was given, no answers."

> *Twitter is more behind in its moderation of content and attitude to fact checking. It's also an acceleration platform with no long term plan.* – **Fact checker**

However, in comparison with other internet companies, Twitter rarely came up during our interviews. To try to find out more, we ran a survey in

99 twitter.com/TwitterSupport/status/1270783537667551233

100 blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2020/covid-19.html#engagement

May 2020, including a free-response question about how fact checkers would like to work with Twitter to combat misinformation.

While four out of 30 respondents said that Twitter should at least label content, ten went further, saying that they would like to see Twitter set up a structured programme similar to Facebook's fact checking programme. One suggested that this could be done either through ClaimReview or through a tool like Facebook's fact checking tool. Several said that payment would be a prerequisite for any partnership like this. One respondent wrote, "I have been contacted by Twitter. However, their programme seems to rely on fact checkers locating claims and delivering content for free. This is not possible due to financial costs." Another wrote, "They need to start remunerating fact checkers for pointing out misinformation on their platform."

Two respondents said that they would like Twitter to improve its API access, with one requesting that Twitter open the API for more than seven days in CrowdTangle.

Other internet companies

Apple, Microsoft, LinkedIn and Amazon have not publicly engaged with fact checkers to tackle misinformation, although Microsoft's search engine Bing uses Claim Review.[101] Microsoft has provided free access to Edge (its browser) users to NewsGuard (an internet news watchdog service), and has told the media that its research team is working on misinformation, disinformation, and health care hoaxes.[102]

Summary of main challenges of working with internet companies and possible solutions

Internet companies have significantly increased the reach of fact checkers, helping them to scale their work online - but this comes with challenges

101 bing.com/webmaster/help/markup-claim-review-7202cff4

102 zdnet.com/article/newsguard-becomes-free-for-all-microsoft-edge-users/; mediapost.com/publications/article/351424/microsoft-to-give-edge-browser-users-access-to-new.html

such as lack of transparency, difficulty in finding a contact and making feedback heard.

- **Financial dependency on internet companies for funding.** Many fact checkers have a high proportion of their budget coming from internet companies, especially from Facebook. Fact checkers are very vulnerable to future decisions by internet companies to stop funding or reduce funding for fact checking.
- **Transparency.** Fact checkers have a challenge understanding exactly how and where their work is being used by internet companies, especially internal use by internet companies as part of AI and moderation efforts. Finding out the impact of individual fact checks and overall fact checker activity on user behaviour is also tricky, as internet companies have so far refused to reveal that level of information. Fact checkers and internet companies should continue a dialogue about what type of transparency would be useful and why, and internet companies should commit to providing fact checkers with information that will help them understand whether they are fulfilling their mission, and information that can contribute to sustainability.
- **Investment in partnerships and engagement.** It is often challenging to locate a contact from an internet platform with whom to discuss collaboration or send information about misinformation or coordinated activity. Facebook is the exception to this, as it has regional representatives for fact checkers as part of its global fact checking programme. Other internet companies would reap the rewards of fact checkers' experience and research by investing in teams to manage partnerships with fact checkers.
- **Testing and feedback.** Feedback is not necessarily acted upon, nor is it clear how it is prioritised. Similarly, fact checkers do not always get answers to questions about products they are using to scale their fact checks or assist internet companies in reducing misinformation on their platforms. Some fact checkers are asked to pilot products while others are not, which suggests an inconsistent approach to global product and policy testing. Fact checkers should discuss whether a collective approach to feedback and testing could be a solution in some areas, and internet companies should communicate more openly about prioritisation of feedback, to manage expectations and keep relationships constructive.

Technology and automation

How technology has changed the fact checking environment

We asked interviewees how technology has changed their work in recent years and what they'd like to see in the future. Many mentioned that the internet had broadened their scope, while others said technology had driven a proliferation of possible sources of claims.

> *Misinformation is growing online: we see more, monitor more, try to think like an algorithm. Nothing like that was in my head when I started my career as a journalist in 2008.* – **Aos Fatos**

> *The way we interact with technology platforms has changed. Do we see them as platforms for distribution or monitoring? Sometimes we flip it upside down to use the same platform for debunking.* – **Factly**

> *Without tech we wouldn't be here. We originated to fight false claims on the internet in Arabic. The tools we use are all internet based.* – **Fatabyyano**

> *We've become more focused on social media. Checking social media is pretty radical compared to the basis of our founding – although it sounds normal to newer fact checkers. Technology has changed our work for good.* – **PolitiFact**

> *In the past, we were looking at a few media organisations, but now there are millions of content producers. Technology has helped – we've got tools that allow us to double check – but a significant part of the change has to do with volume.* – **Rappler**

> *The whole market for information has changed. Facebook has contributed to more people being exposed to fact checking. Related to this, there's a much broader scope for things to fact check. We started off doing only political discourse. Now there's an endless universe. We need to be much more specific about why we're checking this and not that. We have better selection criteria, although our fact checking process itself hasn't changed that much.* – **La Silla Vacía**

Automated fact checking

Several fact checking organisations are developing tools to automate parts of their work, such as identifying checkable claims, allowing users to report suspected misinformation, or verifying the accuracy of simple numerical claims. Full Fact's 2016 report The State of Automated Factchecking identified four clear stages of fact checking with potential for machine intervention: monitoring, spotting claims, checking claims and creating and publishing articles.[103]

However, during the interviews for this report, the term "automated fact checking" was interpreted very differently by different people. Some understood the endeavour as envisaged by Full Fact, breaking down the constituent parts of fact checking and testing whether any of these parts can be performed accurately by machines. Others saw it differently, and expressed justifiable skepticism about the possibility of a world in which robots could perform the whole fact checking process in one leap.

This difference in conception could account for the huge variety of responses to a general question about what interviewees thought about

103 fullfact.org/media/uploads/full_fact-the_state_of_automated_factchecking_aug_2016.pdf#page=4

automated fact checking. One interviewee said, "I can't imagine a world with it right now," whilst at the other end of the spectrum, it was described as "the future". Some felt that automation could help with certain types of claims: "I can see it working for images and basic claims, but not more complex claims", said one, while another said they thought automation could help match images and videos.

Claim-spotting was seen as very useful by some, such as Africa Check in Senegal: "The Washington Post was able to check 100,000 claims from Donald Trump in 100 days.[104] There's no way you can do that here in Senegal." For others, such as Teyit, a focus on spotting political claims is irrelevant: "If it started detecting photos and videos we'd want to do something with it."

The single point of agreement was that machines would not replace human fact checkers any time soon. Ellinika Hoaxes said, "No machine can replace human intuition: machines still can't understand if something is satire or opinion. Fact checks have to go through a human before publishing." Fact Crescendo said, "It might be a thing of the future, but human intelligence cannot be taken out." Chequeado said, "Automation is good for our work, but it can't be the only tool. Fact checking needs humans."

In particular, automating the research part of fact checking is seen as a distant and unrealistic fantasy, since so much human judgement and creative thinking is needed to track down sources and evidence, collaborate with other fact checkers, and identify context and framing such as satire. Rappler, reflecting on the possibility of robochecking replacing human researchers, said: "There are things on microfilm that my team struggles with! So it'll be a while."

> *We want anything that makes the time shorter between seeing a claim and publishing a fact check* – **Dubawa**

Factly pointed out that robochecking depends entirely on the quality and online accessibility of data in each country. Factnameh agreed, saying that in Iran, there is not a lack of data, "but it's messy and disorganised – some

104 washingtonpost.com/grophics/politics/trump-claims

of it's in PDF, some are open and some are just pictures of the pages. Also, sometimes websites are closed outside of Iran".

For Teyit, existing tools are irrelevant. For example, Full Fact's tool focuses on finding political claims, rather than on verifying videos and photos. Teyit also thought that using automated tools to verify is a dead end. "The way I see it, it's more a tool for double checking if something's already been fact checked. Regarding verifying itself, from where I stand it's not a tool for that."

Many raised the question of whether machines' language capability was good enough in their languages. For example, Fatabyyano had concerns about how well the tools would operate in Arabic: "We don't have a lot of hands so we need AI: most of the people who fact check for us are volunteers. But Arabic grammar is very hard, and we don't have a lot of Arabic-specialist developers. People building these tools will need to collaborate with people fact checking in other languages." Fact Crescendo commented that "If it was only one language that we're talking about then yes, the possibility may be there. But when we're talking about more than 100 languages in a country, like in India, it doesn't seem like we're getting there." Teyit says "We could develop new technical tools if someone developed NLP [natural language processing] for Turkish. At the moment automated tools aren't that useful for Turkish."

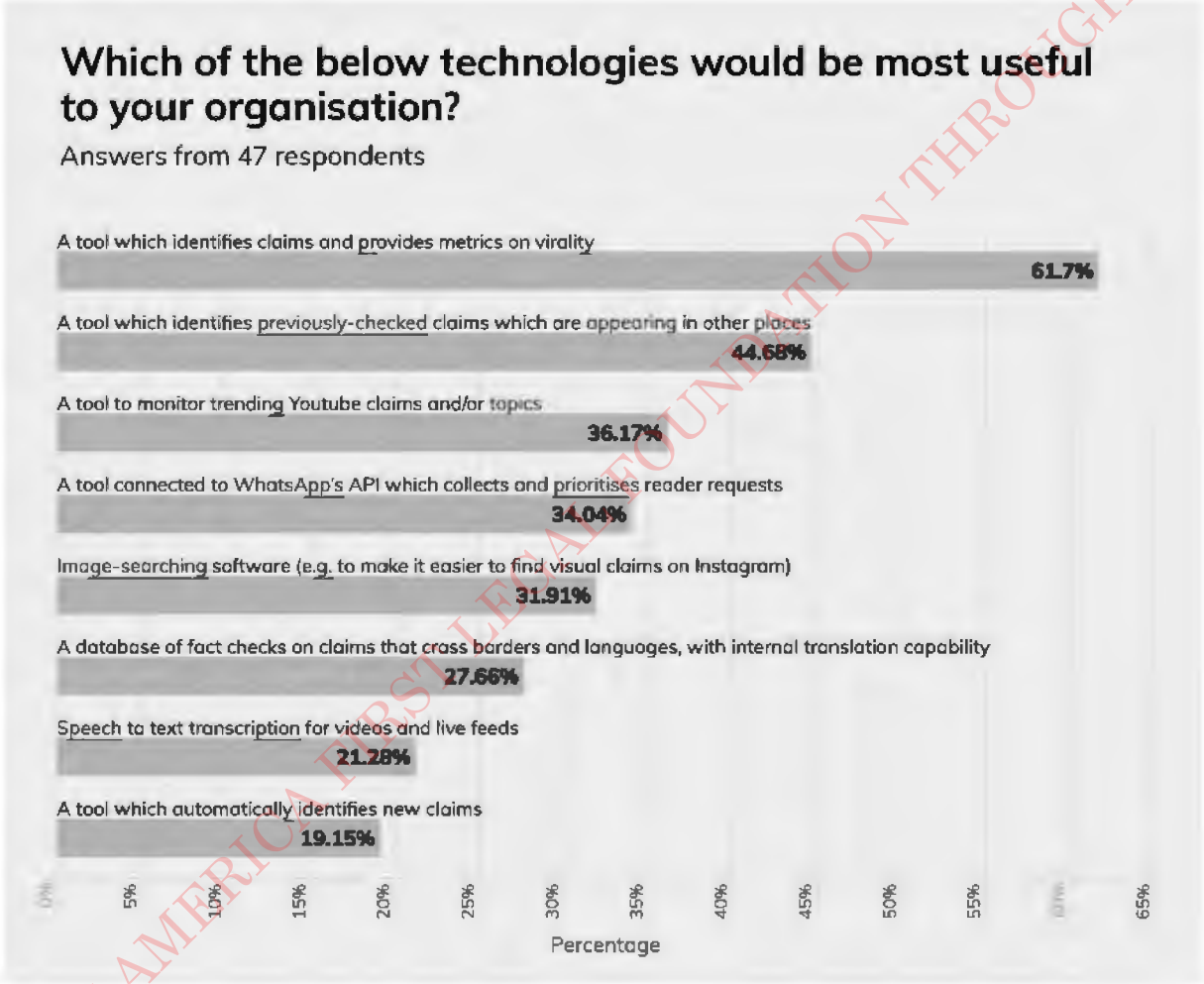
Many of these concerns echo challenges around automated fact checking identified by Lucas Graves in a 2018 paper for the Reuters Institute.**105** Graves highlighted natural-language processors' English language bias, difficulties in accessing reliable official datasets, and the need to parse messy TV and government transcripts to find checkable claims and identify speakers.

Where technology can help

Not all fact checkers have in-house web development capacity or technical expertise. This has an impact on these organisations' abilities to participate in conversations about the future of technology. These organisations would benefit from free technology consultancy and

105 reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/risj-review/factsheet-understanding-promise-and-limits-automated-fact-checking

subsidised technology support for basic tasks such as upgrading their CMS or creating and fixing simple web pages. However, advanced technology is still likely to be used by a wide variety of fact checkers. Based on interviews, we included a question in our survey about which kinds of technology would be most useful to fact checkers. The most popular proposition was a tool which identifies claims and provides virality metrics alongside them.



Based on interviews, the ideal – though perhaps unrealistic – monitoring tool would:

- Identify claims in a wide range of languages and alphabets.
- Take in data about previously-checked accounts and pages (helping to identify repeat offenders).

- Capture virality and predict the performance of a post.
- Work across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.
- Have video and image search functionality.
- Auto-generate keyword searches based on live data.
- Transcribe speech to text in a wide range of languages.
- Have detailed transparency documentation.

Beyond this, organisations' wish lists were more specific, either to their workflow or country:

- Improving natural language processing in specific languages, e.g. Arabic.
- "Editorial Checklist" WordPress plugin.
- Crowdsourcing platform for micro-research tasks (e.g. converting PDFs to raw data).
- PDF to Excel converter.
- Auto-generating parts of articles, e.g. the CMS suggests a link to frequently used dataset on the topic you are writing about, or auto-fills a sentence about the share count of the claim you're checking, based on the claim's URL.
- Software that flags whether videos are likely to have been altered.
- Instagram Stories monitoring tool.

While not every technology project need aim to benefit every fact checker, it is worth exploring whether technology could have multiple use cases beyond a single organisation or country.

The fact checkers developing technology to assist their work

In general, fact checkers seem to see automation and technology fitting better into the monitoring aspect of fact checking than research, publication and distribution. The projects mentioned below are not

exhaustive, and new initiatives may have appeared since the time of writing.

Automatic identification of claims, crowdsourcing reader tips, and search trends

Lead Stories' Trendolizer: identifying emerging viral posts and connecting the dots between known misinformers

Trendolizer monitors individual links from known sources of misinformation which are gaining popularity online. This helps fact checkers to prioritise claims by showing which stories are beginning to trend. It also lets users build a database using Google Analytics and Adsense account codes, IP addresses, domain name registrations, Mailchimp lists and sign-up forms, allowing researchers to identify websites as part of the same network. Interestingly, Trendolizer also finds duplicates of claims before they gain sufficiently high engagement to appear in Facebook's fact checking product queue, and surfaces links from Youtube which content moderators have removed from search results and recommendations, but which are still gaining traction on Facebook. Trendolizer wants to build duplicates detection for all fact checkers, add more video platforms, and redesign the dashboard. Trendolizer is a paid for tool with around twelve fact checker subscribers. At the time of writing, Trendolizer cost $350 per month.

Rappler's shark tank: monitoring which ingests accounts previously identified as spreading misinformation

After experiencing attacks by the President's supporters in 2016, Rappler began to collect data to monitor and analyse the spread of disinformation and hateful speech online. This database, known as the 'shark tank' because of the hostile language used, takes in public posts and comments made in open groups and pages. Rappler initially selected groups followed by 26 fake accounts spreading disinformation. By 2018, Rappler mapped a network of over 400 connected pages and groups.[106] Rappler uses the shark tank alongside other monitoring tools such as CrowdTangle and Trendolizer. "If something is very viral we get lots of notifications for things that aren't really fact check worthy. We use all these tools to triangulate the signals."

106 rappler.com/newsbreak/investigative/206017-attacks-against-philippine-press-duterte-second-year

Full Fact: claim detection and claim matching

In 2019 Full Fact added new functionality to its suite of tools to help identify claim-like statements that are being made in the UK Parliament, online newspapers, and some Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. It presents the claims to fact checkers alongside information to help them choose whether the claim is suitable to be fact checked.

Africa Check, who worked with Full Fact as part of a wider AI collaboration, helped to teach the tool how to recognise a claim in the South African context, said that while there is scope for improvement, the tool can correctly identify a claim, and has helped the team to find claims they otherwise would not have seen. Full Fact has since started to experiment with training the underlying AI in more languages and making a much more streamlined capability to detect claims available to other fact checkers with low technical overheads.

In 2020 Full Fact is focusing on looking for repeated sightings of claims the team has already checked. This helps the impact team, who are responsible for persuading people or organisations to make public corrections to inaccurate claims. With more information about where claims are appearing, who has made a claim and on what platform, the impact team can make better decisions about how to prioritise corrections casework. Claim matching also enables longer-term analysis such as how often are claims repeated over a period of twelve months or more, with and without Full Fact doing a fact check and corrections request, to better understand the impact of Full Fact's work.

Tech and Check Cooperative: identifying claims and disseminating fact checks via an app

The Tech and Check Cooperative, based at Duke University, is working on two projects. The first is identifying factual claims and sending a daily email update. The second is a set of 'pop-up' apps that use automation to disseminate fact checks more widely. This includes the FactStream app, which displays fact checks in one stream during live events, and is populated by fact checks from PolitiFact, the Washington Post and FactCheck.org. It also includes a fact checking app for voice-activated assistants.[107]

107 reporterslab.org/tech-and-check; apps.apple.com/us/app/factstream/id1327422405?ls=1

Chequeado's Chequeabot: identifying claims in online media outlets

Chequeado uses a bot called Chequeabot to scan media outlets around the country, identifies claims and matches them with existing fact checks. The bot gives Chequeado a text file with links that can be posted on social media.[108] Chequeado says that this automatisation has meant they can fact check more federal statements.

Aos Fatos's Radar: disinformation monitoring in real time

Aos Fatos is developing a methodology for monitoring and verifying low-quality content on social networks so that any user can follow in real time how this content is spreading on the internet, for example on websites, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.[109] The aim is to provide Aos Fatos' team with accurate diagnoses about coordinated campaigns and misleading content on social networks. For example, Aos Fatos used Radar to identify the spread of misinformation about coffins being buried empty to inflate Covid-19 death statistics.[110]

RMIT ABC Fact Check: identifying bushfires misinformation on Twitter

RMIT ABC Fact Check from Australia told us they decided not to join the Facebook programme because they felt that there would be a conflict of interest in also reporting on Facebook. RMIT is developing a pilot project to identify misinformation on Twitter, initially focusing on misinformation about Australia's bushfires. RMIT is trialling different text mining techniques to understand how different keywords are related to certain topics, with the aim of identifying who is pushing certain inaccurate narratives (for example that bushfires are the result of arson). At the time of the interview, RMIT was broadening its scope to coronavirus.

108 poynter.org/fact-checking/2018/in-argentina-fact-checkers%C2%92-latest-hire-is-a-bot

109 aosfatos.org/noticias/com-apoio-do-google-aos-fatos-vai-desenvolver-monitor-de-desinformacao

110 aosfatos.org/noticias/como-desinformacao-sobre-caixoes-vazios-impulsionou-desmentidos-em-massa-contra-carla-zambelli-no-twitter/

Teyit's crowd-powered website: educating users as they participate in monitoring and research

Teyit is making a new website where people can add claims to the website, as well as evidence to support a fact check. "Internally, we spend a lot of time improving our software to decrease work time. Misinformation spreads faster than the truth, so we have to be really quick." Users can send messages, open cases and add evidence, for example uploading PDFs. The platform can automatically archive links. Teyit's staff can see reports and who shared the information. Teyit sees the tool as a mirror for its website: "people can see what our writers are working on."

The tool also has an educational aspect. Users get points when they complete training and educational materials. After that they can open claims and rate evidence. Teyit sees it as vital to combine technology with people: "Just using technology didn't help us. Tech is meaningful when you use people – it's important to change people with technology."

Africa Check's WhatsApp chat bot: crowdsourcing WhatsApp misinformation via reader requests

Africa Check is working with technology non-profit Meedan to create a personalised WhatsApp messaging service. Users can forward information they want checked to a chatbot. Africa Check researches the claim and then sends it back with a link to evidence and basic information about where the claim originated and where it was published.

First Draft's coronavirus search trends: briefings on trending coronavirus searches

First Draft provided a weekly briefing on online signals about coronavirus, based on: a Google Trends coronavirus dashboard showing the most popular topics that people have searched; a questions hub where users can flag questions they haven't been able to find the content they are searching for; and social media monitoring of posts shared on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Reddit, or via closed messaging apps.

Technology to help fact checkers with research

Forensia: authenticity scores for audio files

Forensia is a paid-for app developed by Argentina's National Council of Scientific and Technical Research which helps fact checkers verify the authenticity of audio files that supposedly contain clips of politicians speaking. Fact checkers can send in an audio clip to Forensia, which is compared against files that carry the real voice of the politician. The clip is then verified against a database of voices and sounds from people who were born in or live in the region where the politician is from. Fact checkers receive a probability score back, which Forensia says should be used in combination with other types of evidence.[111]

Maldita.es: superpowered community of experts to advise and contribute to research

Maldita.es has built a database of more than 1,900 supporters with different skill sets, such as scientists or doctors. Maldita.es uses a customer relationship management tool to work with these volunteers, as well as to manage reader tips, subscriptions and donations. The database is developed continuously, for example by adding tags to help reporters find experts. While there are drawbacks to this system – such as difficulties in cross-referencing what volunteers say and vetting credibility – it has helped Maldita.es contextualise a wide range of claims ranging from health and organ trafficking to bear attacks and protests.[112]

Full Fact's robochecking prototype

Full Fact has a robochecking prototype, which checks simple numerical claims for which public data exists online in a machine readable format. Full Fact has been working with the UK's national statistics office for several years to make statistics machine readable,[113] although there are still open questions about getting machines to understand claims in

111 poynter.org/fact-checking/2019/meet-forensia-a-software-ready-to-debunk-fake-whatsapp-audio-files

112 poynter.org/fact-checking/2019/is-it-a-marvel-film-or-a-fact-checking-newsroom-how-maldita-es-uses-its-readers-superpowers

113 fullfact.org/blog/2015/aug/typology-caveats; fullfact.org/blog/2015/jul/statistics-are-not-just-numbers-they-require-context-be-useful

context. The prototype for this tool works in a small fraction of cases but does yet work well on a wide variety of claims and data.

Technology to help fact checkers publish and distribute their work

Aos Fatos' Fátima: replying to users in Facebook Messenger, and challenging sharing of false information on Twitter

Aos Fatos also runs a bot on Twitter and Messenger, part of its Fátima AI project. On Twitter, the Fátima web app monitors tweets with links to false information and responds with a link to a fact check. On Messenger, Fátima is a chatbot which gives users specific tips on how to debunk fake photos, videos and statements.

Coronavirus alliance: searchable global database of coronavirus fact checks

The International Fact-Checking Network coordinated a global group of more than 100 fact checking organisations to work together to tackle misinformation related to the coronavirus pandemic. The International Fact-Checking Network created a sortable and searchable database, which is regularly updated and produces written weekly reports on trends, published on one central hub.[114]

114 poynter.org/coronavirusfactsalliance

Conclusion

Harm from false information is not limited to any single platform, or even to the internet: misinformation can also be disseminated by politicians and news media, by word of mouth, in advertisements, and on printed materials handed out or delivered to people's homes.

Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme is an important intervention, and the most effective response from any internet company so far. Facebook's effort to work globally – with 70 fact checkers in at least 50 languages – is also an important commitment. The Third-Party Fact-Checking programme has encountered all the challenges that might be expected, such as technological and communication issues, and there remains room for improvement.

Internet companies should work together to coordinate their efforts to tackle misinformation across online platforms. Other internet companies should follow Facebook's lead in working with fact checkers through a structured, paid programme, and learn from the experiences of Third-Party Fact-Checking.

Fact checkers should also develop a collective process to engage with and contribute to internet companies' responses to the evolving challenges of online misinformation, to protect the long term sustainability and independence of fact checking.

Summary of challenges

Monitoring

- Volume and relevance
- Overemphasis on virality from social listening tools
- Inundation with audience requests
- No monitoring tool for YouTube
- Image and video searching

Research

- Repetitive claims and time consuming or repetitive tasks
- Accessibility of information and transparency of authorities
- Training editorial staff
- Difficulty of finding a source for claims originating from closed platforms

Publication and distribution

- Setting up new social media channels
- Sustaining media partnerships
- Presenting fact checks with limited space and design resources
- Internet shutdowns
- Online harassment

Working with internet companies

- Financial dependency on internet company funding
- Transparency: both in terms of the full scope and nature of internet companies' responses to online misinformation, and of detailed impact metrics for partnerships with fact checkers or products powered by fact checks
- The need for more investment by more internet companies in partnerships and engagement with fact checkers
- Testing and feedback
- Variation in fact check data requirements of different internet companies products

Appendix

All recommendations

Recommendations for internet companies

These are overarching recommendations to Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Google, Twitter and platforms coming into the mainstream such as TikTok. Some companies already have some of these measures in place, and we recommend this be maintained.

- Allow users to report suspected misinformation, aggregate reports data, and share it in anonymised formats and in real-time with fact checkers in relevant countries.
- Share live data with fact checkers on potential misinformation surfaced by AI, as opposed to user reports.
- Work with fact checkers globally to label misinformation and feed this data to AIs.
- Internet companies' misinformation teams should coordinate so that fact checkers send the same data into every company's system rather than adapting for each company or platform.
- Pay fact checkers for work which is used to improve the quality and trustworthiness of internet companies' products and brands.
- Show more awareness of the risks of a US-centric approach to the development of misinformation policies and products by expanding product testing and consultation to include a wider range of fact-checking organisations.
- Fund the International Fact-Checking Network to enact the recommendations in this report which are intended to counteract the pressures fact checkers experience when working with internet companies.
- Participate in a discussion on how to better protect fact checkers from harassment and coordinated attacks.
- Label inaccurate and misleading political speech and provide links to fact checks.

Facebook

Facebook's efforts to reduce misinformation on its platform should be commended. Leaving aside its shortcomings and development hurdles, Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking programme has undeniably improved the state of misinformation online in multiple ways.

However, there are still important improvements to make. In addition to recommendations (4), (6), (7), (8) and (9) above, we recommend that Facebook act upon the following recommendations to more effectively tackle misinformation and coordinated activity on its platform, support the sustainability of the fact checking industry and improve the day-to-day operations of fact checking partners.

Third-Party Fact-Checking programme: future and sustainability

- Maintain the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme and expand into under-served regions such as the Middle East and North Africa.
- Share a road map for the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme with partners so that they can plan and invest in sustainability in the long term.
- Work with partners and coordinate with funders globally to develop a long-term plan to mitigate financial reliance on Facebook.

Third-Party Fact-Checking programme: Fact Checking Product

- Increase developer capacity to more quickly and reliably resolve issues which affect the quality and accuracy of fact checking produced by Third-Party Fact-Checking partners.
- Share information about how fact checker feedback is being dealt with, for example how it has been prioritised, who has and hasn't heard it, and why it will or won't be acted upon.
- Collaborate with fact checkers to integrate claim detection into the queue.

- Consult with partners to prioritise natural language processing in certain languages: our research suggests that Indian and African local languages are under-served.

Transparency

Fact checkers have been asking for Facebook to share information with partners about the impact of the Third-Party Fact-Checking Programme for several years. Here, we recommend that the following information is shared with partners, and give reasons why.

- **Quarterly data about the impact of individual partner organisations** would help fact checkers to prove impact to potential funders and supporters, and allocate staff time effectively between Facebook work and other potentially impactful work such as training mainstream media journalists.

  Example: Full Fact's 140 fact checks and 400 claim matches led to 2,500 further automatic claim matches. 50,000 users chose not to share; 70,000 users continued to share despite warnings.

- **Anonymised data about the impact of individual fact checks** would help fact checkers start to understand more about the effectiveness of headlines, images, summaries, and to learn from long term patterns.

  Example: After you applied your fact check "There's no evidence immigrants caused a PPE shipment to be destroyed at Dover" to 3 claims, a further 20 matches were automatically found. 500 'false' labels were shown to users and 30% of these continued to share. 800 existing sharers were notified and 55% deleted their post.

- **Information about how ClaimReview is used by Facebook** would help fact checkers visualise the application of their work and tailor the way they fill in different fields more effectively.

- **Information about how Facebook's AI learns from ratings and claim matching data** would make fact checkers aware of the risks and unintended consequences of the ratings chosen and claims identified as matches.

- **Information about the AI models being used to generate different parts of the queue** would allow fact checkers to focus

on specific signals and disregard those that they do not consider useful within their organisation.

- **Key findings from internal user research** would give much-needed audience information to fact checkers who want to present their fact checks more effectively on different channels.

  Example: Information consumption trends in different markets, how users parse visual information in different countries

Working with partners

- Continue to foster a close-knit community by hosting events for partners.
- Consult with fact checkers about product changes and policies that will affect their work in advance, especially when there is a high likelihood of media attention.
- Provide preparation and detailed information about the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme to Facebook staff who are speaking publicly about it.
- Conduct or commission regular research (e.g. focus groups) with partner fact checkers to stay abreast of and respond to their needs and concerns.
- Hold a discussion about how to rate claims about fact checking organisations, which the fact checker in question cannot rate themselves due to conflict of interest.
- Hold a discussion about how to tackle deliberate sharing of content across multiple private groups, whilst balancing the need to maintain privacy.

Communication about the Third-Party Fact-Checking programme

There is an information gap on Facebook's Third-Party Fact-Checking web page. Fact checkers are frequently asked to provide information about the scheme, and do not always have answers. Some improvements have been made since we conducted interviews for this report, including giving information about which actions Facebook is responsible for and which are the responsibility of fact checkers, but we still recommend:

- Add a Facebook representative's contact details to the Third-Party Fact-Checking page.
- Raise awareness among users of how to report suspected false information and what happens after a report is submitted.

Supporting research and dissemination of fact checks

- Improve internal search on Instagram and Facebook.
- Reinstate Graph Search for public interest journalism.
- Continue to provide in-kind support via ad credits.
- Highlight fact checks and fact-checking organisations in Instagram explore and search results on all platforms.
- Create a "factcheck" hashtag for Instagram which can only be used by verified International Fact-Checking Network Code signatories.

CrowdTangle

- Collaborate with fact checkers to integrate claim detection into CrowdTangle.
- Continue to provide access and training, including to fact checkers which are not signatories of the International Fact-Checking Network Code of Principles.
- Continue to develop new lists for predictable or breaking news events such as healthcare crises, attacks and elections.
- Develop image-search capability.
- Introduce alerts for hashtags.
- Review CrowdTangle's effectiveness in different languages and special characters.
- Develop useful and accurate YouTube monitoring capability.
- Work with Twitter to return Twitter results to the tool.

WhatsApp

- Continue to open API to enable fact checkers to connect customer management software to support communications, and to analyse and prioritise reader requests.
- Work with fact checkers to reduce the manual labour required to set up the infrastructure to send out broadcasts in the small business app.
- Develop metrics to help publishers track engagement (e.g. number of forwards).

Google and YouTube

Google and YouTube have shown increased willingness to engage with fact checkers. They can make the most of this increased credibility by investing in more engagement and outreach and by developing a paid, structured fact checking programme for YouTube.

In addition to the general recommendations for internet companies above, we recommend that Google and YouTube enact the following recommendations to more effectively tackle misinformation on its platforms, support the sustainability of fact checking and improve fact checkers' day-to-day work.

Working with fact checkers

- Expand the Information Credibility team to enable more consultation and outreach to build deeper two-way relationships with fact checkers.
- Introduce a collaboratively-developed, structured, paid programme partnering with fact checkers to identify, label and reduce circulation of misinformation on YouTube, and notify users who have watched or shared misinformation.
- Develop a CrowdTangle-style tool for monitoring viral misinformation on YouTube, and provide access and training to verified fact checkers.
- Continue to support takeup of ClaimReview schema and Media Review schema, including hosting events, training, and building

technical capacity and confidence among fact checkers with fewer technical resources.

- Continue supporting independent fact checking with direct grants and/or grants to the International Fact-Checking Network.

Supporting research and dissemination of fact checks

- Continue to provide ad credits, G-suite access and cloud storage.
- Use ClaimReview as the default data source for products, such as Snippets.
- Regular country-specific briefings for fact checkers about the most-searched and most-watched topics on Search and YouTube, including the top channels and videos reported as misleading.
- Build on Google Dataset Search by funding partnerships with fact checkers to identify the best data for the most-searched topics in each country, and by promoting Dataset Search among public interest media and civil society organisations globally.
- Provide training for fact checkers on SEO, YouTube content creation and Adwords.
- Disallow external embedding of links to videos removed from youtube.com.
- Flag when text is translated from information already debunked in another language.
- Review quality and accuracy of Translate, especially in Farsi.

Transparency and feedback

- Provide a quarterly summary of the impact of ClaimReview on Google's platforms (e.g. 15 million claims within YouTube content were identified using ClaimReview schema about 5G and removed in Q1 of 2020).
- Provide full information about what surfaces fact checks are appearing on, how many people are seeing and engaging with these (at country level), and which search queries are causing fact checks to be surfaced.

- Make public detailed criteria Google is using to decide which fact checkers are being treated as trustworthy sources in Search.

Twitter

- Invest in a partnerships team to develop partnerships with fact checkers.
- Introduce a collaboratively-developed, structured, paid programme partnering with fact checkers to identify, label and reduce circulation of misinformation on Twitter, and to notify users who have seen or shared misinformation.
- Support independent fact checking with direct grants and/or grants to the International Fact-Checking Network.
- Provide links to independent, verified fact checkers and fact checks in 'Get the facts' Moments.
- Significantly improve transparency about how fact checkers' work is being used to tackle misinformation on Twitter.

International Fact-Checking Network

- Facilitate and lead discussions on how fact checkers wish to relate to internet companies and others wishing to use our work online, and surface common positions among fact checkers on this.
- Seek feedback from the community about where to host a social entry point for ClaimReview to ensure a wider variety of voices can contribute, that changes are understood by fact checkers with fewer technical resources, and that implementation issues are resolved.
- Collaborate with Google, Bing, Facebook, etc to provide clarity on questions fact checkers have about ClaimReview including: the internal translation capability of platforms' products; products' ability to cope with regional languages; how adding ClaimReview interacts with algorithms e.g. interaction with search results ranking; why ClaimReview works intermittently in Google search; how Facebook is using ClaimReview to do claim matching.

- Provide grants and develop guidance to support fact checkers who want to carry out audience research.
- Hold a discussion with verified and unverified fact checkers to revisit the International Fact-Checking Network's position on signatories using pseudonyms in countries where journalists are at risk.
- Continue to provide grants for experimental projects to help fact checkers reach new audiences and for technical innovation.
- Continue to lead discussions on building solidarity and resources for fact checkers experiencing online and political harassment, including legal challenges.

Funders

- Support projects to improve accessibility and presentation of public and ministerial data (e.g. work with a government to overhaul its national statistics portal or open up public datasets).
- Support the International Fact-Checking Network in activities recommended in this report, such as support for online harassment, innovation and sustainability efforts.
- Support research into effective presentation of fact checks, information and news consumption and belief formation in diverse markets – especially those outside the USA – with an emphasis on practical recommendations.

Technologists

- Build relationships with fact checkers by offering basic technical support before embarking on complex automation projects.
- Steer clear of the phrase "automated fact checking" to avoid alienating potential users of automation technology: instead focus on discussing what repetitive tasks can be done reliably by machines.
- Prioritise building tools and technology with a large potential user base, including

- Social listening tools that combine virality with claim identification
- Claim spotting and matching
- YouTube monitoring tool
- Improving natural language processing in smaller languages
- Searchable image and video misinformation database
- Database for fact checks of claims that go across borders, with internal translation capability
- Speech-to-text transcription for YouTube content that can be connected with claim spotting tools

- Foster a culture of mutual benefit by partnering with multiple fact checkers and seeking commitments from more than one partner to test new tools.
- Continue to develop technology to help fact checkers, especially: improving natural language processing in smaller languages, technology tackling distribution challenges and repetitious claims.

Fact checkers

- Develop a collective process to engage with and contribute to internet companies' responses to the evolving challenges of online misinformation, to protect the long-term sustainability and independence of fact checking.
- Prioritise sustainability planning, including mitigating the impact of a sudden reduction in funding from certain sectors.
- Identify the impacts of Third-Party Fact-Checking on editorial output and strategy.
- Continue to develop technology to assist with fact checking, especially technology tackling distribution challenges and repetitious claims.
- When experiencing online and/or political harassment, reach out to the International Fact-Checking Network and global colleagues with requests for support.

- Continue to ask for help and assist colleagues around the globe with local research favours and advice.

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2 Carlton Gardens
London
SW1Y 5AA

fullfact.org/contact

@FullFact

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From: "Nakashima, Ellen" (b)(6) @washpost.com>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Trying to reach you re GEC
Date: Fri, 16 Oct 2020 14:40:54 +0000

Hi, (b)(6)
I'm a reporter with The Washington Post. Just left a message on your cell phone. I'm trying to reach you about what I hear are some upcoming releases by the GEC. Can you be in touch? I'm at (b)(6)
Many thanks,
Ellen

Ellen Nakashima
National Security reporter
The Washington Post
(b)(6) (work)
https://www.washingtonpost.com/people/ellen-nakashima/

Sender: "Nakashima, Ellen" (b)(6) @washpost.com>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
(b)(6) @state.gov>;
CC: (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Fact Checking in Cairo
Date: Wed, 14 Sep 2022 17:19:45 -0400

Hi (b)(6),

It was great speaking with you all yesterday.

Here are the links we had discussed:

- Fatabyyano: The Jordanian fact-checking outlet
- ARIJ: Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism and their annual conference
- MediaWise: Poynter's media literacy program

Looking forward to continuing our discussions and hopefully getting some programming started in Egypt and the region more broadly.

Best,
Alanna

On Thu, Sep 1, 2022 at 2:05 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:

No problem!

From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Sent: Thursday, September 1, 2022 12:26 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Fact Checking in Cairo

Tuesday the 13th at 9 a.m. is fine with me, as long as we are able to keep it to an hour (which I'm sure we can). (b)(6)

Best,

Alanna

On Wed, Aug 31, 2022 at 2:02 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:

Ah, you're right, apologies. I'll be out of town the latter half of next week, so would 9 am EST on Tuesday the 13th work?

Thanks!

From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Sent: Tuesday, August 30, 2022 5:31 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Fact Checking in Cairo

I just realized that is a US federal holiday, so reflectively, probably not great for anyone. Maybe Tuesday?

On Tue, Aug 30, 2022 at 11:30 AM Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org> wrote:

Good on my end!

On Tue, Aug 30, 2022 at 3:36 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Alanna! I've also been traveling, sorry for delayed response. How about Monday September 5th at 9 am EST? Would that work for everyone for a quick call?

From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Sent: Tuesday, August 23, 2022 9:34 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Fact Checking in Cairo

Hello!

Sorry for the delay in response; I was traveling in India for work (and then pleasure) and my email got backed up.

I would love to connect with you; North Africa is an area that doesn't have a ton of fact-checkers. We've done some training in Libya and Tunisia and would love to continue to expand.

My Calendly provides my availability. Hopefully there is a time that overlaps, given the time difference.

Looking forward to meeting with you.

Best,

Alanna

On Sun, Aug 14, 2022 at 9:23 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:

Alaana,

Greetings from Cairo! I work for the Embassy here, focusing on Chinese activities in the Middle East.

As part of my work, I'm partnering with our Public Affairs Section to look at opportunities to counter Russian and Chinese disinformation in the Egyptian media. We have recently been talking about the potential to fund a grant to teach fact-checking to several news outlets here. Journalists have requested this type of training, and how they can learn about tools and online functions to help them fact-check their work.

My colleagues in Washington mentioned that you recently helped with a proposal to do similar work in Tunisia. I was wondering if you might be interested in talking with us about this for Egypt, or if your organization would not be able to work on this type of proposal for Egypt, if you have ideas of others who might be available.

Thank you so much for your time,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)
Regional China Officer – Egypt, Iraq, Levant
U.S. Embassy Cairo
Office: (b)(6)
Mobile:

(Please note Cairo's workweek is Sunday-Thursday)

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Alanna Dvorak

International Training Manager/IFCN

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Sender: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Recipient: (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>; (b)(6) @state.gov>

From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
To: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
CC: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Reconnecting: State/Poynter
Date: Fri, 8 Jul 2022 14:54:08 +0000

Alanna - looks like 2PM will work for all of us next Friday. I'll send around a calendar invite with dial-in information that we can use.
Looking forward to it,
(b)(6)
From: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, July 6, 2022 4:16 PM
To: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Reconnecting: State/Poynter

Alanna - great to reconnect with you. Let me convene with (b)(6) and we will iron out some times for later this month. It'll be a pleasure to brainstorm with you.
Best,
(b)(6)
From: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>
Sent: Tuesday, July 5, 2022 10:29 PM
To: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) @state.gov>
Subject: Re: Reconnecting: State/Poynter

Hi (b)(6)
After a whirlwind two weeks that included our GlobalFact 9 Conference, in which we welcomed 500 fact-checkers, and some personal time trekking around Scandinavia, I am back in the office and getting caught up.
I would love to touch base with both of you. To save from the usual going back and forth on our availability, I can just throw my Calendly out here, which has my schedule. Looking forward to speaking with you all!
Best,
Alanna

On Fri, Jun 17, 2022 at 9:27 AM (b)(6) @state.gov> wrote:
Hi Alanna,
Thank you for an excellent panel presentation at yesterday's IAF event! Just sending a quick note so that you have my contact information again. It would be great to set up something later in July between myself and (b)(6) (from State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Press and Public Diplomacy) to get a better sense of your footprint in the MENA region.
Separately, I also recommended to (b)(6) that he encourage the U.S. Embassy in Tunis to apply against the internal small grant funding opportunity that I spoke about yesterday. You mentioned that post did not have funding to continue supporting local Tunisian partners - this is at least a potential option for

them. That application window closes next Friday at midnight - no action needed from your side since post will need to be the one to submit the proposal.
Thanks,

(b)(6)
Foreign Affairs Officer
Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State
(b)(6) @state.gov

--
Alanna Dvorak
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Sender: (b)(6) @state.gov>

Recipient: Alanna Dvorak (b)(6) @poynter.org>;
(b)(6) @state.gov>