

Tech Platform Governance

Navigating the Future of digital (non)Regulation

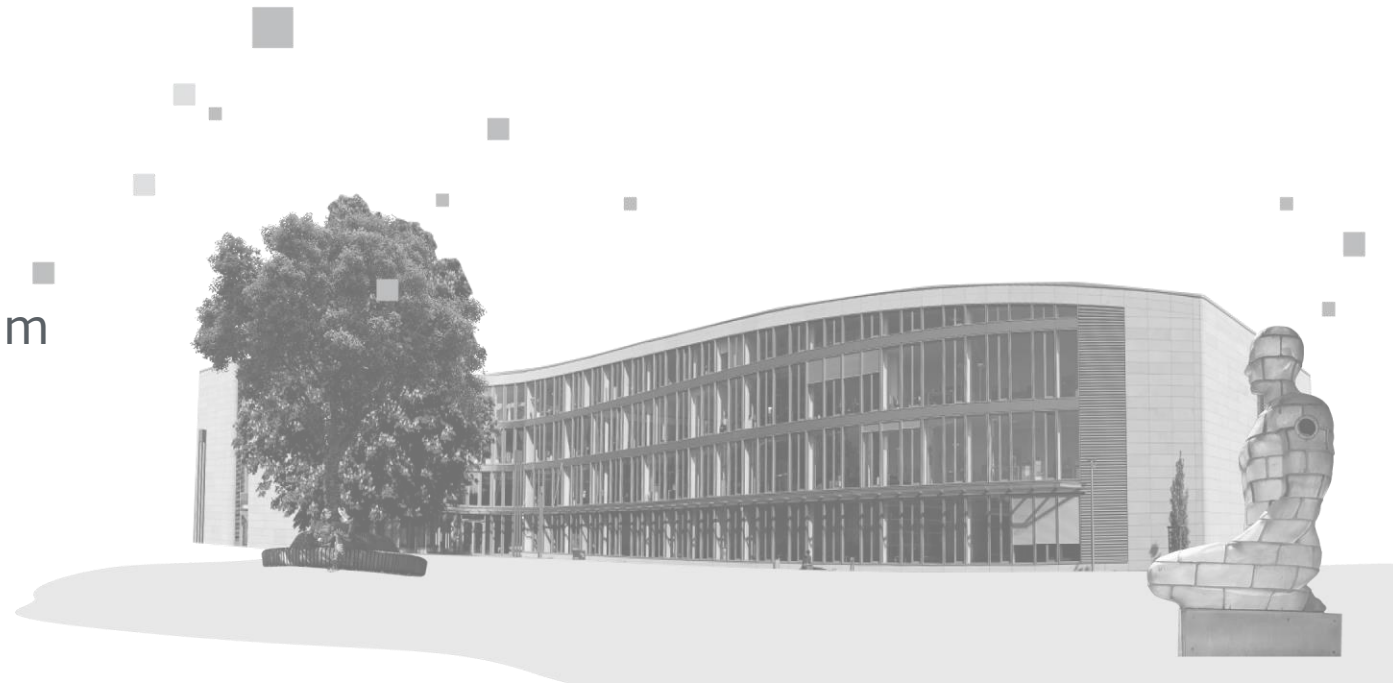
Ewan Thomas-Colquhoun

PhD Student and Researcher

Hasso Plattner Institute @Universität Potsdam

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Create Knowledge.**

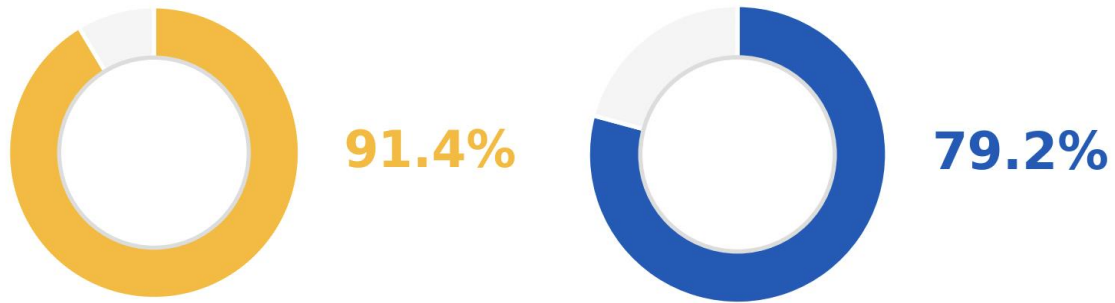
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1 How people use social media: Germany and Ukraine



- **High and Increasing Internet Usage:** Germany has over 90% reported internet usage among individuals, with Ukraine also above the European average at just below 80%.



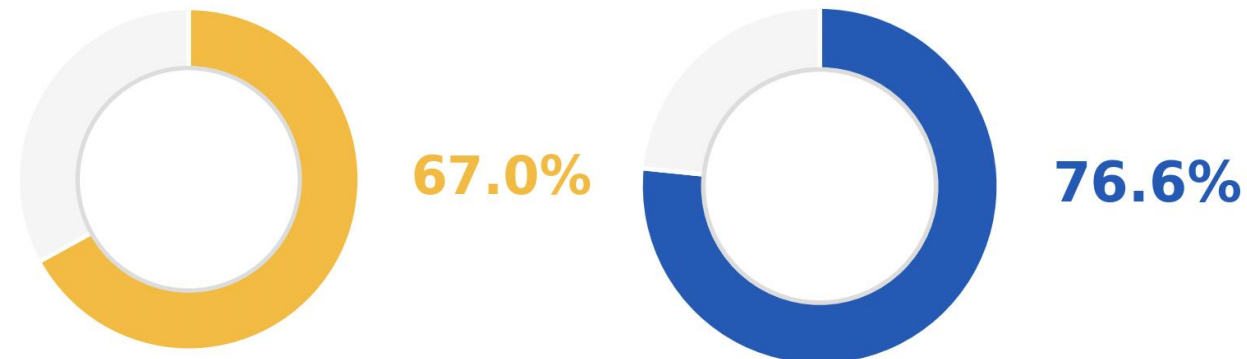
- **Around Half of Population Actively Use Social Media*:** Germany has 51% of social media usage, with Ukraine slightly higher at 63%.



- **Younger People More Likely to Use Social Media:** 79% of 18-39 year-olds use social media in Germany compared to 36% of those over 40. In Ukraine 92% under 40 compared to 66% in the over 40s.

- **Internet and Social Media Replace Television as Most Popular News Source:**

Source: Germany and Ukraine have both seen TV replaced as the most popular news source, with 60% in Germany reporting TV as a news source and 66.7% in Ukraine. In Germany, online sources, including social media, has become the most important source, at 67%, with 76.6% favouring social media in Ukraine.



- **Shift in Most Popular SM Platforms for Online News:** Both Ukraine and Germany have seen a shift towards video content as popular content forms for news online, with YouTube being used for news by 21% of Germans and 61.2% of Ukrainians, for whom Telegram remains the most important 65.7.

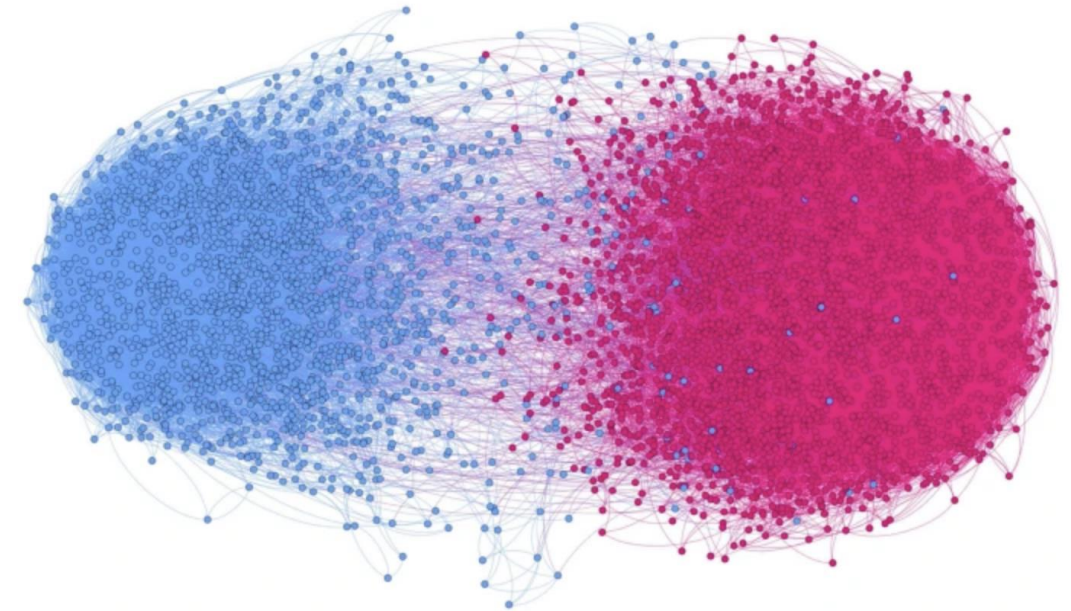
Sources: Germany – Hölig – Reuters Institute, University of Oxford (2024), Ukraine - Oporaua.org (2022)

1 How people use social media (cont.): Polarisation and Echo Chambers

- Only **3-6% of time online** is spent engaging with news media (according to tracking data).
- **22% Casual/Passive Users** do not actively seek out any news or political content online.
- **55% Daily Briefers** access news daily, typically using one to two larger authoritative sources.
- **22% News Interested** users access multiple and diverse news sources daily.
- **Online discourse is shaped by a minority**, a self-selective small proportion of users engage in online political debate, meaning comments are typically unrepresentative of wider debate
- **3-6% are in Echo Chambers** accessing only polarised content and information sources highly active users contributing disproportionately to online debate.

Source: Ross Arguedas (2022). (Meta Study - data largely from US and UK)

Fig. 1

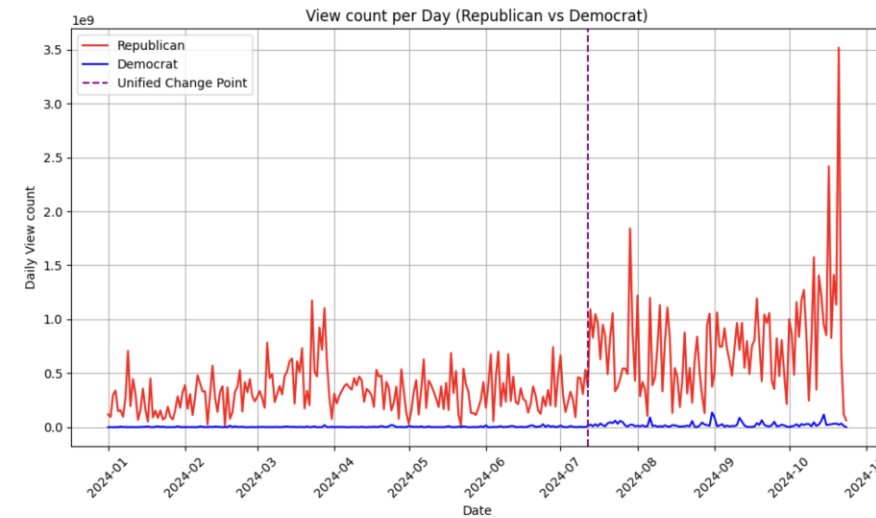


Example of a polarized and segregated network on Twitter. The network visualizes retweets of political hashtags from the 2010 US midterm elections. The nodes represent Twitter users and there is a directed edge from node i to node j if user j retweeted user i . Colors represent political preference: red for conservatives and blue for progressives [20]. For illustration purposes, only the nodes in the $k = 3$ core are visualized. See Methods for more details

Sasahara et al. (2021).

2 What this does to politics: (Non)Regulation, Algorithms & Political Processes

- Digital attention economy based on advertising revenue incentivises algorithms that maximise user time on platform.
- Divisive and emotional content drives engagement with platforms and is algorithmically promoted.
- Affective polarisation, directed towards perceived opponents, increases, while individualised content leads to more divergent views.
- Self-selection by a minority of highly partisan users (6-8%) can lead to echo chambers amplifying hate, extremism and leading to violence.
- Algorithmic manipulation and opaque recommender systems can be used to politicise the output content of platforms.
- Insufficient account validation requirements can lead to an excess of automated (bot) and comp. propaganda accounts (trolls).



Source: Graham and Andrejevic (2024)



Source: O'Carroll (2025)

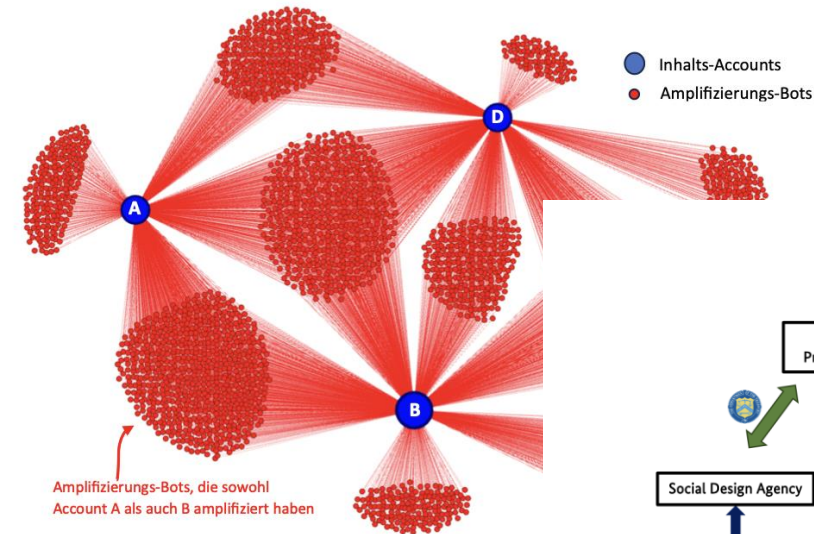
2 What this does to politics (cont.): Computational Propaganda

- Russia actively uses computational propaganda to attempt to alter user perceptions of Ukraine and reduce German support:

Computational propaganda is the use of algorithms, automation, and human curation to purposefully distribute misleading information over social media networks. (Woolley and Howard, 2017)

- Manipulate an emotive response from users and curate the perception of Germany as a country in decline to **question financial support**.
- Drive fear of an escalation of the conflict onto German territory as a means to **question military support**.
- Using doppelgänger accounts and stolen source code from media outlets to appear trustworthy.
- Using networks of bots and trolls to amplify this narrative in the algorithm.

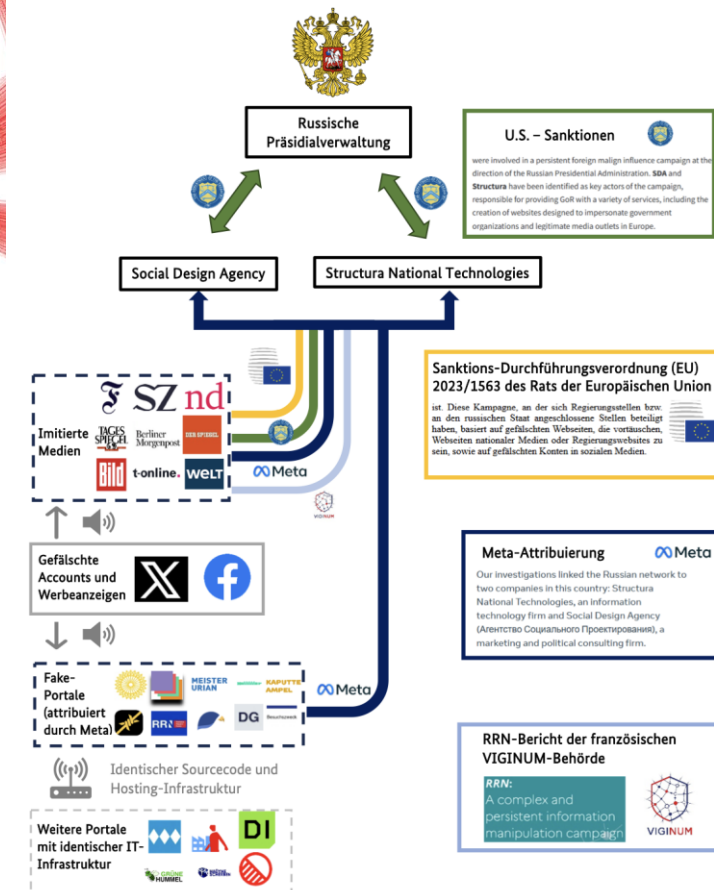
Exemplarischer Ausschnitt des Amplifikations-Netzwerks (4 Inhalts-Accounts + Amplifikatoren)



Above: Example cross-section of an amplification network, with content producing accounts in blue and amplification accounts in red.

Right: Network for the production of computational propaganda in Russia and corresponding sanctions.

Source: Auswärtiges Amt (2024)

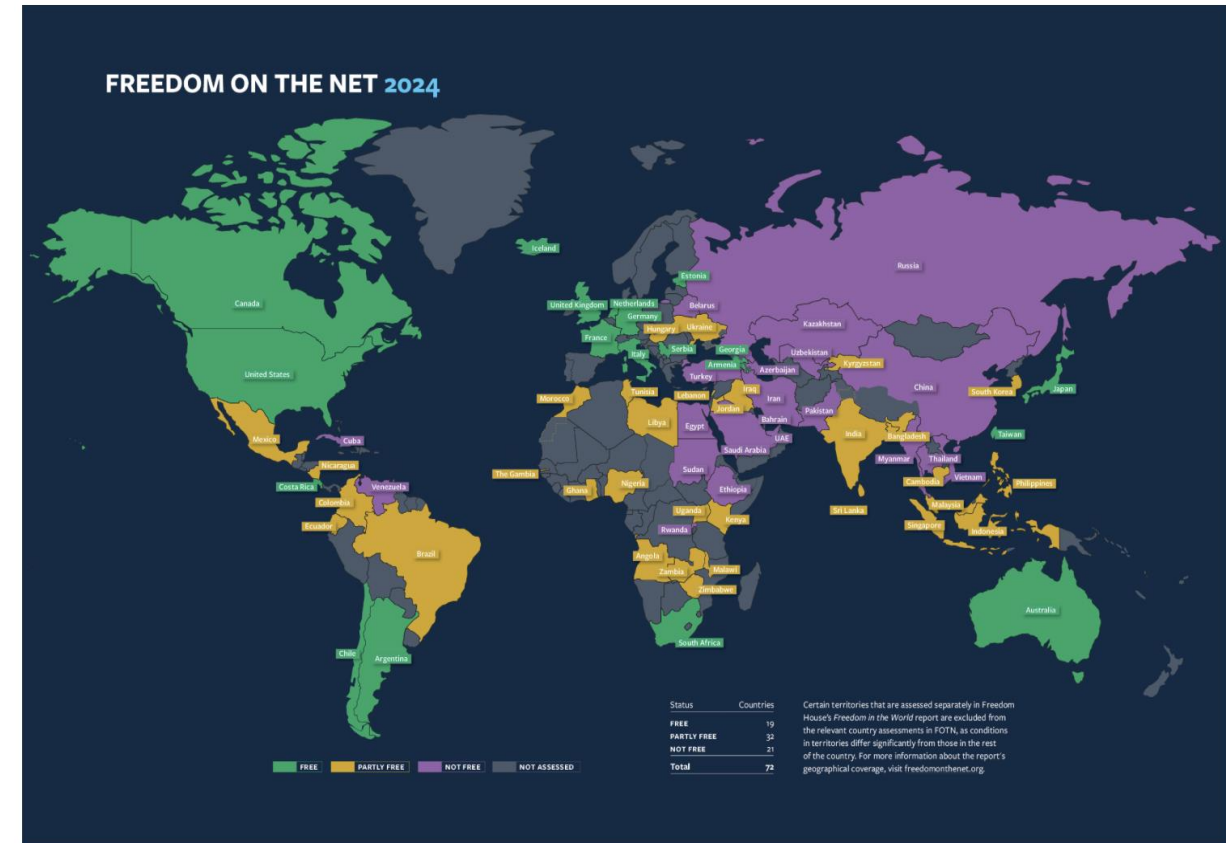


3 What effects regulation has: Governance Norms

- Multistakeholder governance from the Tunis Agenda of the World Summit on the Information Society (2005):

§34. A working definition of Internet governance is the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet.
- Sovereignty as a guiding principle behind a recent growth in state influence within internet governance, as within United Nations Convention against Cybercrime (2024):

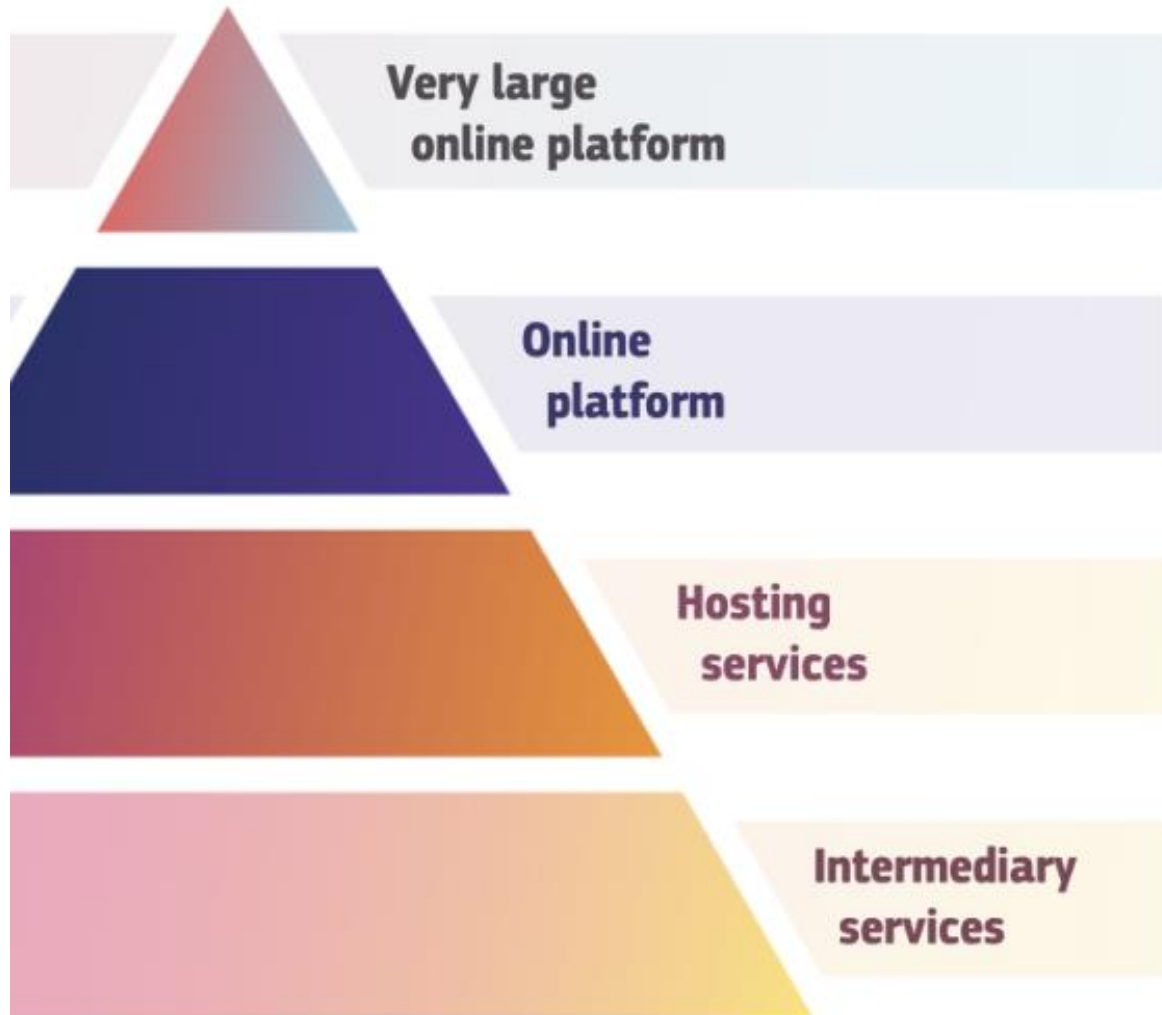
Art. 5 §1. States Parties shall carry out their obligations under this Convention in a manner consistent with the principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States and that of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other States.
- “Turn to infrastructure” and a trend towards increasing controls on the internet globally.



Freedom on the Net Report – Freedom House (2024)

Sources: Ververis, Marguel and Fabian (2020), Musiani et al. (2016)

3 What effects regulation has (cont.): (2) European Union Digital Services and Artificial Intelligence Acts



- EU DSA goals:
 - prevent illegal and harmful activities online and the spread of disinformation [...] ensures user safety, protects fundamental rights, and creates a fair and open online platform environment.*
- Very Large Online Platforms requirements:
 - Systemic Risk Assessment and Mitigation (EU DSA Art. 34-35)
 - Transparency of Recommender Systems (EU DSA Art. 27)
 - Advertising transparency (EU DSA Art. 26)
 - Notice-and-action mechanism (EU DSA Art. 16 & 22)
 - Data access for researchers (EU DSA Art. 40)
 - Transparency for AI system use (AI Act Art. 52)
 - AI Watermarking (AI Act Art. 50)
- Current criticism of DSA and AI acts:
 - Response time
 - Platforms 'checking their own homework'
 - Politicisation of intervention
 - Does nothing to change underlying business model

4 What can we do in our approach to digital media, to support its use for improving democratic processes?

1 **The truth should trend:** engage with content that supports democratic values, push quality journalism into the algorithm.

2 **Don't feed the trolls:** a significant proportion of emotive content comes from bots, don't engage.

3 **Verify what you see:** Search for multiple sources on a single point, ask yourself who benefits from me sharing this.

4 **Don't give space to hate:** Report hate speech, platforms have a requirement to respond.

5 **Talk generously with those around you:** Engage with friends and family, focusing on shared values, to act as a counter to polarisation.



Source: de la Paz, E., Ranger, J., Gómez-Cruces, J. S., Jan, U, and Thomas-Colquhoun, E. (2025). Path to Power: 2024 – Democracy Disrupted?. (2025.1) Hasso Plattner Institute.

Thank you!



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*** unless otherwise stated all other used sources and data can be found in the individual reports at: <https://pathtopower.global/path-to-power-2024-democracy-disrupted/>