

**Question for written answer E-002826/2024**

**to the Commission**

Rule 144

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**Subject:** The spread of disinformation by recommender systems and other automated mechanisms as a systemic risk under the Digital Services Act

Following her nomination to the Commission as Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy, Henna Virkkunen stated in her written responses that ‘Very Large Online Platforms have additional obligations, to assess and mitigate serious risks such as for disinformation, as well as taking measures to ensure that content cannot easily go viral’. During her confirmation hearing on 12 November 2024, she confirmed that if platforms ‘are spreading disinformation, this is harming democracies very much, and it can pose systematic risks’.

Since the 2021 Facebook Files, we have evidence that prevalent recommender algorithms increase polarisation, disinformation and populism. We also know that disinformation spreads faster than information.

Following the Romanian presidential elections, we have further indications that engagement-based ranking, such as TikTok’s algorithm, leads to the viral spread of disinformation, which is categorised as a systemic risk under Article 34 of the Digital Services Act<sup>1</sup>.

Can the Commission advise whether:

1. it plans to analyse the role of very large online platforms’ current recommender and amplification systems in spreading disinformation, in particular that of engagement-based ranking or increased amplification for high-frequency accounts?
2. it is analysing alternative solutions, such as bridging-based ranking and recommendations based strictly on user choice in the absence of platform-driven amplification and profiling?

Submitted: 9.12.2024

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj>.