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What are the most successful measures for governments and/or platforms to tackle disinformation for your generation?

With the advent of new technologies and the growing role of social media as a main means of information for people from this generation, the spread of disinformation has become a real threat and is posing a major preoccupation in democratic countries. Disinformation consists in deliberately communicating and spreading erroneous information aiming to mislead the broad public opinion and push the public to act towards the interests of the transmitters. This paper will give examples of successful measures by which governments and platforms could counter this phenomenon.

The first measure concerns the government. Legislation is a strong political action and a way of tackling disinformation. In fact, passing laws condemning the deliberate creation and intentional sharing of erroneous online content can be an important tool. Governments should also hold the rights of censoring forums and websites proven to be a source of disinformation and even track and sanction the potential disseminators behind the phenomena. And for a broader establishment of political action and a more efficient fight against disinformation, laws should be unanimously adopted by democratic countries and take a common form. This can be ensured through the work of supranational regulations or institutions (e.g:EU) enforcing member states to act accordingly. These laws should also apply to technology companies (Google, META, Twitter…) as the latter should be held more accountable in regards to disinformation, and under the threat of penalization (fines, temporary ban) as does the EU through enforcing conformity of social media with a list of measures. This comes in order to force social media to better police their platforms, and not simply rely on their own content policies.

A second measure would be overseeing the flowing content of social media. This measure concerns directly technology and social media platforms. Technology companies and platforms like Google and Facebook are the main gateways through which disinformation is spread. They rely on algorithms amplifying the issue. Many conspiracy theories, Covid-19 related hoaxes or even political fake news and announcements, as it was the case during the US 2020 presidential elections were on the "recommended-list" of Youtube.

Hence, platforms should control their content with stronger policies concerning banning reported content after verification, deleting bots and suspected fake accounts, but also providing data provenance information, so the users can acknowledge the nature of data they are consuming.

But for such measures to be implemented, technology companies should first restructure the way their platforms work. Therefore, social media should first improve the nature of their algorithms to include a sort of automatic verification processes, before sharing the information. Secondly, internet platforms should definitely involve more human management over algorithms, especially when dealing with tackling disinformation. A reason for this is the inability of algorithms to unilaterally detect and deal with some malicious accounts creating and sharing disinformation online. These accounts often promote radical ideas and have many adherents. Indeed, some accounts or pages include some special characters, which makes it hard for people to find (and thus report), but also for algorithms to detect and oversee their content. For instance, one malicious account like " 卍 Ådølf-_-H!tl3R 卍 " would be harder to detect than another like "Adolf Hitler". Hence, the idea of having a human management overviewing the content of social media.

Finally, fact checking remains a classic but efficient measure to verify the truthfulness and veracity of the information either before or after its dissemination and thus a means of tackling disinformation. In this context, there are many websites through which individuals or organizations can evaluate the truthfulness of the information. To promote such a process, media platforms and governments can try to support specific organizations in charge of fact checking tasks or recognize (certify) accounts of publishers claiming their fact checking efforts online.

This paper presented some measures by which governments and platforms can efficiently tackle the growing disinformation danger. Indeed, legislation should take an international form for a unanimous policy towards the danger while technology industries on the other hand should put more effort and restructure their algorithmic policy and involve a bigger human control to detect and halt actors and factors behind dissemination of disinformation. Yet, to achieve this, governments should unanimously ensure the compliance of these companies to regulations.