Opening Statement
Meta
Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media
6 Nollaig 2023

A Chathaoirligh and members of the Committee, my name is Dualta Ó Broin and I am Head of Public Policy for Meta in Ireland. I have been invited to speak to you today about Online Safety, Online Disinformation and Media Literacy. I will provide a brief overview of Meta's approach to these topics in this statement - and I look forward to the Committee member's questions in relation to them.

Online Safety

While Meta believes in freedom of expression, we also want our platforms, Facebook and Instagram, to be safe places where people don't have to see content meant to intimidate, exclude or silence them.

We take a comprehensive approach to achieving this; by writing clear policies, Community Standards[1] in the case of Facebook and Community Guidelines[2] in the case of Instagram about what is and isn't allowed on our platform; by developing sophisticated technology to detect and prevent abuse from happening in the first place; and by providing helpful tools and resources for people to control their experience or get help.

We regularly consult with experts, advocates and communities around the world to write our rules and we constantly reevaluate where we need to strengthen them.

Our content enforcement relies on a combination of people reporting content, AI technology and human reviews. Our online and publicly accessible transparency centre[3] contains quarterly reports on how we are faring in addressing harmful content on our platforms, in addition to a range of other data.

We welcome the fact that Coimisiún na Meán (CnaM) has finally been established in Ireland to implement the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive. From early on, we've been supportive of the objectives of the DSA and the creation of a regulatory regime in Europe that minimises harm effectively, protects and empowers people, and upholds their fundamental rights. In August we published details[4] of additional transparency measures and user options which are part of our ongoing commitment to meet our regulatory obligations.

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[1] https://transparency.fb.com/en-gb/policies/community-standards/?source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fcommunitystandards
[2] https://www.facebook.com/help/instagram/477434105621119/
[3] https://transparency.fb.com/
[4] https://about.fb.com/news/2023/08/new-features-and-additional-transparency-measures-as-the-digital-services-act-comes-into-effect/

We welcome the publication of the Digital Services Bill 2023 yesterday and we look forward to Ireland having this legislation and regulatory resources in place to meet its obligations under the DSA by the February 2024 deadline.

Members will appreciate that as Facebook and Instagram are in the process of being designated for the purposes of the revised AVMSD by CnaM and are now subject to regulation under the DSA - I am somewhat limited in what I can discuss in relation to those matters.

Online Disinformation

We've taken significant steps to fight the spread of misinformation using a three-part strategy – remove content that violates our Community Standards (In Ireland we removed almost 1000 pieces of misinformation in the first half of this year from Facebook for this reason), reduce distribution of stories marked as false by third-party fact-checkers, and inform people so they can decide what to read, trust and share.

As part of that effort, in the European Union we partner with 26 fact-checking organisations covering 22 different languages in the EU. In Ireland, we work with TheJournal.ie. We add warning labels on posts that they rate as false and also notify the person who posted it, pointing them to the fact-checker's article debunking the claim. For the first 6 months of this year, these labels were applied to 1.1 million pieces of content on Facebook originating from Ireland. We also impose strict penalties on Pages, Groups, and Instagram and Facebook accounts which repeatedly share misinformation - like not recommending them to people, and moving all of the content they share, regardless of if it contains false claims, lower down in News Feed so fewer people see it.

Informing people with more context is crucial to our strategy and an approach that can be more impactful than the alternative of just removing content. For example, we notify people to let them know when a news article they're about to share is more than 90 days old and if they are about to "like" a Page or share content from a Page that has repeatedly shared false claims on Facebook.

Separate to these efforts in relation to misinformation - we also publish a quarterly adversarial threat report which details our analysis and research into Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour (CIB) on our platforms. In our Q3 Adversarial Threat report[5] published last week, we published our latest research into deceptive activities originating from Russia, Iran, and China – the three most prolific geographic sources of foreign interference campaigns to date; how we've seen threats to the information environment develop, including the tactics we anticipate adversarial threats will most likely use to target civic discourse next year; and the risks and opportunities

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[5] https://scontent-dub4-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t39.8562-6/406961197_3573768156197610_1503341237955279091_n.pdf?_nc_cat=105&ccb=1-7&_nc_sid=b8d81d&_nc_ohc=UDiFiAWy6BMAX--mULD&_nc_ht=scontent-dub4-1.xx&oh=00_AfAzMz0TDyceMhVbbfGgIoF1IU3Y4x8ysGHsu9GMqsZuOA&oe=6572BA92

created by generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) that we're working on alongside our industry peers, governments, and researchers.

Finally on this topic, Meta are very pleased to be signatories to the European Commission's code of practice on disinformation. As part of our work on this code, we are reporting every six months to the European Commission on our efforts to combat mis and disinformation on our platforms in the EU. We understand that it is the European Commission's intention that this Code of Practice will become a Code of Conduct under the DSA next year.

Media Literacy

In relation to Media Literacy in Ireland, we have been members of Media Literacy Ireland since its establishment and we have a significant range of resources and tools which assist users in understanding why they are seeing particular content, how our systems operate and how we develop and enforce our policies. We are constantly updating these resources - among the most significant published this year is a guide to how Artificial Intelligence powers your experience[6] on Facebook and Instagram.

I'd like to thank the Committee members for their time today and I look forward to the discussion.

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[6] https://ai.meta.com/blog/how-ai-powers-experiences-facebook-instagram-system-cards/