

# TRANSATLANTIC PRINCIPLES FOR A HEALTHY ONLINE INFORMATION SPACE

Our information space is plagued by a range of deficiencies that require concerted attention and balanced solutions.

The **Alliance for Healthy Infosphere** was founded by GLOBSEC in the summer of 2020 in order to help create a democratic, secure and accountable online information space in the EU and beyond.

The introduction and implementation of the following transatlantic principles represent key steps in enhancing these efforts and building societal resilience. The Alliance, consisting primarily of experts from smaller EU countries, has a unique knowledge of the current online information space. Our goal is to generate tangible solutions to today's most pressing informational problems.

By bringing together a range of stakeholders from various fields to endorse these principles, the Alliance will help guide society into a more inclusive, more democratic information space. Once these principles are endorsed by relevant stakeholders from private, public and civil society sectors, we will **help operationalize them** in order to ensure a measurable, continuous impact upon societal resilience to issues of information manipulation.

Please join us on this path by endorsing these Transatlantic Principles for a Healthy Online Information Space:

## 1. Strive for greater transparency in the online information space

The digital space should be transparent for its users. Companies and legislative bodies should work towards efficient regulatory frameworks that mandate verification and oversight processes, including: mandated audits and greater transparency of algorithmic operations, clear rules on political advertising, better and more user-friendly reporting practices, clarity about efforts to curb information manipulation, and broader and more systematic platforms for data sharing amongst third party researchers. These efforts must be balanced alongside efforts to maintain robust standards for data privacy.

## 2. Empower users to make informed decisions about their data

Citizens have the right to user-friendly and easily accessible information about the use of their personal data & metadata online, including via microtargeting practices and/or third-party data-sharing. This access will enable users to make informed decisions about their own digital privacy, including further use of their data and what type of content they are exposed to. Technology firms bear responsibility for empowering their users to make such decisions, but the parameters of these responsibilities must be more clearly defined.

## 3. Foster a culture of digital responsibility and accountability

All stakeholders involved must do more to foster a culture of digital responsibility and accountability amongst the tech sector, the financial sector that supports technology (i.e. venture capital), governments, journalists, and civil society in order to create long-term user safety as well as healthy democratic discourse online. To do so, relevant stakeholders such as public institutions must define the responsibilities and generate corresponding systems of accountability for each group.

## 4. Minimize the spread of harmful information online

Online inauthentic behavior and inorganic amplification are being used to share harmful and divisive content and manipulate people's perceptions, at times without violating the social media companies' terms of service. Relevant stakeholders need to work together to limit the potential virality of such content by raising the cost of information manipulation, consistently enforcing terms of services, and mitigating the use of inauthentic manipulation tactics.

## 5. Work towards timely, standardized and proportionate rules for the digital space

Timely implementation of standardized rules across various countries and digital platforms will foster cultures of fairness sorely needed in the online information environment. These rules must work to establish norms for intra-platform cooperation and should be informed by past experience. They should be future-facing and include room for proportionately regulating emerging and more-closed forms of digital media technologies (i.e. voice-centric social media and encrypted chat applications). It is of the utmost importance that implementation of such rules and norms is overseen by vetted independent institutions.

## 6. Support the ethical use of AI systems that embrace democracy

With the increasingly important role AI plays in the information environment, it is crucial to encourage the use of AI systems built with tangible frameworks of human rights and democracy in mind. Such systems must center both human agency and oversight. They must respect user privacy, prioritize user safety, display operational transparency, and be built to detect and eliminate their own internal biases. These features will work to prevent AI and algorithm-borne political inequities and miscarriages of justice.

## 7. Develop tools to increase citizens' media and digital literacy

All generations are impacted by the changing digital environment skills. A healthy infosphere needs public-private collaboration in developing and sharing tools aimed at improving digital literacy, critical thinking and AI readiness in order to increase citizens' resilience to information manipulation online in the long term. Development of these skills must also be part of teaching curricula and employment trainings across the public and private sectors.

## 8. Empower civil society and the public to get involved

Civil society is integral to, but underrepresented in, the fight to create a healthy online information space. Governments and technology firms must do more to give these groups equitable stakes in deliberative processes, better funding and resources to combat associated problems, and more access to relevant data. Civil society is uniquely positioned to offer innovative, culturally contextual, and hands-on solutions that will lead to better public awareness and more civic engagement on- and off- line. Simultaneously, all stakeholders must cultivate and prioritize collective public roles, and the associated capabilities of regular citizens, in combatting harmful information—because the general public is most affected by our presently unregulated digital space.

## 9. Nurture an open space for competition to avoid monopolies

Create competitive mechanisms including stronger enforcement of anti-trust legislation modelled on the broader media sector in order to ensure fairer access to opportunities offered by the digital space and prevent the development of monopolies. Emergence of public interest-minded platforms should be encouraged and small and medium-sized companies ought to have the right to mandated, equitable stakes in the digital market without discrimination or constant threats of being subsumed and/or edged-out of the online market.

## 10. Search for transatlantic solutions and beyond

The digital space is highly interconnected and common problems require common responses. Searching for solutions with joint projects to create a truly democratic digital space on both sides of the Atlantic offers an alternative to non-democratic models. Furthermore, such model will represent an opportunity to address current and future online challenges in a collaborative and more effective manner to countries and citizens across the globe.