

European Parliament  
Avenue du Président Robert Schuman 1  
67070 Strasbourg Cedex

Strasbourg, 21.10.2021

*Dear Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission*  
*Dear Mrs. Margrethe Vestager, Executive-Vice President of the European Commission*  
*Dear Mrs. Věra Jourová, Vice-President for Values and Transparency of the European Commission*  
*Dear Mr. Thierry Breton, Commissioner for the Internal Market*

### **Fake news and the negative influence on the health situation**

Most Member States have reached the needed high percentage of vaccinated citizens in order for the EU to have the 4th coronavirus wave and the Delta variant under control. But even so, there are still numerous protests against the use of the Green Pass in the EU and there are still countries in the Union striving to achieve the average in vaccination rates.

In this context, the most alarming phenomena is the continuous fake news and anti-vaccine propaganda promoted by individuals, certain political parties, leaders and other public figures in the media and on various social media platforms. Clearly, measures taken by some local authorities and / or by the media and social media platforms alone are not effective and in certain Member States we are now witnessing dramatic situations as a result.

Thousands recently protested in Italy, Latvia is facing a new lockdown, Romania and Bulgaria have the highest number of people infected with the coronavirus and the lowest vaccination rates, while predominantly younger patients are in need of intensive care - hundreds of children are now hospitalized with COVID-19.

In Romania, the situation is aggravated by disinformation and fake news circulating in the social media, fomented inter alia by national media outlets. There are numerous concerning messages not only denying the existence of the virus but also inducing fear about the vaccines available and spreading information about unverified, unsupervised treatments.

One may easily notice the very well organized disinformation, misinformation and manipulation campaigns on social media groups and individual pages: similar messages delivered in similar manners are posted and shared thousands of times. One may also observe the fact that not only media and social media platforms do not manage to provide proper support to European citizens in limiting this kind of fake news, but help distribute it more efficiently.

Exposure to contradictory information on the origins and effects of Coronavirus, as well as on the vaccination efficiency, leads to vaccine hesitancy and consequently compromises EU vaccination efforts. What measures does the Commission undertake to guarantee that EU citizens do not fall victims of manipulation and disinformation in the matter of limiting the spread of Covid-19? What tools does the Commission have at its disposal to curb the growing amount of fake news?

Is the Commission considering an inquiry regarding a possible cyber attack or an organized campaign towards mass manipulation in the EU with a worrying success in countries like Romania by agents using the social media platforms?

Is the Commission planning to approach Member States, including Romanian authorities on this matter and plan joint actions to help combat the spread of fake news and disinformation through media and social media on pandemic-related topics?

Is the Commission aware about the fake news and disinformation about the European Union being spread in Member States in a similar manner? If so, is the Commission considering a strategy to combat these messages affecting public trust and corroding the common construction especially in a time of crisis?

Yours sincerely,

Vlad Marius Botoș, MEP, Renew Group  
Vlad Gheorghe, MEP, Renew Group  
Dacian Cioloș, MEP, Renew Group  
Dragoș Tudorache MEP, Renew Group  
Ramona Strugariu MEP, Renew Group

Laurence Farreng, MEP, Renew Group  
Ďuriš Nicholsonová, MEP, Renew Group  
Nicolae Ștefănuță, MEP, Renew Group  
Alin Mituța, MEP, Renew Group  
Ilhan Kyuchyuk, MEP, Renew Group