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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen
on behalf of the European Commission
(14.3.2025)

Democracy is a core value of the EU, with free and fair elections at its heart. Member States are responsible for organising elections according to national legislation and constitutional rules, international obligations and EU law.

The Commission has been promoting election integrity, in full respect of national competences, including in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections¹. Other networks such as the Rapid Alert System² and cybersecurity coordination networks³ exchange on improving cybersecurity and countering Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference. These networks consist of representatives of relevant competent national authorities, enable the exchange of best practices and information among such authorities and are supported by Commission services.

Under Digital Services Act (DSA), very large online platforms (VLOPs) and very large online search engines (VLOSEs) need to assess and mitigate risks to civic discourse and electoral processes while respecting fundamental rights. In April 2024 the Commission published guidelines in this area.⁴ The European Board for Digital Services (EBDS), consisting of Member States' Digital Service Coordinators (DSCs) and chaired by the Commission, established a working group on the integrity of the information space⁵. It exchanges on elections and civic discourse risks in the context of enforcement of the DSA. The EBDS published a DSA Elections Toolkit for DSCs with instruments, best practices and lesson learnt.⁶ For example the roundtable⁷ and stress test⁸, with VLOPs and VLOSEs, German authorities, and civil society organisations that the German DSC and the Commission organised ahead of the German federal election in February 2025.

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/democracy-eu-citizenship-anti-corruption/democracy-and-electoral-rights/european-cooperation-network-elections_en#:~:text=This%20network%20brings%20together%20representatives%20of%20Member%20States%20E2%80%99elections%2C%20including%20data%20protection%2C%20cyber-security%2C%20transparency%20and%20awareness

² https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/factsheet-rapid-alert-system_en

³ EU-CyCLONe, CSIRTs Network (Commission is an observer in both networks), NIS Cooperation Group.

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52024XC03014&qid=1714466886277>

⁵ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/working-group-4-european-board-digital-services-integrity-information-space>

⁶ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/dsa-elections-toolkit-digital-services-coordinators>

⁷ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/digital-services-coordinator-germany-hosts-roundtable-online-platforms>

⁸ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/german-digital-services-coordinator-tests-platforms-readiness-under-digital-services-act>