

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-000082/25
to the Commission
Jorge Martín Frías (Pfe)
(10 January 2025)**

Subject: Loss of trust in fact-checking agencies and their funding from the public purse

In recent statements ⁽¹⁾, Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of the world's largest digital platform Meta, questioned the impartiality of fact-checkers and acknowledged having encountered ideological bias and pressure when moderating content in the European market, which is why he announced that he will hitherto dispense with them.

Given these statements and the allegation by the owner of X of pressure exerted on Elon Musk by the Commission through a secret pact not to fine his social network in exchange for the incorporation of fact-checkers, can the Commission:

1. disclose and give a breakdown of — in addition to Meta's fact-checking partners in Spain (AFP, EFE Verifica, Maldito Bulo and Newtral) ⁽²⁾ — the fact-checking bodies domiciled for tax purposes or headquartered in Spain which have been contracted by the Commission to carry out work, studies, events or any other activity?
2. give a breakdown of what and how much European funding the above companies have received, whether via subsidies, direct and indirect aid, public procurement contracts or cooperation programmes of any kind?
3. say whether it believes it necessary to review its relationship with these controversial and much-questioned fact-checkers?

Submitted: 10.1.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(20 March 2025)**

Since 2021, the beginning of the current Multiannual Financial Framework, the Commission has provided support to five organisations (Agence France Presse; Agencia EFE SAU, S.M.E.; Asociación Maldita contra la Desinformación, Periodismo, Educación, Investigación y Datos en Nuevos Formatos; Associació Verificat; Newtral) that are relevant to the request of the Honourable Member, domiciled or headquartered in Spain and that meet the criteria to be considered fact-checking organisations according to the European Digital Media Observatory ⁽¹⁾. The information regarding EU funding is public ⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾.

As stated in the recent Commission Opinion on the assessment of the Code of Practice on Disinformation ⁽⁴⁾, independent, impartial fact-checking can significantly contribute to identifying and addressing risks linked with the dissemination of disinformation, negative effects on civic discourse and electoral integrity while fully respecting freedom of expression, in line with the Digital Services Act's ⁽⁵⁾ objective of creating a safer online space respectful of fundamental rights.

The Commission does not interfere with the independence of fact-checking organisations; candidates are in fact required to demonstrate their independence when applying for funding.

¹ <https://about.fb.com/news/2025/01/meta-more-speech-fewer-mistakes/>

² <https://www.facebook.com/formedia/mjp/programs/third-party-fact-checking/partner-map>

⁽¹⁾ <https://edmo.eu/resources/repositories/fact-checking-organisations-in-the-eu/>

⁽²⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

⁽³⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/budget/financial-transparency-system/>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/code-conduct-disinformation>

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package>