

## *Building Trust, Curbing Lies:*

## *A Digital Badge to Political Misinformation*

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**KEY PROBLEM:** Social media platforms, unlike traditional media, foster affective polarization, deepening "us vs them" dynamics and influencing public perception and democratic processes. Misinformation, often propagated by political figures, thrives in these environments, affecting voter behavior and election outcomes.

**PROPOSED POLICY SOLUTION:** The Digital Literacy Badge program aims to combat misinformation by recognizing and incentivizing responsible digital behavior among politicians and influencers. Participants voluntarily commit to sharing accurate, well-sourced information, signaling disputed content, and promoting balanced discussions. Badge holders gain public trust, enhanced visibility, and prioritized content, while platforms benefit from reduced misinformation, greater user trust, and fewer legal risks. Overseen by an EU-based independent body, the program avoids free speech concerns and revokes badges for violations. Its societal impact includes reducing political polarization, fostering fairer elections, and promoting social stability.

**CURRENT APPROACHES:** The European Union has implemented a multifaceted approach to combat misinformation, focusing on social media due to its influence.

- The regulatory framework, including the **Digital Services Act (DSA)** and the **Code of Practice on Disinformation**, sets rules for digital platforms but faces challenges in ensuring compliance and addressing media literacy gaps.
- Administrative initiatives like cross-border alert systems and research funding aim to enhance coordination and develop tools to counter disinformation.
- Fact-checking efforts through platforms such as EDMO and EUvsDisinfo provide transparency but struggle to reach populations deeply influenced by false narratives.
- Media literacy programs like "Media Literacy for All" seek to empower citizens but face barriers in engaging marginalized and less educated groups vulnerable to polarization.

### OUR PROPOSAL

- The European Commission oversees the program, integrating it into the Digital Services Act and ensuring social media platforms support its implementation. Platforms must promote badge holders' content and align algorithms to reduce misinformation, incentivized by regulatory benefits like tax reductions.
- An Independent EU Oversight Body ensures consistent enforcement across Member States. This body accredits badge holders transparently, revokes badges when necessary, and allows appeals. It also collaborates with platforms to define content prioritization and maintain evidence-based, non-political standards.
- The EU Marketing and Public Engagement Body designs a user-friendly badge system, raises awareness through campaigns, and ensures the program appeals to diverse influencers. It highlights accountability benefits while avoiding restrictions on diverse voices.

Funding comes from public programs like Digital Europe and CERV, supplemented by private contributions from tech companies and platforms. The badge offers visibility, networking, and credibility to participants, driving its adoption and impact. The Digital Literacy Badge system faces challenges, including perceived bias, inconsistent participation, influencer reliability, institutional vulnerabilities, and public skepticism, requiring ongoing evaluation and adaptive strategies to ensure its credibility and effectiveness. Continuous evaluation and flexible strategies are essential.