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EIN-A4

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EIN Seminar on: "Fake news and Electoral Campaigns"

Introduction:

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Speakers:

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- Political institutions and politicians themselves have always been one of the favourite targets of fake news and disinformation, specially attacked during electoral campaigns.
- Fake news and disinformation are not a recent phenomenon. However, there have been a large number of wake up calls that make it essential to discuss this topic. The more we debate it, the more awareness we spread among the public in general.
- There has been an intention of governmental sources to use media tools in a specific direction in order to display a set of emotions and values widely spread among the citizens across the globe, with the objective of greatly influence public opinion in their own benefit.
- Fake news is blamed for the rise of Populism, by influencing the outcome of the election results. Despite people have become more aware of the fact that discredited information is a reality, they still turn to the media to be informed on the issues at stake, shaping their opinion on the information revealed by its means.
- Electoral campaigns are usually a great business for the press, bringing with it a number of questions related with the veracity of what is published.
- In electoral periods, people must be aware that some campaigning groups do everything to win votes and that media is usually the easy way to get it. On the other hand, some state actors with a specific geopolitical interest benefit from destabilization of the society, spreading the wrong information at any cost.
- The priority should be to keep building trust and confidence in democratic institutions by means of innovative practices for citizen engagement and awareness, transparency and ethical behaviour. Thus, the European Union must apply some measures to support the integrity of elections, and to protect the democratic systems and public debates.
- We have been witnessing some technological and digital developments that set a new approach of the information tools by the public.
- The more tools we have to get information, the more vulnerable we are to get the wrong kind of information.
- We need social media companies to boost their efforts on countering fake news, but efforts should most of all be put on transparency, accountability and identification.
- A great part of the content that can be found online is manifestly illegal. Nonetheless, the popularity that a news can rapidly gain on social media imposes to the traditional media to follow its steps in order to not be left behind in case it is a breaking news. Thus, we cannot trust traditional broadcasting the same way we did before.
- We need to focus on reconstructing and empowering the role of traditional media. Good journalists and editors, like politicians, are all custodians of freedom of speech and democracy.
- Unfortunately, journalists are not very well equipped to discern the truth and they are quick to jump on a story.
- It is very important to invest on analytical tools to better detect and analyse the information before it is widely spread.
- Disinformation is getting harder to detect, being imperative to implement a set of measures to combat it, as it is permanently shaping public opinion.
- The first step is to address youngsters and advise them on how to deal with the information and news online in order to be protected from falsehoods.
- Education and media literacy must be a compass to spot fake news and unreliable sources. At school, kids need to learn to unmask fake news, to do fact checking and increase their critical thinking and they will influence their parents in the same direction.
- Media plays a very important role in Democracy disseminating information among the citizens and journalists are an essential part of it. Thus, it is regrettable that some of the press is driving away from ethics and truth.

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