

Brussels, 27 February 2023

Subject: Russian media propaganda utilising online platforms

Honourable President of the European Commission Mrs. von der Leyen,

The European Parliament welcomed the decision to include in the 9th sanction package the suspension of the broadcasting licences of four additional Russian media outlets and economic sanctions against three media companies.

The fight against Russian propaganda must continue.

Telegram is an instant messaging service, similar to WhatsApp, but more widely used in Russia, with more than 700 million global users. It is estimated that 50% of Russians have Telegram on their phones. Russians make up 10% of Telegram's global users and Pro-Putin channels represent about 90% of its content.

Prominent representatives of Russian propaganda, both individuals and entities, use Telegram to spread disinformation to a large audience. According to a survey by Deloitte, 50% of Russians have Telegram installed on their phones.

Among these prominent representatives of the Russian propaganda are V. Solovyov, A. Gasparyan, M. Simonyan, R. Babayan, T. Keosayan, O. Skabeyeva, A. Sheynin, A. Pushkov, D. Kylikov, A. Malkevich, P. Akopov, O. Matveychev, M. Kolerov, A. Krasovsky, A. Mamontov, different «Russia Today» news channels, «Krasnaya Zvezda» as well as other similar individuals and entities (including R. Kadyrov, N. Poklonskaya, etc.), who continue to carry out their activities by creating personalised channels on Telegram with the involvement of a significant audience.

The list of these Telegram channels includes:

https://t.me/rt_russian;
<https://t.me/SolovievLive>;
<https://t.me/Solovievf>;
<https://t.me/ASGasparyan>;
<https://t.me/margaritasimonyan>;
<https://t.me/msimonyan>;
https://t.me/poklonskaya_nv;
<https://t.me/robabayan>;
<https://t.me/skabeeva>;
<https://t.me/rkadyro95>;
https://t.me/Kaadyrov_95;
<https://t.me/GardeZ66>;
https://t.me/alexey_pushkov;
<https://t.me/dtlive>;
<https://t.me/redalertZVO>;
https://t.me/alexandr_malkevich;

https://t.me/malkevich_live;
<https://t.me/PetrAkopov>;
<https://t.me/matveychev>;
https://t.me/Modest_A_Kolerov;
<https://t.me/krasovkin>;
<https://t.me/dtlive>;
<https://t.me/c/1732054517/14290>.

The content published on these propaganda channels violates the terms and conditions of Google Play and the App Store, which state that published content must adhere to certain policies, and prohibit the distribution of sensitive, violent, or terrorist content.

The spreading of Russian disinformation on Telegram also constitutes a violation of EU legal acts imposing sanctions:

- A number of individuals and entities spreading Russian disinformation have been included on the sanctions list, which prohibits the provision of economic resources to the sanctioned individual or entity;
- The broadcasting and the enabling or facilitating of broadcasting for sanctioned individuals and entities is prohibited under EU sanctions. Many broadcasters included in the EU's sanctions list continue to operate on Telegram.

We recognize the positive role Telegram has been playing in terms providing a platform for pro-Ukrainian sources of information. At the same time, it is our opinion that channels such as Telegram should be more proactive in policing their own content.

Honourable President of the European Commission, at your recent joint press conference with President Zelenskyy you stated that you would target Putin's propagandists, because their lies were poisoning the public space in Russia and abroad. The immediate exclusion of Russian propaganda channels from Telegram - as well as any other applications available on Google Play and/or the Apple Store - would be a tangible step in the right direction.

Yours sincerely,

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