



Bringing the Online In Line with Human Rights

CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This past year, INACH and its members have collected data about the alarming increase in conspiracy theories and disinformation, along with the effects this trend has on our world .

Here is a summary of what was observed as well as a dive into our policy recommendations to combat online hate and disinformation.

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During the start of the Covid-19 pandemic chaos erupted in different places in the world when people tried to set cell phone towers of 5G on fire, as they believed that it was 5G that caused Covid19. People also attacked Capitol Hill in the United States in January 2021 convinced they were saving Donald Trump from the fraud that was committed during the elections. In 2016 a man entered a pizzeria in Washington carrying a gun, believing that the restaurant was hiding children in the basement for the use of a paedophile network run by Hillary Clinton, even though nothing was found in the basement. These are a few examples of misinformation and conspiracy theories leading to violence clearly proving this issue needs to be taken seriously.



ECO-FASCISM

Eco-fascism is a totalitarian government that requires individuals to sacrifice their interests to the well-being of the ‘land’, understood as the splendid web of life, or the organic whole of nature, including peoples and their states. Some of the concerns of eco-fascism go all the way back to the 1800s. Calculations made by Thomas Malthus about predictions of the growth of the world population are often used by followers of eco-fascism. Malthus said the world population was outgrowing the food that the earth has to offer us and therefore argued in favour of population control. Eco-fascists continue using the arguments of Malthus until today, despite the fact that it already has been proven that his calculations were wrong. So eco-fascism has always been here but now it is undergoing a revival because climate change is a real fact. However, the solution proposed by eco-fascists is a very different and dangerous one than usually proposed by environmentalists on the left wing or others who are genuinely worried about climate change. In fact, the solution of eco-fascism is genocide. Eco-fascism sees industrialization as the cause of climate change and longs back to traditional pre-industrial times.

DANGERS OF THESE THEORIES

These theories spread hate, fear, racism, and disinformation that undermine the very fabric of our societies and democratic processes. Therefore, they must be countered by moderation, removal, education and counter speech. See our policy recommendations on how to do that below.

THE GREAT REPLACEMENT THEORY

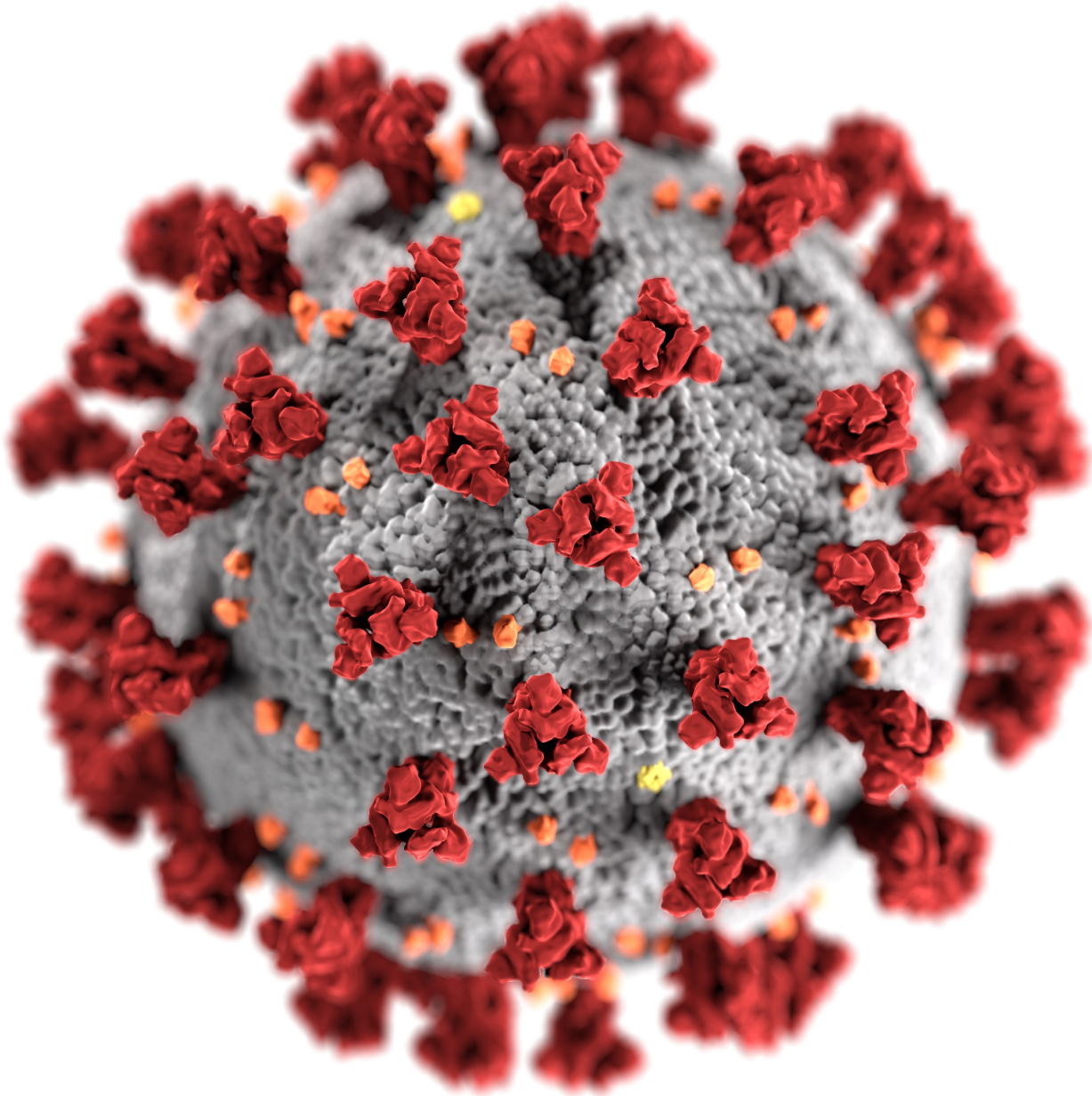
The Great Replacement simply comes down to this: the demographic change in a country is organized and has the plan behind it to exterminate the white race. Whether true or not, many believe that in thirty years white people will be a minority in their country. That goes for both the US and Europe. The Great Replacement theory originates from the book ‘Le Grand Remplacement’, written by French philosopher Renaud Camus in 2011. Camus inspired the setting up of the group Generation Identity, which is estimated to be one of the fastest growing far right movements in countries across Europe. However, bits and pieces of the Great Replacement theory are used by many different groups and politicians.

QANON

The origin of the QAnon theory comes from an individual, known as Q, who wrote about his theories on the platform 4Chan. He mixed the suspicion of a paedophile network with a pyramid of political and media control which would have the Mossad, the Israeli secret service, at the top of that pyramid. Who Q exactly is, nobody knows. After Q, others have taken his legends and developed it further, focusing mostly on American politicians. At the core of their belief is the fact that there is a ‘deep state’ or secret elite that has the actual power in hand and is trying to get rid of Donald Trump, their hero. Trump is the only one who is not tied to any of these secret elites that have had power in their hands traditionally. That is why sometimes it is also called the pro-Trump conspiracy.

COVID-19 RELATED THEORIES

A lot of rumours have appeared since the emergence of Covid-19; the disease came out of a Chinese laboratory where they lacked monkeys and decided to test it out on humans, is one rumour. Another is that the vaccine already existed, and the disease was spread to increase vaccine sales or that the disease is not as deadly as they say it is. A very persistent rumour has been that the vaccine against Covid-19 contains a chip that will lead to governments controlling us or that the vaccine will genetically modify us. Or the virus escaped from a Chinese lab or was actually spread on purpose by the Chinese government as a biological weapon. There are a few variations surrounding the 5G networks and Covid-19. Some argue that it is not the corona virus that causes Covid-19 but the radiation of the 5G network. Others assume that the 5G network lowers our immune system and makes us vulnerable to the virus. And then there are also people who believe that the 5G network facilitates the spread of the Covid-19 virus.



INACH’S POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMBAT ONLINE HATE AND DISINFORMATION

1. The EU should find a way to have the new social media platforms sign a CoC. The DSA in general is a real opportunity to offer a unified approach to respecting online human rights.

2. AI cannot be the only tool in place to handle the monitoring of hate speech. It needs to be done in close cooperation with humans. There is a strong need however to keep developing AI regarding hate speech and keep the context that is used to teach AI free of discrimination, in order to make the technology smarter and therefore more useful in the future.

3. In order to stay up-to-date on the developments, NGOs should make an effort to exchange knowledge regarding the new social media platforms. INACH should use its network to organize the time and place to make that exchange possible through webinars.

4. Since disinformation and conspiracy theories are closely intertwined with hate speech, more efforts should be made to counter fake news by NGOs such as ours. It should be monitored in the same manner as hate speech.

5. Social media companies should find a solution to the problem of the discrepancies between what is being removed and what is not, by working on harmonizing, detailing and clarifying their content guidelines.

6. On an EU level, work should be done to attain a more harmonized definition of hate speech, changes should be made to make the monitoring exercise less biased, and the Code of Conduct could be developed further.

7. Social media’s adherence to the Code of Conduct should be kept in check through continuous monitoring exercises. The methodology of these exercises should be fine-tuned to mitigate bias.

8. The EU should consider tougher approaches to policing illegal online content if the CoC and the Communication do not reach the intended goals in the coming years.

9. On a national level, the German law (Network Enforcement Act) should be taken as an example in general terms, including the necessary development regarding its missing regulations on the deletion of legal content.

10. More should be done in educating the public (hence the potential complainants), with a focus on younger people, the elderly and authorities in charge of helping those complainants, such as the police.

11. Social media companies should ask NGOs to train their moderators on hate speech and on the laws that regulate illegal speech in different EU countries.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If you want to read more on hate speech, conspiracy theories, and on our recommendations on combating them, you can find our related reports below:

[COVID-19 – A Plague of Racism and Conspiracy Theories](#)

[The Rise of Conspiracies in Spreading Online Hate](#)

[The state of policy on cyber hate in the EU 2021](#)



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