

IGF Dynamic Coalition on Platform Responsibility

Call for Papers

Platform Regulation(s)

The [Dynamic Coalition on Platform Responsibility](#), established under the auspices of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum, invites researchers and practitioners to submit position papers analysing the role and [responsibilities of online platforms](#) from a technical, legal, social or economic perspective.

Background:

With the increasing centrality of online platforms in the production and dissemination of content, growing expectations are being placed on the role of large platform operators to provide “safe” online spaces for user engagement. This trend is visible in the legislative proposals that have emerged in various countries enlisting social media companies to prevent hate speech, incitement to violence or hatred, and “dangerous terrorist recruitment material”.

Over the last year, the trend towards platform regulation has manifested itself most vividly in the context of the identification and prevention of “fake news”, raising the issue of what role do online platforms play and what impact they may have on the public sphere. This offers a perfect example of a recurring problem with platform regulation: an important part of the content that is supposed to be prohibited escapes clear legal definition. It comprises a variety of different phenomena, and therefore arguably requires a combination of a wide range of measures. While some proposals have called for special legislation to restore trust and create a level playing field, major platforms such as Google and Facebook have been quicker in addressing those concerns, including structural responses and tools for users to limit their exposure to such misinformation.

A different but very similar problem has arisen regarding “brand safety”, *i.e.* the concerns of advertisers in relation to the association of their ads with certain types of content deemed to be “inappropriate”. In March 2017, following a letter by the Guardian and many brands pulling their ads from YouTube, Google announced to have heard concerns “loud and clear” and raised its bar for “hateful, offensive and derogatory content” which will be excluded from the association with Google ads. Important questions remain regarding the transparency, proportionality and effectiveness of the measures these companies have taken, and their impact on small and independent news providers and for content creators, some of whom (particularly those with content characterized as “sensitive”) have seen their ad revenues dramatically reduced from the day of Google’s adoption of this revised policy.

Against this backdrop, the need for a multistakeholder discussion on the role and responsibilities played by online platforms in our society becomes urgent. The IGF Dynamic Coalition on Platform Responsibility (DCPR) seeks to trigger discussion around the impact of platforms on users’ rights, fostering the identification of case studies and elaboration of concrete policy proposals.

Call:

The first DCPR annual report aims at promoting analysis on the role and responsibilities of online platforms, to foster discussion at the 12th United Nations Internet Governance Forum.

Suggested topics include analyses of, *inter alia*:

- Human rights impact-assessment of platform terms of service and practices
- Taxonomies and categorizations of platforms

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- Economics of online platforms
- Algorithmic regulation and accountability
- Procedural safeguards for user rights in automated decision-making
- The role of platforms in personalisation of content and political micro-targeting
- Fiduciary duties and positive obligations of online platforms
- Fairness, trust and transparency mechanisms for online platforms
- Misinformation, false news and propaganda in social media
- Ethical standards and model contracts for platform operators
- Harmonising platform responsibilities across intermediary liability regimes
- Competition and economic regulation in platform markets
- Data ownership in platform markets
- Tools to prevent online harassment and bullying
- Virtual assistants, virtual reality and future platforms for user engagement
- Suggested principles on which regulation can be built
- Critical approach to existing and proposed regulatory frameworks

Submission Guidelines:

Research papers, including analytical and theoretical papers, position papers, or case studies will be considered for inclusion in the report, even if they have been previously published. The length of the submissions should be between 2500 and 5000 words. To facilitate the reviewing process, papers should not include author names or other information that would help identify the authors. All submission shall be in English or Spanish language. Citation should be in [APA 6 style](#), authors shall use footnotes rather than endnotes and submission should be in Microsoft Word or OpenDocument Text format.

Submissions are due on **15 July 2017**. They should include the following elements:

- Title
- Short abstract (250 words)
- First draft of the submitted paper
- Author's name, affiliation and short bibliographical note (in the body of the email)

Submissions should be sent to luca.belli@fgv.br and N.Zingales@sussex.ac.uk

Authors will be notified within approximately 7 days from the deadline as to the status of their contributions. All submitted papers will be subject to peer review. **PLEASE note that every author submitting a paper will be asked to peer review another submission**, which will be judged according to the novelty of the contribution, the theoretical soundness and the quality of presentation.

Authors will be given the opportunity to improve their contributions based on peer comments. Selected papers will be published into the Report of the DCPR, which will be published in open access, under Creative Commons licenses. Authors will also be invited (at their own expenses) to present their work at the annual DC3 meeting to be held at the United Nations Internet Governance Forum, from 18 to 21 December 2017, in Geneva, Switzerland.