

Facebook and Twitter face sanctions

Facebook and Twitter could face sanctions if they continue to stonewall the UK Parliament over Russian interference in the EU referendum. Damian Collins, chair of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport select committee, which is addressing 'fake news' has **given the companies until 18 January to correct their failure to hand over information he requested about Russian misinformation campaigns on their platforms**. 'There has to be a way of scrutinising the procedures that companies like Facebook put in place to help them identify known sources of disinformation, particularly when it's politically motivated and coming from another country,' Collins said. **The Guardian** reports that his intervention, the first concrete warning that sanctions could follow any failure to provide the information required, is likely to cause concern for the social media firms. Previously he had signalled his dissatisfaction in letters to the two companies without specifying the consequences of noncompliance.

Facebook is announcing initiatives in Brazil to counter false news reports that are expected to proliferate as the country heads towards October elections. A report on the **News24** site notes that one of the projects is a free online course designed for teens, young adults and educators on how to spot and contain the spread of false stories. It will also create a Messenger bot on online information. **The initiatives are to be in place by June, when Brazil's presidential campaign is set to accelerate.**

More than half of British users of social media surveyed in a new poll have admitted that they fail to check the original source of online material before sharing or 'liking' it. The survey, which addresses the public's susceptibility to manipulation by purveyors of 'fake news', also finds that three in four Britons believe tech companies, such as Twitter and Facebook, and MPs are not doing enough to counter the organised online spread of falsehoods by state actors such as Russia. **The Guardian** reports that the poll of more than 2 000 UK adults found Russia was the country most likely to be regarded as a culprit when it came to online campaigns. **Almost two thirds (64%) believe it is true that certain governments employ people to mislead the public online**, sometimes through fake profiles on social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Of those people, 59% believed Russia was employing people to engage in such activities, followed by 41% who believed that the US Government was doing so. The figure was 32% for China and 27% for the UK Government.