

BECID Condemns Meta's Decision to End Third-Party Fact-Checking Partnerships

BECID

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The Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders (BECID) strongly condemns Meta's recent decision to terminate its third-party fact-checking partnerships in the United States. The justification behind this move undermines critical efforts in striving for free access to quality information, as well as hurts the funding opportunities of a news media sector already in financial trouble. Even if the decision has currently not been rolled out in the European Union, the effects have already reached the Baltics.

"Simply put, this seems to be just another attack against journalists. The erosion of trust against the journalistic institution and the adversary behaviour alongside it is hurting the public's access to quality information. Adding fuel to the fire has already brought on personal attacks in the Baltic fact-checking community," says Maia Klaassen, the coordinator of BECID.

Meta's decision perpetuates a misunderstanding of the role of fact-checkers, who do not censor content but provide independent reviews and transparency.

Most fact-checkers in the Baltics work or have worked in news media, and most identify as journalists even when working in NGOs, as per BECID's research in 2023. Their work is of high quality, as **Meta's own previous reports** have stated. By ending these partnerships on what seems to be a political whim, Meta is effectively removing a vital layer of accountability and transparency that independent fact-checkers provide.

Furthermore, the decision by Meta to shift towards a Community Notes model, similar to that of X, raises concerns about the effectiveness and impartiality of content moderation on its platforms. Independent fact-checkers play a crucial role in identifying and addressing false information, and their removal could lead to an increase in the spread of harmful content, similarly to what happened on X in the Baltic states.

In conclusion, BECID urges cooperation between social media platforms, independent fact-checkers, and other stakeholders. By pooling resources, we can mitigate the risks posed by information disorders and strengthen the resilience of democratic societies. Meta's decision to end these partnerships is a disservice to the public and a step in the wrong direction in the ongoing battle against information disorders.

Aistė Meidutė, editor of Delfi Lithuania fact-checking initiative 'Melo detektorius':

The primary goal of fact-checkers all over the world is to provide more factual information and encourage people to engage in better informed conversations. It was never about removing information or limiting access to it and Meta 3PFC partners nor in the US nor anywhere else had the power to do so.

Freedom of speech should be about responsibility towards yourself and others to know the facts and be able to share correct information, therefore fact-checkers are able to help use this freedom wisely. It is a very dangerous path to think about freedom of speech as a green pass to publicly spread whatever is on your mind and misinform others.

In the face of today's geopolitical realities, especially in Baltic countries that are a constant target of Kremlin's disinformation, trust in professional media and fact-checking should be more important than ever, therefore we as fact-checkers intend to continue our mission.