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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATION

Secretariat of the European Centre for Democratic Resilience

Terms of Reference

1. BACKGROUND

The Communication on the European Democracy Shield (EDS), adopted on 12 November 2025, announced the creation of a **European Centre for Democratic Resilience** (the 'Centre'), designed as a hub for cooperation, information-sharing and operational exchange among Member States, EU institutions and participating EU candidate countries and potential candidates. It also announced the establishment of a **Stakeholder Platform** (the 'Platform') to enable contributions from a broad set of independent, non-governmental stakeholders to the work of the Centre.

The Platform provides a structured forum for exchanges on democratic resilience and information integrity, including contributing to countering foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) and building resilience to disinformation. The Platform should contribute to facilitating the exchange of knowledge, best practices, providing input to inform the Centre's priorities and activities and supporting cooperation among stakeholders in ways that complement the Centre's projects and broader objectives.

The Platform will operate in a practical, flexible and output-oriented manner. It will include a feedback mechanism ensuring that Platform contributions are considered and transparently handled by the Centre. Through its work, the Platform will further recognise the essential and active role played by non-governmental, independent stakeholders in promoting and building democratic resilience.

The Platform will operate in full respect of the independence of its members. Participation in the Platform will not affect the autonomy, mandates, positions, professional independence, or the editorial independence of participating organisations and networks.

The Centre secretariat ('secretariat') will foster communication between members of the Stakeholder Platform (Platform members) and participating Member States, EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies ('Centre members'). It is responsible for the establishment and administrative management of the Platform.

2. OBJECTIVE AND TASKS

The proposed Platform objectives are twofold and complementary:

1. Fostering a whole-of-society approach, through exchange of expertise, practices and insights relevant to democratic resilience and information integrity;
2. Enhancing collaboration between institutional and non-governmental stakeholders.

To achieve these objectives, the Platform will in particular:

- facilitate regular exchanges among Platform members on developments concerning emerging threats, risks, trends, and practices relevant to democratic resilience and information integrity, including countering FIMI and building resilience to disinformation;
- contribute to cooperation and coordination among Platform members and, where appropriate, between Platform members and Centre members;
- act as an advisory forum to the Centre by providing independent input, analysis, and strategic guidance to inform its work, also in the form of joint outputs or project-based cooperation linked to the agreed priorities of the Centre;
- contribute to the annual conference, quarterly meetings, regular exchanges through the Centre's IT platform, and set up thematic working groups;
- support the dissemination of relevant research and outputs to the Centre members and, where appropriate, to relevant stakeholders and the wider public.

The Platform members will define their activities under these objectives in a collaborative manner, with the support of the Centre secretariat and in alignment with the annual priorities of the Centre.

3. MEMBERSHIP AND SELECTION PROCESS

3.1. Setup of the Platform

The EDS Communication indicated that the Platform will gradually build on existing stakeholder communities, such as the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), as coordinator of the European Network of Fact-Checkers project. In line with this, the setup of the Platform takes place in two steps:

- **a pilot phase**, with the participation of EDMO and EFCSN;
- **the official launch of the Stakeholder Platform**, based on the results of a call of the expressions of interest.

3.2. Membership

The Stakeholder Platform will be composed of up to 37 participating networks and organisations, with up to 35 elected in a call for expressions of interest in addition to those participating in the pilot phase.

Members will be selected for three years and will remain a member until their voluntary resignation, persistent inactivity, no longer fulfilling the membership criteria or their exclusion following non-adherence to the Code of Conduct, or applicable confidentiality and transparency requirements. Their membership may be renewed as a result of subsequent calls for applications.

All members commit to respecting the rules established in the Terms of Reference and the Code of Conduct.

Membership in the Platform, as well as contributions to its different activities, will be on a voluntary basis and unremunerated. Certain costs related to in-person meetings may be covered (see section 9).

In order to be eligible for membership, organisations or networks must meet all the following eligibility criteria (E.1-E.6).

Eligibility criteria:

E.1: Legal registration: the applicant, or for a network or consortium, the lead or coordinating organisation selected or empowered by its members to represent it, must be legally registered in an EU Member State.

The applicant must declare the one category to which it belongs:

a. civil society organisation;
b. media organisation;
c. research organisation or academic institution;
d. think-tank;
e. network or consortium. Applicants in this category must also state in which categories (a-d) the majority of their members belong to.

E.2: Nature of organisation: the applicant must be an independent, non-governmental, non-profit organisation, network, or consortium.

E.3: Respect for EU values and applicable law: the applicant commits to respecting and upholding the values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, complying with applicable EU law, including the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 and respecting the Terms of Reference of the Stakeholder Platform, including its Code of Conduct.

E.4: Transparency of operations and funding: the applicant must be registered in the EU Transparency Register at the time of application and must remain registered for the whole duration of its membership. For a network or consortium, this applies to the coordinating organisation or to

the organisation selected by its members to represent them in the Platform. The applicant must also be transparent about its operations and funding through defined internal processes or by-laws.

E.5: Presence in at least five EU Member States: The applicant or members of the network or consortium it represents must have offices or operations (for example projects carried out in those Member States by the applicant, cooperation with organisations based there, member organisations actively involved in the applicant's work, or staff or correspondents based there) in at least five EU Member States, including its Member State of registration. This applies equally to single organisations, networks and consortia.

The applicant will demonstrate that at least one concrete activity was performed in those Member States during the last three years, indicating the date and, if relevant, the partner or member involved.

E.6: Exclusion: The applicant, its coordinating or selected organisation and any person with powers of representation, decision or control over it must not be bankrupt or in an equivalent situation, must not have been the subject of a final judgment or final administrative decision for fraud, corruption, money laundering, participation in a criminal organisation or grave professional misconduct, and must not be subject to, or funded by persons or entities subject to EU restrictive measures.

3.3 Selection process

Platform members will be selected through an open call for expressions of interest. The call will be published together with the Terms of Reference.

The Centre secretariat will prepare and manage the call, assess applications and conduct correspondence with applicants.

The selection process will be open, transparent, proportionate and designed to ensure the independence, credibility and balanced composition of the Platform, including a geographical balance of its members.

The applications will be checked against the eligibility criteria. Eligible applications will be assessed against the selection criteria below. S.1 is a declaration used for the composition of the Platform, and it is not scored. S.2 and S.3 are scored in 100 points in total.

Selection criteria:

S.1: Areas of expertise (declared, not scored) The applicant must indicate one main area and up two additional areas of expertise from the list below. The main area must be supported by the evidence given under S.2.

a. Information integrity (including detecting, analysing and countering FIMI and disinformation);
b. Fact-checking and/or independent journalism;
c. Media and digital literacy, citizenship education and skills for democracy;
d. Election integrity, democratic participation (including digital tools for citizen participation);
e. Digital democracy, digital accountability, and digital rights.

S.2: Proven expertise and track record (60 points). The applicant must demonstrate proven and relevant experience in the area(s) declared under S1, at national, European and/or international level. It must present up to five concrete examples of work carried out in the last three years (for example projects, investigations, research, publications, datasets, trainings, campaigns, or digital tools and services), each with a short description of the applicant's role and the results achieved, and a link or reference where available.

> **S.2.a: Relevance and depth (25 points)**: how closely the examples match the declared areas, and how substantial and specialised the applicant's own contribution was.
>
> **S.2.b: Results and reach (35 points)**: what the work achieved, and at which level (national, European, international), supported by verifiable evidence.

S.3: Motivation and contribution (40 points) The applicant must explain why it wants to join the Stakeholder Platform, what it seeks to contribute to the Centre's work, what it expects from it, and how it will take part in a proactive way. This criterion will be assessed against:

> **S.3.a: Understanding and fit (10 points)**: how well the applicant understands the Centre's role and the Platform's purpose, and how clearly its own contribution is aligned to them.
>
> **S.3.b: Concrete contribution (20 points):** what the applicant will bring to the Platform, such as lessons learnt and best practices, data, analysis, tools, training, etc., and how realistic that offer is.
>
> **S.3.c: Commitment to take part in a proactive way (10 points):** how far the applicant commits to regular participation, through named representatives, attendance and an offer to lead or co-lead activities.

Further details will be specified in the call for expressions of interest.

The call for expressions of interest will reopen periodically, at least every three years, to update the membership.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. Platform members

Platform members will act independently and contribute their expertise in support of the Platform's objectives. Platform members will:

- contribute to the design and implementation of activities under the Platform's objectives, in alignment with the annual priorities of the Centre;
- participate in the annual conference, quarterly meetings and other exchanges organised under the Platform;
- share research, expertise, practices and insights relevant to democratic resilience and information integrity within the Platform and, where appropriate, with the Centre members;
- contribute to thematic working groups and project-based cooperation, including by proposing new topics or projects linked to the priorities of the Centre;
- respect the applicable confidentiality and transparency requirements as well as the code of conduct.

4.2. Steering Committee

The Stakeholder Platform will establish a Steering Committee as its representative and coordination body. The Steering Committee will support the effective, transparent and accountable functioning of the Platform.

4.2.1. Guiding principles

The mandate, size, term of office, rotation arrangements and renewal rules of the Steering Committee will be decided by the Platform members, in accordance with the Platform's rules of procedure (section 6 of these terms of reference).

The Steering Committee will be composed of Platform members elected or appointed based on an inclusive, transparent and fair process agreed by the Platform members.

In creating the Steering Committee, members should pay attention to respecting geographical representation, diversity of perspectives, and expertise as well as transparency.

A Chair and Co-Chairs could be elected from among the members of the Steering Committee to coordinate the Platform's work on a rotating basis.

4.2.2. Tasks and responsibilities

The Steering Committee will:

- develop, together with Platform members and in agreement with the Centre secretariat an annual work plan to be adopted at the annual conference. The work plan will outline priority areas of work, including, where appropriate, together with Centre members;
- act as the coordination and liaison body of the Platform for the purposes of exchange with the Centre members and the Centre secretariat;
- support the strategic planning of the Platform's work, including the preparation of annual priorities, setting up the working groups, work planning and follow-up to Platform activities, in alignment with the annual priorities of the Centre;
- support the governance and operation of the Platform, including by promoting clarity on roles, procedures and reporting lines;
- develop, endorse, and oversee suitable decision-making processes for the Steering Committee as well as for the Platform;
- monitor respect for applicable confidentiality and transparency requirements as within the Platform's activities.

4.3. Centre secretariat

The Centre secretariat supports the operation of the Stakeholder Platform. In particular, the secretariat will:

- provide administrative support to the Platform, including on logistical and budgetary aspects of meetings in the context of the Centre;
- support communication between the Platform and the Centre, including to facilitate a feedback loop to ensure that Platform contributions are considered and transparently handled by the Centre;
- manage stakeholders' access to the Centre's IT platform, which will be used for communication between the Platform and Centre members.

5. WORKING ARRANAGEMENTS

5.1 Communication

Communication between the Platform with the Centre will take primarily place via the Platform Steering Committee and the Centre secretariat and is facilitated through an IT Platform.

5.2 Meetings

The Platform will hold quarterly meetings together with Centre members and the Centre secretariat, in addition to the annual conference. These meetings will be convened by the Centre secretariat.

Platform members may propose agenda items via the Steering Committee to the Centre secretariat.

The Platform may convene meetings for Platform members as it wishes.

5.3. Work Plan

The Steering Committee, together with Platform members and in agreement with the Centre secretariat, will establish a draft annual work plan to be adopted during the annual conference.

The work plan will outline priority areas of work for the Centre, jointly identified with the Centre members.

The progress of the annual work plan, its deliverables and lessons learned will be presented during the annual conference, and the new priorities will be established.

5.4. Projects

The Steering Committee, together with Platform members and in agreement with the Centre secretariat, and where appropriate, with Centre members may establish joint projects.

These may be organised at the request of the Steering Group, Platform members, Centre members or the Centre secretariat. Their scope and duration will be decided by the participating parties and in accordance with the rules of procedure and in respect of the code of conduct.

5.5 Working groups

The Stakeholder Platform may establish working groups to examine specific themes or implement projects in line with the Platform's objectives.

The Platform members are responsible for identifying the need for the establishment of a working group, arranging its set-up, identifying its scope and running it in accordance with the agreed rules of procedure and in respect of the Code of Conduct.

Platform members may invite Centre members to join a specific working group.

5.6 Annual conference

The Stakeholder Platform will hold an annual conference as its principal yearly gathering. It will provide an opportunity for structured exchange between Platform members and the Centre members on priorities, trends, activities and results related to democratic resilience and information integrity. It will present the annual work plan.

The annual conference will be organised as an in-person event, in principle with the participation of Platform members and Centre members.

Outcomes may include conclusions, identification of priority areas for follow-up, and recommendations or other contributions for consideration by the Centre.

It will be also a stock-taking exercise, summarising the achievements of the Platform of the past year, presenting the lessons learned and setting up new annual priorities.

6. RULES OF PROCEDURE

6.1. General principles

The Platform's activities will be conducted in accordance with these Terms of Reference.

The Platform may organise its work in plenary, in thematic working groups, or through written procedure, as appropriate.

Each Platform member will designate one official contact person for organisational and administrative purposes, including communications relating to meetings, written procedures, circulation of documents and access to the Centre's IT platform.

Each Platform member will designate one representative to participate in meetings of the Platform.

6.2. Decision-making

The Steering Committee, in agreement with Platform members, will determine the appropriate decision-making process and quorum for the Steering Committee as well as the Platform, which may include written procedures. The agreed decision-making process will be spelled out in a written document to be signed by all members.

Decisions taken by the Steering Committee or the Platform will be recorded in the meeting minutes.

6.3. Conflicts of interest

Platform members will act independently and in the public interest in relation to the Platform's objectives.

Platform members will declare in writing to the Steering Committee any situation that may give rise to an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest in relation to a matter under discussion. The Steering Committee will inform the Centre secretariat about such cases.

Where such actual, potential or perceived conflict exists, the Steering Committee and Centre secretariat will decide on appropriate mitigating measures, including potential exclusion of the affected member from the relevant discussion or vote.

Platform members must immediately declare in writing any change in their circumstances that could give rise to an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

6.4. Adherence to the Code of Conduct

All Platform members will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Platform.

Non-adherence can lead to exclusion from the Platform in accordance with the applicable procedure. Complaints regarding non-adherence may be submitted to the Steering Committee, which will inform the Centre secretariat.

6.5. Handling Code of Conduct incidents

Any incident or concern regarding non-compliance to the Code of Conduct will be reported as soon as possible to the Centre secretariat. Information shared in relation to an incident will be handled on a strict need-to-know basis.

The Centre secretariat, in consultation with the Steering Committee, will assess the incident, taking into account its severity, the safety and well-being of the parties involved, including anonymity where appropriate. If a member of the Steering Committee is a party in the incident, they will be removed from this process.

Based on this assessment, the Centre secretariat, on the advice of the Steering Committee, may apply appropriate measures, including:

- issue warnings;
- ask for an apology and/or retraction;
- removal from one or more meetings of the Platform; or
- exclusion from the Platform.

In case the removal or exclusion of a member is being considered, the party under scrutiny should have the right to be heard by the Centre secretariat and the Steering Committee during the assessment.

The Centre secretariat will conclude and communicate on the applicable measure to the party concerned. In exceptional cases, where a breach is clear, immediate removal from a meeting may be decided to ensure the safety and well-being of participants, pending further assessment.

6.6. Termination of participation

A member may cease participation in the Platform in any of the following cases:

- voluntary resignation;
- persistent inactivity;
- no longer fulfilling the membership criteria;
- exclusion following non-adherence to the Code of Conduct, or applicable confidentiality and transparency requirements.

Persistent inactivity may include, in particular, repeated non-participation in Platform meetings, repeated failure to respond to essential communications, or a sustained lack of contribution to the Platform's activities without justification. The Steering Committee may contact the member concerned to verify whether there are justified reasons or whether the member wishes to continue participating.

Before any exclusion for inactivity, the Steering Committee will inform the member concerned in writing of the grounds under consideration and give that member the opportunity to be heard within a reasonable deadline. The Steering Committee will assess the situation, in consultation with the secretariat where appropriate, and decide whether to maintain participation, issue a warning, suspend participation in specific activities, or terminate participation.

Where there are reasonable grounds to consider that a member no longer fulfils one or more of the membership criteria, the Steering Committee will inform the member concerned and give that member the opportunity to submit any relevant supporting information. The Steering Committee will assess the situation, inform the secretariat, and decide whether the member continues to participate, whether any remedial action or clarification is required, or whether membership shall be terminated.

A member that resigns, is excluded, or whose membership is otherwise terminated, will no longer be invited to meetings and other Platform activities, and will be removed from all mailing lists and communication tools used by the Platform.

Where appropriate, a replacement may be selected in accordance with the applicable membership and selection arrangements.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRANSPARENCY REQUIREMENTS

The Centre secretariat, Platform members, the Steering Committee, as well as any other participants, will respect confidentiality rules that apply to discussion, in particular for the safety of members. They are subject to the obligation of professional secrecy.

Should members fail to respect these obligations, the Steering Committee may take appropriate measures including considering temporary removal or exclusion of parties.

Relevant adopted documents concerning the Platform, including its list of Members, the agendas, public minutes from quarterly meetings, and annual conference conclusions, will be made available online.

Exceptions to publication apply only where disclosure of a document would undermine the protection of a public or private interest as defined in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) N° 1049/2001[1]. Applications for access to documents held by the Platform will be handled in accordance with that Regulation.

Personal data will be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 2018/1725.

[1] Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43).

8. ACCESSIBILITY

Meetings of the Platform, whether taking place online, in person or in hybrid format, will be designed and implemented with appropriate technological tools with a view to remove accessibility barriers and enable full and equal participation.

9. REMUNERATION AND MEETING EXPENSES

No remuneration will be provided for activities undertaken within the scope of the Platform.

Attendance to in-person Platform meetings by members will be reimbursed by the Commission via the Centre secretariat. This may include per-diems, travel, and accommodation expenses incurred by a maximum of two representatives per member organisation or network.

Reimbursement will be made in accordance with the provisions in force within the Commission and within the limits of the available appropriations allocated to the Commission departments under the annual procedure for the allocation of resources.

ANNEX

The Code of Conduct of the Stakeholder Platform

Members are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity, regardless of differences in opinion or perspective.

Members will respect and uphold the values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in all activities carried out in the Platform.

Participation in the Platform will not affect the autonomy, mandates, positions, professional independence, or the editorial independence of participating organisations and networks.

Any form of harassment, bullying, or discrimination, including but not limited to, physical, technology-facilitated or verbal abuse, violence, threats, sexual misconduct, offensive language, or behaviours that seek to belittle, marginalise, or humiliate individuals or groups is strictly prohibited.

Harassment refers to single or repeated cases of unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical behaviour, whether in person, online or through other forms of contact, the goal or consequence of which is violating a person's dignity, victimising, humiliating, undermining, threatening or creating a hostile, degrading, or offensive environment for a person. Such behaviour can be associated with but not limited to a variety of grounds, including those listed under discrimination.

Bullying is unwanted, recurring aggressive behaviour, the goal or consequence of which is victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening an individual or group of individuals. It causes psychological and/or physical harm, and/or causes the personality, dignity, physical or psychological integrity of a person to be affected in the execution of their work. Bullying may involve misuse or abuse of power/authority. It can be physical, verbal, social or relational, cyber, and work-related. Such behaviour can be associated with but not limited to a variety of grounds, including those listed under discrimination.

Discrimination occurs when people are treated less favourably than others in a comparable situation only because they belong, or are perceived as belonging, to a certain group or category of people. Discrimination can take the form of unequal treatment because of age, disability, ethnicity, class and background, political belief, race, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, language, culture, and any other characteristic protected by law. Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Discrimination is direct when based on one of the protected criteria; a person is treated less favourably than a person without said characteristic; or is not treated the same in a comparable situation and without objective justification foreseen by the law. It is indirect when a disposition, criterion, or apparently neutral practice is susceptible to generating a specific disadvantage for a person with a protected criterion and without objective justification foreseen by the law, relative to others.

This Code of Conduct applies to the Platform's meetings, the annual conference, working group meetings, and to any mailing lists or other engagement taking place as part of the Platform and its activities.

Electronically signed on 18/11/2026 16:51 (UTC+01) in accordance with Article 11 of Commission Decision (EU) 2021/2121