

How we prepare for the German elections

The year 2021 marks the "super election year": six German states will elect their state parliaments and the German federal election will take place in September. We are convinced that Facebook can make a positive contribution to the safety and transparency of elections. Every election is different – that's why we have teams focused specifically on the elections in Germany. Below, we would like to share how we are preparing for the elections.

01

Removing harmful content

- Keeping people safe on Facebook and Instagram is always our top priority.
- We have a global set of rules – called our [Community Standards](#) – that publicly explain what is and isn't allowed on our service. If you post something that goes against our rules, we will remove it.
- This includes misinformation that could lead to physical imminent harm and misinformation about the election process which could prevent people from voting.
- Since 2016 we have tripled the size of the teams working on safety and security to more than 35,000 people. This includes about 15,000 people who are responsible for reviewing content.
- We have also pioneered the use of artificial intelligence to find and remove harmful content quicker.
- From April to June 2021, we took action against 31.5 million pieces of content globally for violating our hate speech policy. We removed nearly 98 % of hate speech before someone reports – up from 24 % in 2017.
- In June 2021, we introduced [changes to keep Facebook groups safe](#). These include ways to recommend groups and restrict the reach of groups and their members, reducing privileges for those who break our rules. In addition, we recently removed political groups, as well as newly created groups, from recommendations in Germany.

02

Combating misinformation

- We remove misinformation that violates our community standards.
- We reduce the distribution of false news, when it's marked as false by our third party fact checking partners. We continue to work with over 80 fact-checking organizations that review and rate content in more than 60 languages around the world. In Germany, our partners are [AFP](#), [Correctiv](#) and [dpa](#).
- Once fact-checkers rate something as false, we reduce its distribution and provide more context to users.
 - We send notifications to users who shared the content.
 - We add warnings and friction to show users fact-checker's articles if they try to share the content;
 - We add an overlay on top of the content that has already been shared, for anyone that may still come across it.
 - When users saw those warning labels, 95% of the time they did not go on to view the original content.
- We don't feel it is our place to act as referee in political debates or to prevent statements made by politicians from reaching their audience, which in turn prevents these statements from being subjected to public debate or public examination.
- This is why our independent fact-checkers do not check content and ads that belong to politicians. However, when politicians share content that was previously rated false or partly false, it receives reduced distribution in Facebook's newsfeed.

03

Changes to address virality

- We have made fundamental changes to WhatsApp and Messenger to address the virality of misinformation. That's why we've introduced forward limits.
- We have reduced the number of people you can forward a message to to just five chats at once and introduced the 'forwarded' and 'highly forwarded' labels.
- We have since further reduced the number of people you can send a 'highly forwarded' message to to just one chat at once.
- Limiting forwarding is an effective way to slow the spread of viral misinformation. The introduction of forward limits has resulted in a 70 % reduction in the number of highly forwarded messages on WhatsApp.

- We use machine-learning to identify and ban accounts engaged in this behavior, and we ban around 2 million accounts a month globally for this type of abuse.
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04

Political ads transparency

- We believe political discussion and debate should be transparent to every voter, which is why over the past few years we've introduced a number of tools that provide more information about political ads on Facebook and Instagram.
 - Anybody who wants to run political ads in Germany must go through a verification process to prove who they are and that they live in Germany.
 - Every political ad in Germany is also labelled with a 'paid by' disclaimer, so you can see who paid for them.
 - We also put all political ads that run in Germany in our [Ad Library](#) so that everyone can see what ads are running, what types of people saw them and how much was spent. This fully searchable archive will store these ads for seven years.
 - In addition, anybody can click on an ad they see on Facebook and get more information on why they are seeing it as well as choose to block ads from particular advertisers.
 - In the Ad Preferences on Facebook and Instagram, it is also possible to choose if someone would like to see fewer ads about social issues, elections or politics in the News Feed.
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05

Tackling election interference

- Election interference is something we take incredibly seriously. Over the past three and a half years, we have regularly shared our findings about coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) we detect and remove from our platforms. We show recent progress in our [monthly report](#).
- We've built specialised global teams to stop this kind of activity, focusing on coordinated inauthentic behavior - when groups of people use sophisticated networks of Pages, Groups and accounts to try and manipulate public debate.
- It's important to stress that we take action against these networks because of their deceptive behavior, not because of the content they are sharing, which may or may not be harmful.

- Since 2017, we've taken down over 100 of these networks worldwide, many ahead of major domestic elections.
 - We block millions of fake accounts at registration every day even before they are reported to us.
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06

Support of politicians

- We provide politicians with a number of useful tools to help them engage with voters in a safe and responsible way. Measures such as two-factor authentication as well as Facebook Security and Privacy Checkup help protect candidates' accounts from unauthorized access and identity fraud. We also support third-party security and authentication methods such as Google Authenticator or LastPass.
 - To reduce and prevent harmful comments, we provide various tools for content moderation. They can be used, for example, to filter out offensive posts or block comments containing certain keywords. Page administrators can also remove or block people.
 - We are regularly updating our resources for candidates as well as their staff and our teams are here to support those running for office including hosting workshops, virtual events and best practices.
 - We have a special focus on supporting female candidates, who are often exposed to much sharper voices online than their male counterparts. In regular online events, together with our partners from the counter speech and resilience fields, we provide information on measures, features and tactics for effective moderation. This includes advice on how to preserve constructive debates as well as how to deal with incriminating comments. Furthermore, we offer an additional reporting tool as well as individual consultation if needed.
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07

Facebook Protect

- As part of our preparation for the German federal election, we are expanding [Facebook Protect](#), which we first launched in 2019 in the United States, to Germany. This is a voluntary program for candidates, their campaigns and elected officials in Germany that provides additional security for their accounts and Pages.

Related links:

- [Facebook Germany Newsroom](#)
- [Ad Library](#)
- [Facebook Community Standards](#)
- [Community Standards Enforcement Report](#)
- [Transparency Center](#)
- [Overview of efforts to combat misinformation, polarization, and dangerous organizations](#)
- [Resources for candidates in the federal election](#)

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