

The Perugia Declaration

On 16th and 17th February 2018 an international conference of experts on contemporary political campaigning was held at the University of Perugia. The event took place during the campaign for the Italian national elections due to be held on 4th March 2018. The workshop also coincided with new allegations of electoral manipulation via social media in the US, following similar claims in France, Germany and the UK. Participants in the workshop made the following declaration:

Noting that recent elections in France, Germany, the US, and the Brexit Referendum have been tainted by allegations of foreign involvement by means of new forms of social media targeted advertising and breaches of election law,

Noting that given the lack of transparency neither citizens nor parliamentarians have access to data and evidence sufficient to evaluate allegations of improper election manipulation,

Noting that only 68% of Italian parliamentarians declare election expenses and the existing rules of election supervision are not sufficiently enforced,¹

Noting that Facebook does not provide access to sufficient public data and has been criticised by Parliamentarians from the UK and elsewhere for potentially facilitating illegal foreign involvement in elections.

We call on the Italian Parliament to urgently review the rules and the enforcement of the existing laws regulating electoral campaigning to foster a more pluralistic and fair competition.

We call on all candidates in the current Italian general elections to report accurately all spending including spending on social media, and parties to facilitate open transparency of these new forms of social media campaigning,

We call on election monitoring authorities for the review of electoral expenses, namely special Parliamentary Committees, the *Corte dei Conti* and the local *Collegi di garanzia elettorale* to enforce the existing laws and report openly on non-compliance,

Building on the call by Experts at the University of Amsterdam in September 2017, we call on Facebook, Twitter, Google and other online platforms to share publicly the full range of paid political contents, disclose the sponsoring actors, and identify the categories of target audiences. This should be done globally as this is an issue that affects elections worldwide.

Moreover, we call on the Council of Europe to enact a Recommendation on the use of the Internet in election campaigns regarding the need for more transparency in line with democratic values and fundamental rights under the European Convention on Human Rights.

We the undersigned,

Experts from academia and civil society, gathered for the workshop “Social Media and Data Driven Targeting in election campaigns” at the University of Perugia

¹ Patrimoni trasparenti: Redditi, proprietà e spese elettorali dei politici nazionali della XVII Legislatura (2016), Roma: Openpolis <http://minidossier.openpolis.it/2016/01/PatrimoniTrasparenti>

February 17, 2018

Paolo Mancini, University of Perugia (Italy)
Damian Tambini, London School of Economics (UK)
Alexandre Alaphilippe, Saper Vedere (Belgium)
Rosalba Belmonte, University of Perugia (Italy)
Sara Bentivegna, University of Rome “La Sapienza” (Italy)
Giovanni Boccia Artieri, University of Urbino (Italy)
Marzia Bona, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (Italy)
Giuseppina Bonerba, University of Perugia (Italy)
Samantha Bradshaw, Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford (UK)
Christopher Cepernich, University of Turin (Italy)
Riccardo Coluccini, Hermes Center for Transparency and Digital Human Rights (Italy)
Tom Dobber, University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands)
Marius Dragomir, Center for Media, Data and Society of the Central European University (Hungary)
Daniel Fazekas, Bakamo.social (Hungary)
Fabio Giglietto, University of Urbino (Italy)
Johannes Hillje, Political and communications consultant (Germany)
Sam Jeffers, Who Targets me? (UK)
Louis Knight-Webb, Who Targets me? (UK)
Giuseppe Lauricella, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (Italy)
Rita Marchetti, University of Perugia (Italy)
Marco Mazzoni, University of Perugia (Italy)
Roberto Mincigrucci, University of Perugia (Italy)
Benedetto Ponti, University of Perugia (Italy)
Luca Recchi, University of Perugia (Italy)
Federico Sarchi, Facebook tracking exposed (Italy)
Marie-Therese Sekwenz
Anna Stanziano, University of Perugia (Italy)
Augusto Valeriani, Università di Bologna (Italy)
Kristof Varga, Bakamo.social (Hungary)
Sofia Verza, University of Perugia (Italy)