

Transparency International EU

The global coalition against corruption

Why Transparency International EU left X

Nicholas Aiossa · Thursday, November 21st, 2024

You may have noticed our recent announcement that we would be leaving X, Elon Musk's social media platform. This was a decision that was not done in haste, borne from many internal discussions, and a witnessing of a platform that in our judgement increasingly departed from Transparency International EU's (TI EU) values, namely transparency, integrity, and accountability.

We have used X (formerly known as Twitter) as a social media tool for 14 years. We invested a great deal of time cultivating relevant followers and engaging in topical discussions on how to better fight corruption together. For a small organisation, it greatly helped amplify our policy recommendations and advocacy messages to a much wider audience.

It is well documented that X has drastically changed since Elon Musk purchased it two years ago. Algorithms were changed, and blue tick purchases led to unverified engagement and the beginning of the spread of vast amounts of misinformation. And anyone using the platform will have seen a rising amount of racist, misogynistic, antisemitic, Islamophobic, conspiratorial nonsense. Some harmful content was even being pushed and amplified by Elon Musk himself. In response to legitimate criticism from civil society, Musk has also sought to silence those that challenge his platform through Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), and has updated X's terms and conditions last month to make those vexatious lawsuits more favourable to him.

Directly relevant to TI EU, in July of this year, the European Commission found, in a preliminary assessment, that X had breached new digital content rules under the Digital Services Act—a piece of legislation that we worked on to improve the transparency and accountability of the largest online platforms. The Commission found evidence that X's policies allowed for the spread of malicious content and for actors to deceive users. It also found that the platform does not comply with EU transparency requirements on advertising, undermining essential supervision and research to identify emerging risks. The investigation continues, focusing on X's unwillingness to stop the spread of illegal content and misinformation. Elon Musk's response was to spread unverified allegations against the Commission and personally insult then-Commissioner Breton after further concerns were raised.

Cumulatively, and with this apparent disregard for EU legislation, as well as personal attacks against the Commissioners trying to enforce those rules, it is uniquely untenable for us as a Brussels-based organisation to continue to be on this platform.

So, we took the decision to leave X and focus our attention on getting our anti-corruption messages out through other mediums, such as [BlueSky](#) and [LinkedIn](#). We are hardly pioneering in our exodus from X, with [many leaving](#) the platform. In its explanation for leaving this week, [The Guardian newspaper](#) called X a “toxic media platform” with “disturbing content promoted or found on the platform, including far-right conspiracy theories and racism.” We would agree.

Our decision does not commit Transparency International as a movement or any other TI entity or individual to follow suit. Many civil society organisations choose or must remain on X for advocacy purposes, and we respect their choice. Many Brussels-based civil society organisations, politicians, and even the European Commission, which is claiming the platform is in breach of EU rules, continue to remain on X. Each organisation or individual needs to evaluate the pros and cons of X and come to their respective decision to stay or go. We have made ours.

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