

To: Sheryl Sandberg
From: xxzhang@facebook.com [Xiangxin Zhang]
Date: October 8, 2018
Subject: Action Plan of Public Concerns

Dear Sheryl,

As you requested, this is the action plan for the top 3 public concerns.

Firstly, we need to further protect user privacy by improving technology-based defense against hacking activities and restricting data sharing with companies.

Our most recent data leakage was caused by a weakness in “a feature allowing Facebook members to view how their profile appeared to others.”¹ A tiny weakness in our system where 2.23 billion monthly active users are present worldwide² is going to attract regulators’ attention easily. Recently, Britain’s information regulator said it intends to hit us with the maximum amount allowed by law over data practices related to Cambridge Analytica³, which was up to 1.63bn (£1.25bn) - 4% of our annual global turnover⁴. Apparently, we have no choice but to strengthen our immunity to hacking, or we lose significant amount of our yearly income.

We originally allowed third-party apps to access wide-ranging data about the friends of users who had signed up, and now we need to reconsider about it. There were some serious issues, for example, Cambridge Analytica solicited on Facebook and told people it was for academic research made them feel safe, which finally hurt us, as our users will not trust us anymore when they notice it. In order to bring our users back, we need to be make changes on policies related to data sharing.

Moreover, we have to create a neutral platform by prohibiting inflammatory content, adjusting algorithms to be politically neutral and continually banning suspicious accounts.

¹ “Facebook data breach probe launched by Irish watchdog,” BBC, October 3, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-45732071>

² “Facebook reports 50 millions users affected by security bug,” Xinhua, September 29, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/29/c_137500304.htm

³ Taylor, Jacob, “Facebook gave Russian internet company data access extension”, NBC News, July 11, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/facebook-gave-russian-internet-company-data-access-extension-n890541>

⁴ Kleinman, Zoe, “Will Facebook be fined after hack attack?”, BBC, October 1, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-45706809>

⁵ Rutledge, Pamela B., “How Cambridge Analytica Mined Data for Voter Influence”, Psychology Today, March 21, 2018, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/positively-media/201803/how-cambridge-analytica-mined-data-voter-influence>

Since 2011, people linked to Iranian state media had set up Facebook pages with fake names and used them to blast out divisive messages aimed at other countries, including the United States and Britain⁶. It is undermining our company by making us more likely to be regulated by the government when we are utilized as a political tool. Being regulated will tremendously harm our stock performance, which is unacceptable. Therefore, prohibiting politically inflammatory content is necessary.

Our algorithms also need to be adjusted to be unbiased in terms of political preference, and algorithms include machine learning, a rapidly spreading technique allowing computers to independently learn by churning through the copious disorganized data, including data we generate in digital environments., and our own research shows that the choices our algorithm makes can influence people's mood and even affect elections by shaping turnout⁷. Redesigning our algorithms is one of our most urgent missions, as algorithms are unceasingly developing by information generated in our platform, and if we do not make it as less prejudiced as possible, the prejudice in our algorithms will accumulate and finally lead users to a biased direction.

We already banned accounts before, for instance, we banned hundreds of fake accounts and pages, some of which employed similar behaviors that the Russian-backed Internet Research Agency employed in 2016⁸. This is the most time-consuming action, but we have to do manual suspension and perpetual ban anyway.

We also need to eliminate misinformation by deducing the distribution of misinformation, increasing information transparency and developing technologies to counter fake accounts.

To defend freedom of speech while making our platform to be free of divisive information and misinformation, we need to be careful about what we are distributing to our users. Freedom of speech is protected by law, so we cannot simply restrict what people are posting, but we can stop distributing posts that are clearly wrong instead of directly removing it from our platform⁹.

People do bad things when they are hidden behind the scene, and we have never disclosed information about sponsors behind any online political advertisement or paid communication. This is a common practice in traditional news media, and it is crucial for us in terms of gaining

⁶ Ingram, David, "Iran's Facebook strategy had echoes of Russian playbook", NBC News, August 23, 2018,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/iran-s-facebook-strategy-had-echoes-russian-playbook-n90309>

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⁷ Tufekci, Zeynep, "The Real Bias Built In at Facebook", The New York Times, May 19, 2016,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/19/opinion/the-real-bias-built-in-at-facebook.html>

⁸ Memoli, Mike, "Facebook launches new cybersecurity tools for U.S. political campaigns," NBC News, Sep 17, 2018,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/facebook-launches-new-cybersecurity-tools-u-s-political-campaigns-n910411>

⁹ Swisher, Kara, "Full transcript: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Recode Decode", Recode, July 18, 2018,

<https://www.recode.net/2018/7/18/17575158/mark-zuckerberg-facebook-interview-full-transcript-kara-swisher>

credibility either¹⁰, as it is a way to show our attitude that we are willing to dealing with the issue by making all information, including sponsors' identities and location transparent.

An environment where information is trustworthy and friendly is essential in any big communities similar to Facebook. To construct such an environment, we as a technology company should prioritize technology-based solutions, for instance, we can do it by filtering offensive content with image recognition technologies¹¹. As our CEO mentioned, we are going to build AI tools to go find these fake accounts, find coordinated networks of inauthentic activity and take them down¹².

All the best,

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¹⁰ Kirkpatrick, David D., "Facebook Is Failing to Aid Inquiry Into 'Fake News,' British Lawmakers Say", The New York Times, July 28, 2018,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/world/europe/uk-facebook-fake-news.html>

¹¹ Castillo, Michelle, "Facebook will begin taking down fake news intended to encourage violence", CNBC, July 18, 2018,

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/07/18/facebook-to-take-down-fake-news-intended-to-encourage-violence.html>

¹² Swisher, Kara, "Full transcript: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Recode Decode", Recode, July 18, 2018,

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<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/positively-media/201803/how-cambridge-analytica-mined-data-voter-influence>

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/world/europe/uk-facebook-fake-news.html>

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