



Brussels, 21 April 2022

*Press release*

## **ERGA shares the European Commission goals and calls for a higher level of transparency of political advertising**

ERGA has published its [statement](#) about the proposal for a Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising published by the European Commission on 25 November 2021. ERGA members fully support the approach of the European Commission imposing obligations on the whole value chain of political advertising as well as its ambition to ensure fair and transparent campaigns, both online and offline. This new harmonized approach in the implementation of EU democratic values and fundamental rights represents as a milestone for the audiovisual sector, which strengthens European democracy.

While ERGA expresses an overall positive assessment of the draft provisions, some areas need further improvement to ensure a greater impact on electoral integrity and protection of fundamental rights. In this regard, the reinforcement of the sanction regime and of the transparency of platforms' behaviour covered by the regulation should be considered.

However, ERGA notes that the notion of "providers of advertising services" could be further detailed in order to better identify the categories of players and that, with regard to the issue-based advertising, the proposed definition is very wide and risks to encompass cases that are not strictly and directly related to "political advertising". Further clarifications of the definitions would be appropriate in order to avoid any potential risk of undermining fundamental rights, such as, freedom of speech. In this regard, ERGA confirms the views expressed in its report "Notions of disinformation and related concepts" published in 2021. The importance of common understanding of notions such as political advertising has already been addressed by ERGA in [its report](#) on Notions of disinformation and related concepts. ERGA also recalls that online advertising services are provided on a cross-border basis. Therefore, there is also a need for the adoption of a set of proportionate, dissuasive, effective and harmonized sanctioning regime in all Member States. Furthermore, ERGA suggests that the proposal presents an opportunity to go further and calls for the creation of comprehensive and real-time political ads repositories, providing more data granularity on each individual ad. These libraries will greatly help in collecting data that are crucial for the monitoring of the new rules and will increase the transparency of platforms' behaviour for the benefit of users. National Regulatory Authorities and citizens would be able to link the ads they see to the political actor on whose behalf it is published and its political and sponsored nature, know how much has been spent on the ads or on the campaign.

Finally, ERGA would like to highlight the need to reconsider the approach towards microtargeting activities, and the opportunity to appoint a single national point of contact at EU level. The appointment

of a single point of contact could indeed complicate the coordination amongst the Authorities and undermine the supervision of online platforms. For the sake of efficiency and effectiveness, ERGA recommends that the proposed Regulation rely expressly on existing cooperation structures and mechanisms such as the ERGA and the procedures that ERGA has put in place to enhance the cooperation among its National Regulatory Authorities in cross-border cases.

**About ERGA:**

*The European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) consists of the national regulatory authorities in the field of audiovisual media services. ERGA advises the European Commission and facilitates cooperation between the regulatory bodies in the EU. Mr Karim Ibourki, President of the Belgian CSA (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel) is the current Chairperson of ERGA.*