



HOUSE OF LORDS

The Rt Hon the Baroness Stowell of Beeston MBE
Chair of the Select Committee on Communications and Digital
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

Nusrat Ghani MP
Minister for Europe
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

9 May 2024

Dear Minister,

I write regarding action on mis/disinformation and the role of brand safety organisations.

Background

The Committee is currently holding an [inquiry](#) into the future of news. On 16 April a witness raised concerns about the work of online brand safety organisations, such as the Global Disinformation Index (GDI), which provide ratings guides for online advertisers.

Mr Sayers, CEO of UnHerd, [stated](#) that there were “detached and unaccountable” brand safety agencies which could affect the advertising revenues of publishers by issuing a low score. He further contended that “the Government are paying for this organisation [the GDI] right now”.

We received a letter from GDI on 29 April stating that its current work involves providing commercial brand safety tools for advertisers to “reduce the unintended monetisation of deceptive and highly adversarial online content” and “ensure their brands are not supporting Russian disinformation about the Ukraine war, election conspiracy theories, climate change denial, or hate speech”.

GDI states that it was funded by FCDO between 2018 and 2022 to “develop a method of detecting adversarial narratives at scale to help advertisers avoid inadvertently monetising websites operated by the Kremlin, its affiliates, or content promoting state-sponsored disinformation”, as well as to conduct a series of media market reviews. GDI states that it has received no further funding since the grant expired in March 2023.

Information request

I would be grateful for clarification on the following points:

- What role do brand safety organisations play in the Government’s work to tackle mis/disinformation?
- To what extent is this considered within the work of the Online Advertising Taskforce?
- How much Government funding has the GDI received to date and are there evaluations of its work? If so, could you provide the outcome of these evaluations?

I look forward to receiving your response. I am copying this letter to the Minister of State for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries and Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy as the matter also relates to their responsibilities.



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Your sincerely,

Anna Stowell

BARONESS STOWELL OF BEESTON

Copied to:

Julia Lopez MP
Minister of State for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries
Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Saqib Bhatti MP
Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology