Brussels, 19 April 2019

Facebook Transparency Rules prevent EU-wide get-out-to-vote campaigns

Dear Commissioner Frans Timmermans,
Dear Secretary General Martin Selmayr,

We take the liberty to draw your attention to some unintended consequences of the new transparency rules introduced by Facebook ahead of the forthcoming European elections.

By de facto banning pan-EU campaigns, these new rules affect not only EU political parties, but also hundreds of not-for-profit organizations and citizens movements currently running get-out-to-vote campaigns across the continent.

While we understand that Facebook is ready to allow EU political parties and EU institutions to run EU-wide ads on its platforms – as a result of your own letter of April 16 addressed to Mr Clegg –, it is still preventing other organisations like ours
from using Facebook, Facebook Messenger and Instagram for our EU-wide paid communication campaigns whose only aim is to encourage EU citizens to vote.

This is deeply problematic insofar Facebook rules deny the pan-EU, multilingual dimension of the European elections as enshrined in both the EU Treaties and a common EU electoral law. As such, Facebook encroaches upon fundamental EU rights and freedoms, such as free movement and political participation in Europe.

We expect from the EU Commission, as a guardian of the Treaties, to address the issue with Facebook and represent our concerns and reservations as you have successfully done in the case of EU political parties. This is all the more so when our daily work across the continent is motivated by the need to mobilize citizens ahead of and beyond the next EU elections in line with the values upon which the EU is founded.

We look forward to hearing from you,

Alberto Alemanno, Jean Monnet Professor of EU Law, HEC Paris and Founder, The Good Lobby (Transparency Register: 308319527120-86)
Cristina Banita, European Youth Card Association – EYCA
Manuela Mio, The Good Lobby
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