

# Definition of ‘political advertising’

Commission proposal for a Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising.

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Bitkom welcomes the European Commission’s proposal for a Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, as transparent and fair online campaigning is crucial for the integrity of democratic elections. Yet, in the following we would like to express our concern regarding the definition of political advertising and the scope of the Regulation.

Bitkom calls on the co-legislators to **clarify the intended scope** of the Regulation, which is at best unclear. It is crucial that the Regulation covers only political advertising that has been paid for. Including organic user generated content - i.e. unpaid content created by any person - in the definition of political advertising would have a significant negative impact on the civic discourse, as labelling requirements would be applicable to this content.

To resolve this issue, it is imperative that policymakers clarify the definition of “political advertising” to protect free speech. The definition of “advertisement” should be explicitly **restricted to content presented against remuneration** in line with the DSA approach. Bitkom therefore urges the co-legislators to limit the scope of the Regulation to political advertising **services** only and clearly define the scope.

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Bitkom represents more than 2,700 companies of the digital economy, including 2,000 direct members. Through IT- and communication services alone, our members generate a domestic annual turnover of 190 billion Euros, including 50 billion Euros in exports. The members of Bitkom employ more than 2 million people in Germany. Among these members are 1,000 small and medium-sized businesses, over 500 startups and almost all global players. They offer a wide range of software technologies, IT-services, and telecommunications or internet services, produce hardware and consumer electronics, operate in the digital media sector or are in other ways affiliated with the digital economy. 80 percent of the members’ headquarters are located in Germany with an additional 8 percent both in the EU and the USA, as well as 4 percent in other regions of the world. Bitkom promotes the digital transformation of the German economy, as well as of German society at large, enabling citizens to benefit from digitalisation. A strong European digital policy and a fully integrated digital single market are at the heart of Bitkom’s concerns, as well as establishing Germany as a key driver of digital change in Europe and globally.