

As Zuckerberg visits, France threatens new rules on Facebook

May 10 2019, by Angela Charlton



French President Emmanuel Macron speaks during a media conference at an EU summit in Sibiu, Romania, Thursday, May 9, 2019. European Union leaders on Thursday start to set out a course for increased political cooperation in the wake of the impending departure of the United Kingdom from the bloc. (AP Photo/Andreea Alexandru)

France welcomed Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg on Friday with a threat of sweeping new regulation.

With Facebook under fire on multiple fronts, Zuckerberg is in Paris to show that his social media giant is working hard to limit [violent extremism](#) and hate speech shared online.

But a group of French regulators and experts who spent weeks inside Facebook facilities in Paris, Dublin and Barcelona say the company isn't working hard enough.

Just before Zuckerberg met French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, the 10 officials released a report calling for laws allowing the government to investigate and fine social networks that don't take responsibility for the content that makes them money.

The French government wants the legislation to serve as a model for Europe-wide management of social networks. Several countries have introduced similar legislation, some tougher than what France is proposing.

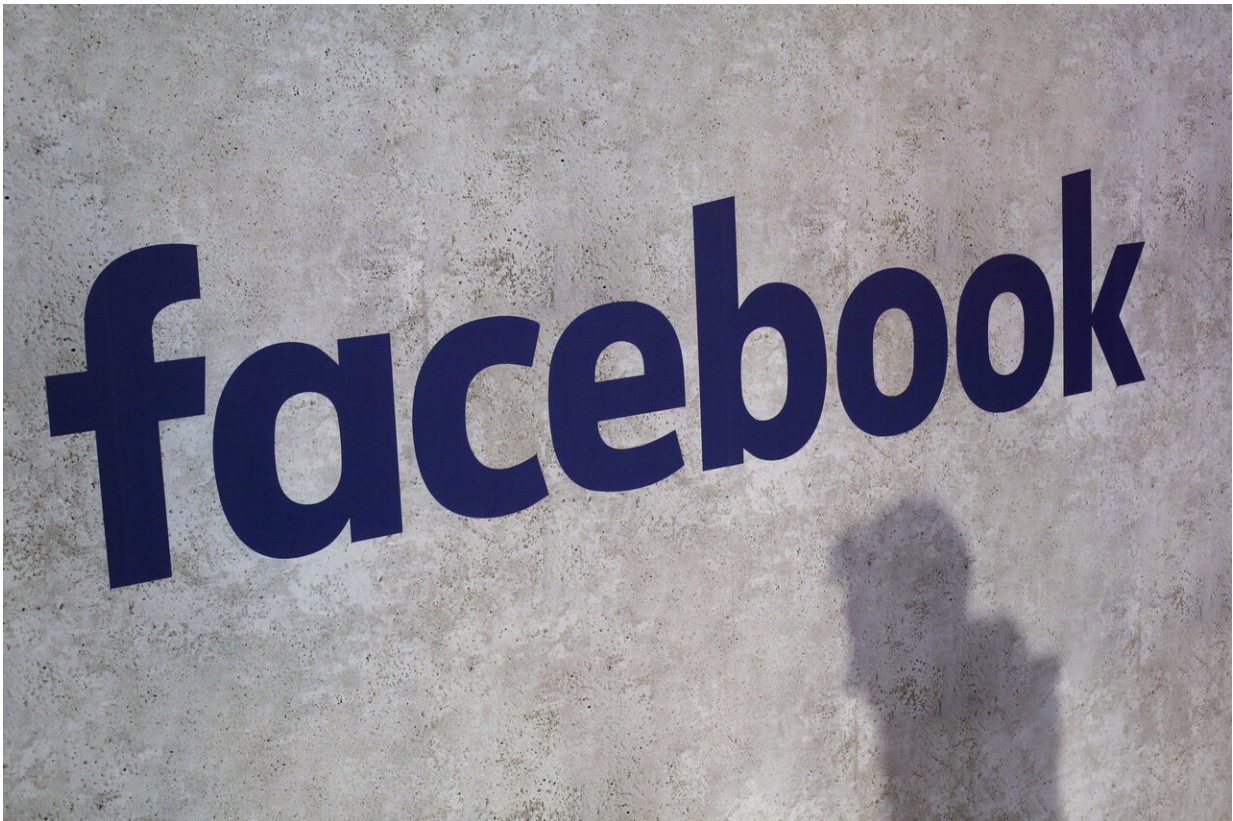
To an average user, it seems like the problem is intractable. Mass shootings are live-streamed, and online mobs are spreading rumors that lead to deadly violence. Facebook is even inadvertently creating celebratory videos using extremist content and auto-generating business pages for the likes of the Islamic State group and Al Qaida.

The company says it is working on solutions, and the French regulators praised Facebook for hiring more people and using artificial intelligence to track and crack down on dangerous content.

But they said Facebook didn't provide the French officials enough information about its algorithms to judge whether they were working,

and that a "lack of transparency ... justifies an intervention of public authorities."

The regulators recommended legally requiring a "duty of care" for big social networks, meaning they should moderate hate speech published on their platforms. They insist that any law should respect freedom of expression, but did not explain how Facebook should balance those responsibilities in practice.



This Jan. 17, 2017, file photo shows a Facebook logo displayed in a start-up companies gathering at Paris' Station F in Paris. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg will meet Friday May 10, 2019 French President Emmanuel Macron as the tech giant and France try to pioneer ways of fighting hate speech and violent extremism online. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus, File)

The regulators acknowledged that their research didn't address [violent content](#) shared on private chat groups or encrypted apps, or on groups like 4chan or 8chan, where criminals and extremists and those concerned about privacy increasingly turn to communicate.

Facebook said Zuckerberg is in France as part of meetings around Europe to discuss future regulation of the internet. Facebook agreed to embed the French regulators as an effort to jointly develop proposals to fight online hate content.

Zuckerberg's visit comes notably amid concern about [hate speech](#) and disinformation around this month's European Parliament elections.

Next week, the leaders of France and New Zealand will meet tech leaders in Paris for a summit seeking to ban acts of violent extremism and terrorism from being shown online.

Facebook has faced challenges over privacy and security lapses and accusations of endangering democracy—and it came under criticism this week from its own co-founder.

Chris Hughes said in a New York Times opinion piece Thursday that it's time to break up Facebook. He says Zuckerberg has turned Facebook into an innovation-suffocating monopoly and lamented the company's "slow response to Russian agents, violent rhetoric and fake news."

Zuckerberg said this year that global regulators should take a more active role in governing the internet, but has been vague on what kind of regulation he favors.

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