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***Facebook/ Cambridge Analytica: The alleged impact and risks for electoral
processes***

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We are here today to look at the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica case from the perspective of the moment we live. It comes at a pivotal time in the history of European integration. One member state, the UK is leaving the Union after an ill-conceived referendum and the ninth elections to the European Parliament will take place in eleven months from now.

The alleged impact of the data leak on the results of the UK referendum need to be ascertained by the investigation of the UK Information Commission. We are awaiting the results of this investigation. As consequences of the referendum will influence the life of generations to come, we believe that conclusions need to be drawn from this investigation. When bad things come, only by finding out what exactly happened, we can prevent it from happening again.

Most importantly any future unlawful use of data analytics, manipulation of data and potential data leaks from social media platforms need to be prevented for future referenda or elections.

The EU is approaching its ninth European elections and is about to adopt new rules for the conduct of these elections for the first time in 40 years. One of the new elements will be the possibility to have electronic and online voting options. Naturally one of the concerns of citizens about this is to have the guarantee that their personal data is protected. The new rules on European elections amended by the Council decision will have the weight of an Union act and will therefore be subject to the judicial scrutiny of the European Court of Justice, which will give citizens much greater legal certainty than before.

The Facebook/ Cambridge Analytica case reveals that new technologies can be a blessing and a curse when it comes to elections. They provide an unprecedented

opportunity to reach out to the electorate but at the same time might open the door to unlawful uses of personal data with a view to manipulate the voter's choice. This is unacceptable as data protection is a fundamental right, which needs to be guaranteed.

That is why, legislators need to intervene in the interests of spreading more fairly the benefits of digitalisation and ensuring that it is not undermining the fundamental rights and the democratic principles, on which our society is founded.

We need to equip citizens with the appropriate legal base for the protection of their rights and personal data, and this is what the General Data Protection Regulation is expected to do.

However, it is also our duty to raise awareness among citizens that they need to be willing to exercise their data protection rights effectively, and not to take these issues light-heartedly by simply clicking on the "Agree with the Terms" button. We need to engage citizens in a democratic debate on the use of data for political campaigns and decision-making.

The Facebook/ Cambridge Analytica case is a test also for the upholding of the rule of law. If tech giants or anyone else implied in this case have broken the law they need to be made accountable for it.

More transparency is needed, more disclosure and cooperation from the big tech companies.

We know that new technologies are the future, so we need to find the appropriate way to regulate and set clear rules on the use of data analytics in electoral campaigns. All actors in this process should be made accountable and this requires collective, global effort.

The problem is much bigger than Facebook/ Cambridge Analytica and we need to solve it globally as tomorrow it will reappear under a different name.

We also have to spare no effort to ensure that the Facebook/ Cambridge Analytica case which has gained a lot of publicity will not undermine the trust of citizens in digitalization and have no negative impact on citizens' participation in future elections.