

Send via E-Mail: 27 March 2018

Dear colleagues, dear Secretariat,

The Cambridge Analytica scandal demonstrated the fraudulent use of Facebook-derived personal data by Cambridge Analytica and related service providers for election campaigning purposes. Many questions emerged as to the role these fraudulent acts could have played in the Brexit referendum results, election campaigns in the Czech Republic and possibly in more EU member states. Facebook as a platform was too decisive as it allowed Cambridge Analytica and potentially other political service providers to operate beyond what is legitimate. This is not only a Cambridge Analytica scandal it is a Facebook scandal.

As you may be aware of, the whistleblower Christopher Wylie, former research director at Cambridge Analytica, told the Observer that, in the context of the Referendum campaign, the *Vote Leave* had channelled money through another campaign to a firm linked to the controversial data company Cambridge Analytica, potentially in a breach of electoral law. The Leave.eu campaign would also have used Cambridge Analytica services.

These allegations go largely beyond the issue of personal data protection and online companies regulation. They go to the heart of democracy: the legitimacy of democratic votes. As a matter of fact, given the narrow gap between the remainers and the brexiteers, they demonstrate that a private company may have, by breaching some fundamental rules, influenced the issue of one of the recent most important votes for the future of the EU and of the UK citizens.

As Members of the European Parliament and as committed Europeans and Democrats, we cannot remain silent in front of such allegations. European citizens have a right to know what Cambridge Analytica has done precisely. Facebook has to explain how exactly their platform was and is being used for political campaigning purposes.

For these reasons, we would like to propose that our AFCO committee, as the committee responsible for Constitutional Affairs, organizes a hearing with high level representatives from Facebook and from Cambridge Analytica as well as the whistleblower Christopher Wylie in order to get a proper understanding of the role these companies have played during the Brexit referendum campaign and in electoral campaigning.

If it turned out that those acts had a decisive impact on the referendum outcome, we believe this could have dramatic consequences on the democratic legitimacy of the latter. We firmly believe that our AFCO committee should play a leading role in this regard.

Thank you very much in advance,

Best,

Pascal Durand & Sven Giegold