
Vigeo Eiris issues a positive monitoring alert for digital American companies surpressing neo-Nazi propaganda

On August 25th, Vigeo Eiris issued a positive monitoring alert for four American companies (Alphabet (Google), Apple, Facebook and Twitter) that have suspended their services to accounts and websites associated with the “Alt-right” movement and the Daily Stormer website, which violate their policies prohibiting content that incites violence and disseminates neo-Nazi ideologies.

The Daily Stormer’s website helped organise the ‘Unite the Right’ rally in Charlottesville where a 32-year-old woman was killed and 19 people were injured after a man rammed a car into a crowd protesting against the white nationalist gathering. The website was especially criticised for an article posted by the site’s founder, Andrew Anglin, which criticised the protester who was killed.

It is the first time that major operators such Alphabet, Facebook and Twitter (Software & IT Services North America sector) or Apple (rated in the Technology-Hardware North America sector) have taken a clear stance by prohibiting the use of their infrastructures by racist groups using supremacist frameworks.

These companies have long been criticised, especially by the relatives of victims, for not doing enough to exercise adequate control over content published on their platform, to combat online hate, bigotry, discriminations, violence and terrorism.

For instance, in May 2017, Twitter, Facebook and Google were accused of enabling the San Bernardino terrorist attack¹. In June 2016² these three companies were sued over Paris massacre victims as well. In December 2016, they were prosecuted for providing 'material support' to Islamic State during the Orlando nightclub attack³.

The current alert sent to investors and asset managers is a positive monitoring alert indicating that Vigeo Eiris will upgrade the scores of the relevant companies if they confirm, simultaneous to their respect for freedom of expression, their decision to prevent neo-Nazi websites using their infrastructure, reinforce their monitoring and their response to all types of racism, calls inciting violence, and terrorism.

1 "Google, Facebook, Twitter accused of aiding San Bernardino terror attack" – Xinhua News Agency - 04/05/2017
- "Relatives of San Bernardino Massacre Victims Sue Twitter, Google, Facebook" – Sputnik News Service - 04/05/2017

2 - "Google and Facebook sued over Paris massacre victim" – Metro - 17/06/2016
- "Family of ISIS Paris attack victim sues Google, Facebook and Twitter" - The Washington Post – 17/06/2016

3 - "Google in 'ISIS' crisis (crisis) Orlando suit grows" – New York Post - 28/03/2017
- "Orlando nightclub victims' families sue Twitter, Google, Facebook" – Reuters - 21/12/2016
- "Facebook, Twitter, Google sued by Orlando shooting victims' families" – USA today - 19/12/2016

Criteria to which the scores upgrade may be applied by the agency include the commitment to, and means implemented by companies in the prevention of direct or indirect human rights violations, and the prevention of discrimination including racial discrimination. The rating process also examines whether Boards and their Audit committees, are reviewing and taking concrete measures to prevent and eliminate risks relating to involvement in Human Rights violations, as well as what specific measures are in place to manage the impacts of their products and services on Human Rights in society at large.

This alert follows another recent monitoring alert upgrade which Vigeo Eiris issued a few weeks ago (on June 26th, 2017), in respect of a significant number of listed American companies that publicly expressed their commitment to pursue climate change mitigation objectives defined in the Paris Climate Agreement (COP 21, December 2016). ([Download the press release](#))

In February 2017, Vigeo Eiris also issued a positive alert on three US companies taking legal action against President's anti-immigration decree "Muslim Ban". ([Download the press release](#))

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About Vigeo Eiris

Vigeo Eiris is an independent provider of global environmental, social and governance (ESG) research and services for investors, public and private organisations and NGOs. The agency evaluates the level of integration of sustainability factors in the strategy and the operations of organizations and undertakes a risk assessment to assist investors and companies in decision making.

Vigeo Eiris offers two types of services through separate business units:

- **Vigeo Eiris rating**, offers databases, sector-based analyses, ratings, benchmarks and portfolio screening, to serve all ethical and responsible investment strategies.
- **Vigeo Eiris enterprise** assesses organizations of all sizes, listed and not listed companies in order to support them in the integration of ESG criteria into their business functions and strategic operations.

Vigeo Eiris methodologies and rating services adhere to the strictest quality standards and have been certified to the independent ARISTA® standard. Vigeo Eiris is CBI (Climate Bond Initiative) Verifier.

Vigeo Eiris is represented in Paris, London, Boston, Brussels, Casablanca, Milan, Montreal, Santiago, Stockholm and Tokyo. The team is composed of more than 200 experts of 28 nationalities with diversified and complementary skills. Vigeo Eiris has developed the "Vigeo Eiris Global Network" made of 7 research providers (Australia, Brazil, Germany, Israel, Japan, Spain and Mexico).

For more information: www.vigeo-eiris.com