

Musk ditches X's election integrity team ahead of key votes around world

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Elon Musk, owner of X, has confirmed he has ditched his team working to prevent disruption to elections, just days after the EU announced the platform, formerly known as Twitter, had the highest proportion of disinformation in three European countries. Ahead of 70 elections around the globe in the coming year, the controversial businessman confirmed on X: "Oh you mean the 'Election Integrity' Team that was undermining election integrity? Yeah, they're gone." According to reports, several staff working out of the Dublin office including the co-lead of election disinformation team, Aaron Rodericks, have left the company. Overnight Musk appeared to give his first reaction to EU claims that X had the highest ratio of disinformation of the large social media platforms with a picture of three penguins bearing the logos of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube saluting another penguin bearing the X logo. Rodericks had recently secured an injunction against the company restraining the company from taking disciplinary action after he had posted information about the company's recruitment of staff for his team on his personal account. He claimed the company did nothing after he had been subjected to a barrage of abuse from people who accused him of trying to suppress freedom of speech on X. Last month he posted an advert on LinkedIn for eight new roles revealing he was seeking people with a "passion for protecting the integrity of elections and civic events, X is certainly at the centre of the conversation". Sweeping new laws came into force in August, compelling social media platforms to remove fake accounts, disinformation and hate speech, with X rivals Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Google and Microsoft all taking action and reporting back to the EU. While Twitter quit the code of practice designed by the EU to help the companies comply with the new laws, Musk promised earlier this year he would comply with the rules. Concerns over the platform's approach to content moderation under Musk's leadership have triggered an advertising boycott of the company, which relies on ads for the majority of its income. Musk has admitted that advertising revenues have fallen by about 60% since he bought the business last year and has blamed anti-hate speech campaign groups for the decline. He is suing the Center for Countering Digital Hate over its coverage of X and has also threatened to sue the Anti-Defamation League, which has raised concerns about antisemitic content on the platform. Farhad Divecha, managing director of London-based digital marketing agency Accuracast, said: "The fact that Elon Musk seems to have disbanded the team that deals with election integrity sends a clear signal that preventing disinformation or maintaining a level of integrity isn't a priority for X. This is one more factor adding to the concerns about brand safety, or ensuring brands aren't associated with objectionable content." The company was approached for comment.