The public consultation on regulation of online political advertising in Ireland is a welcome measure. Relying on platforms like Facebook and Twitter to regulate themselves is not a solution that legislators should embrace. These new surveillance capitalism businesses are international in nature. They socialise risk and privatise profit. Similarly, bringing online political advertising regulation in line with broadcast and print measures may sound progressive. But more needs to be done.

If there were one recommendation I could make it would be to extend the scope of the consultation beyond political advertising. Limiting the response to advertising is failing to acknowledge the nature of online marketing. Organic sharing of misinformation with the guise of truth is potentially more damaging than online advertising. During the last US presidential election for example, Macedonian teenagers lined their pockets by creating pro-Trump misinformation1. In the 48 hours around the UK's Brexit referendum, Russian twitter bots posted almost 45,000 tweets about the referendum2. Neither of these activities are advertising.

The nature of surveillance capitalism needs to be understood to properly regulate online marketing. Regulating platforms like Google and Facebook more like media entities would force online platforms to behave in a manner inline with cultural expectations around political communications. This would entail making them liable for defamation, ensuring some level of public understanding around their algorithms.

Specifically around advertising, platforms and publishers should be required by law to submit all political ads and versions of political ads to a central database, maintained by SIPO, the electoral commission or some similar body. Transparency should be hardwired into legislation, audiences should understand who's paying, where they are and why they're seeing any particular ad, including details of how they've been targeted – geotargeting, demographic data, or as a lookalike.