

FAIRTUBE E.V.

JULY 2022

REPORT OF FAIRTUBE SUPPORT CASES



FairTube

CREATED AND PRESENTED BY

THE DIRECTOR BOARD OF FAIRTUBE E.V.

www.fairtube.info

NUMBER OVERVIEW

REPORT MONITORING TIME FRAME:
SEPTEMBER 2021 - MARCH 2022

TOTAL

41 ENQUERIES WERE SUBMITTED

Enquiries that we found grounds to assess further and proceed to next step evaluation: 30

CASE OUTCOMES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Cases resolved in favour of creator | 11* |
| Cases confirmed by Youtube upon checkup | 6 |
| Cases confirmed credible by FairTube research / experience | 4 |
| Idle Creator: No Response upon follow up | 6 |
| Outside of FairTube's Expertise | 3 |
| (Enquiries rejected / No Reason to step in) | 10 |

*All resolved cases were deemed rightful by FairTube.
3 cases were resolved by YouTube during FairTube's communication/evaluation phase with the creator / prior to stepping in directly with YouTube.

GENERAL REASONS FOR CASE REJECTIONS:

Insufficient cooperation, insufficient information, false information, Idle creators

CATEGORIES:

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Harassment: | 3 |
| Partnership Programm Status: | 3 |
| Video Takedown: | 2 |
| Monetization: | 11 |
| Strike related: | 5 |
| Miscellaneous: | 6 |

GENERAL AREAS OF PROBLEMS

MAIN PROBLEMS CREATORS HAVE COMMUNICATED

HARASSMENT

- Difficulty to speak up about concerns and YouTube's often limited reaction/sensitivity led to frustration.
- The voiced concern surely have a protocol, yet this will in some cases lead to the victim feeling unheard, or not taken seriously by the support team.
- The Main Problems:
 - Cases often take long time to resolve
 - Form has in some cases not lead to help or solution
 - Issues have to be explained multiple times
 - In some cases only multiple appeals led to action
- Reaction and empathy / handling by expert staff on this topic is extremely critical due to possible damaging effects.

DAMAGE TO REPUTATION

- Niche subjects encountered targeted harassment / damage to reputation by community strikes, bots, spamming etc.
- The appeals process, albeit complicated to assess in some cases has turned out to often be an extremely lengthy process on YouTube's side.
- When the process is comparably lengthy, the creators felt powerless and frustrated.
- Although the cases are often complicated to understand and don't seem as critical to the functionality of a channel, it is important to take the creator's concerns seriously:
 - It can affect whole communities and the channel of a creator due to unfounded community strikes.
 - Possible loss of reputation and credibility
 - Threat to community interaction
 - Potential loss of cooperation partners

MONETIZATION & PARTNERSHIP STATUS

- Monetization was the most common and most critical field of support which creators contacted Fairtube about.
- The main problems in communication were:
 - Explanations for demonetization or dismissal were often very general.
 - It was often not possible to pinpoint videos or details.
 - Creator's re-appeals were often confirmed quickly and without sufficient further explanation.
 - The causes for demonetization seemed arbitrary in some cases as details were not sufficiently explained.
 - Comparable channels were monetized, rules seemed randomly applied.
 - The reapplication process will often be dismissed quickly at first and the creators will become frustrated or feel unheard.
 - Lack of transparency will lead to lengthy delays upon reapplication, no matter what the issue is.
 - YouTube refers to their rights to keep their investigative details private in order to avoid their measures and means of identification to be public.
 - Reapplications are only possible once a month, so there might be a loss in revenues even if the issue can be resolved afterwards.
 - Former accumulated revenues can be lost after 50 days due to reimbursement of advertisers.
 - Grave, sudden effects on earnings even if a false demonetization can be proven later.
- In some cases specific videos, for example educational, will be demonetized due to a lack of understanding from the creators side of how the YouTube system will evaluate certain details.
 - In some cases general guidelines will be sent that will often not provide enough details to help to understand the reason(s) for a demonetization.
- In other cases however, the creators have received great pointers on how to adjust the framework of the video to avoid false demonetization.
- Channels that meet all monetization marks but apparently are not deemed ad friendly still often display advertisements, without cutting creators in.
- Sudden demonetization can cause a massive impact on dependability, even for established creators
- In most cases, these practices do not take gravity of concern into account.

STRIKES & VIDEO TAKEDOWNS

- In select cases, strikes are seemingly unfounded or automatically triggered and find quick resolutions upon appealing.
- Main Problems:
 - Often, (unfounded) strikes are directly followed by consequences, even before the creator has a chance to clear up the situation.
 - The automation of the appeals process can lead to misidentifications of problems.
 - In some cases, appeals for strikes are quickly and seemingly superficially dismissed. -> no ask for clarifications
 - Often, only general reasons are given to explain what caused a problem.
 - In some cases the creator does not know how to effectively communicate their "defense", as they do not understand what information has to be provided in the appeals process or how to communicate effectively.
 - The immediate effect strikes have on channels makes the event highly stressful, even if the cause was a mistake.
- In some cases the support team will provide detailed information about the strike and will help the creator to understand its nature in detail.
- Community strikes can be unfounded, targeted harassment but still affect the creators livelihood.
- Creators who experienced targeted strikes as a means of harassment fear a false dismissal of their channel caused by such unfounded strikes.

INVALID CLICK ACTIVITY

- In some cases, creators have their accounts dismissed upon "invalid click activity".
- Main Problems:
 - Creators will not be aware what caused invalid click activity sometimes.
 - In some cases the creator is asked to provide "proof" that no such click activity has taken place, yet will often not know what to look for.
- The support team will not give details on what an invalid click activity triggers as they do not want to reveal their mechanism.
- The process makes it nearly impossible for creators to prove that they did not actively caused / were not involved in an invalid click activity.
- More information on YouTube's side would make the process more understandable for the creator.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Besides the main categories of frustration that directly affect the earnings or standing of the YouTube channels, creators have encountered multiple, complex niche problems.
- Niche problems, although rare, might still affect the livelihood of the creator in short and long term, yet it will often be a long process for the creator to receive sufficient information or support from YouTube.
- Standalone problems are often understandably more complex as generally known issues, yet they can still have a huge impact on the creators work and earnings on YouTube.
- Often, in the first phase of their description, the creator will receive general suggestions for solutions and will have to explain their problem several times in order to receive a detailed answer to their concern.
- Often, the message that YT is still working on an issue is updated regularly, but it can take months without any further information or any movement on the case.
 - This can be very frustrating to the creator as often, the communication turns out to be superficial.
- It would be helpful if there would be a quick roundup in this update, especially if multiple months have passed without a detailed response, as to why it is taking long (such as covid related issues), or what has happened so far (e.g. "The programming department is trying to analyze the problem."), in order for the creator not to feel out of the "loop" when it comes to their channels issues.

MAIN BARRIERS

GENERAL BARRIERS FOR QUICK CASE RESOLUTIONS IN CREATORS COMMUNICATION WITH YOUTUBE

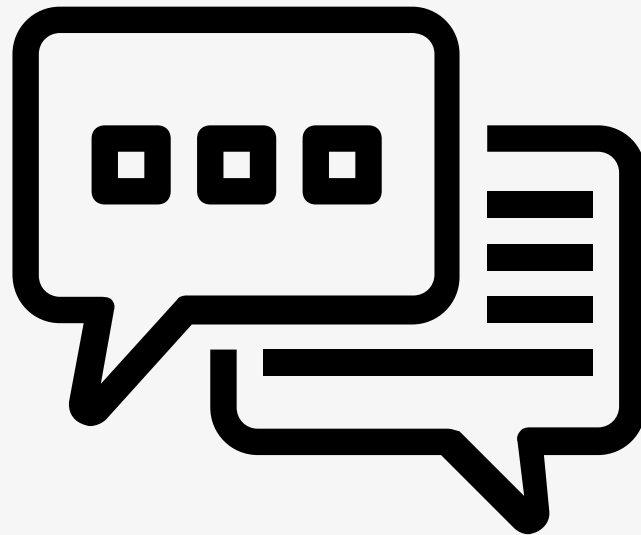
COMMUNICATION WITH YOUTUBE ON CREATOR'S SIDE

- Often, YouTube quickly confirms case appeals without sufficient explanation.
- Often, explanations do not seem to be thoroughly considered at the first appeal. Even when explanations have been provided in detail, the support often seems to just "scan" cases.
- As channels are often very personal and emotional works of creators, it would be sensible to give more detailed pin-pointers for an appeal process straight away. This would make it easier for creators to communicate clearly and as straightforward as possible.
- Sensitivity to niche content is often not given. Audience needs vary, so the creator should not have to "defend" the value of the content when the audience engagement and interaction with the fan base is evident.
- Explanations don't always seem sufficient from the creator's point of view.
- Explanations / Case solving drags on for long periods of time
- Frustration over lack of answers in certain cases
- In some cases creator took a long time to react / seek help / notice problem
- YouTube claims money is going back to advertisers after 50 day limit in disputed accounts -> google will not send specific link to this specific guideline directly -> this effectively limits chance of receiving previously accumulated revenue to one appeals process, although often the first assessment is fairly superficial.
- Creators have little patience when own livelihood is at stake.
- Some cases will not be discussed or explained in more detail due to YouTube making use of their policy to keep company information restricted. This is understandable when it comes to technical details, yet hard for creators to accept, when their livelihood is at stake and they can not pinpoint the cause through the given explanations.

MAIN COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS ON YOUTUBE'S SIDE:

- Critical cases will often only be solved through persistency, as YT does not ask for clarification on the matter and gives only pre-formulated answers in most cases. Often, creators will have to proceed to explain their standpoint multiple times, because of perceived "superficial scan" of explanation given by YouTube.
- Persistence is often needed to reach a higher support level and to have them actively "step in" and further evaluate a case.
- Explanations of demonetization are often hard to comprehend for a creator, when very similar channels clearly meet monetization criteria.
- Creative value of creators of niche content is often underestimated.
- Community value of content not taken into account when considering lack of "value" of niche content.
- In some cases dismissals display a lack of sensitivity for creator's niche interest and community.
- Further dismissals upon appeals will often seem random/unfounded -> explanations will change multiple times once a first cause is sufficiently explained.
- Some explanations do not seem applicable / appropriate to creators. Apparent discrepancies to other cases / situations / guidelines will in some cases not be taken into account and just met with the reaffirmation of said inapplicable guideline.
- In general it is clear that in some cases the creator does not know how to sufficiently communicate their defense, as they do not understand what information to provide in the appeals process.
- A general indicator on what information and pointers the creators defense should provide would help to clarify appeals and to speed up the process on both sides.

POSITIVE INTERACTION WITH YOUTUBE



- Many issues were able to be resolved or confirmed in more comprehensible detail. That helps the creator to understand the situation in more detail and to lessen their frustration over various problems they have encountered.
- When staying persistent, it's often possible to get detailed answers and information.
- When staying persistent it's often possible to explain a problem in detail and get the issue resolved.
- Regular contact to FairTube or to the creator to follow up on a case status will be given in some cases.
- The YouTube support crew will always be polite and respectful towards creators and FairTube at all times.

LEARNINGS & OUTLOOK

1. Often, creators cases could get resolved. In some cases it is clear that expert knowledge makes it easier to communicate and to find a solution both with creators and YouTube.
2. In some cases different angles of explanation and clarification often seem to help the YouTube support to understand the nature of a situation better and will help to resolve the situation. -> If clarification questions/ pointers were provided in more detail by YouTube support, creators would be able to better understand why an explanation was not / will not be applicable.
3. The frustration creators experience when their monetization is quickly dismissed and halted, even though their account was in good standing makes it hard to assess how dependable YouTube is as a source of income.
4. Reassessing gravity of cases or speeding up appeals processes in order to avoid lengthy phases of missed income for mistaken demonetization would be vital to make YouTube a secure source of income for creators in good standing.
5. In some cases, YouTube has correct grounds of dismissal. It would then be important to communicate and explain these via examples in detail. The generality of explanations based on guideline links will often not provide sufficient information to be able to understand what exactly the problem is.
6. In some cases no amount of communication can help to resolve the issue satisfactory as YouTube will in some cases not specify the situation comprehensibly and detailed enough for creators to be able to comprehend the situation.
7. Once an issue arises the creator can suddenly lose all of their income, even though the issue will be resolved after clarification. The revenue however will be lost.
 - > This can massively affect the creators livelihood.
 - > YouTube will have to find a better solutions to balance out the needs of the creators and advertisers in order to remain a secure means of income for creators that are actively seeking to "play by the rules".

OUR DEMANDS



1. Full Transparency of guidelines, regulations, ratings, etc.

2. Clear Rules

3. Let us talk to Real People

4. Creation of Independent Arbitration Boards

5. Let Creators take part in important Decisions

CASE EXAMPLES (ANONYMISED)

Category: Entertainment
Subscriber Count: 300k
Average Views: 100k
Highest Views per Video: 1 Million +

CASE 32: DEMONETIZATION DUE TO A CRUDE JOKE

SHORT CASE DESCRIPTION

The creator was demonetized for a video they created multiple years ago on the grounds of going against the guidelines on violent criminal organizations.

ASSESSMENT

The video's main set up was a football challenge and did not suggest any affiliation with terrorist organizations, yet upon further investigation, there were multiple jokes such as wordplays, fake "battle cries" and inserted explosions that clearly referenced ISIS, bombs and terroristic acts. YouTube is very strict on references to terrorist organizations and generally deems channels affiliated with terrorist organizations unfit for ads. Still, even after demonetization, YouTube actively placed adverts on the channel's videos. So evidently the channel was not deemed a lasting threat.

PROCESS

Upon contacting an expert on terrorism and deradicalization, we made sure to assess the situation in detail and apply the appropriate communication level. The content was surely in bad taste, yet in no way displayed active radical affiliation. We explained to the creator in detail, how his content could be misconstrued although making very clear that we do not suspect any terroristic affiliation by them personally. This is a case FairTube would have pursued for the creator, given that the channel was still actively being monetized otherwise, so obviously there was no grave concern over affiliation by YouTube. As the channel was clearly not blacklisted, which would be incoherent with YouTube's actions, banning the channel from reapplying for partner status on these grounds did not seem consistent or appropriate. We offered the creator to intervene on his behalf, yet he has been idle since December 2021.

SPECIFICS

In a similar, earlier case, we were able to argue effectively that a joke referring to a potential shooting action in reference to a card game, even though in bad taste, could not be grounds for a general dismissal from the partner program on grounds of terrorist affiliation.

CASE EXAMPLES (ANONYMISED)

Category: Entertainment (Ambience /Atmospheric Sounds)
Subscriber Count: 100k
Average Views: 50-300k
Highest Views per Video: 500k +

CASE 41: DEMONETIZATION OF ATMOSPHERIC SOUND CHANNEL

SHORT CASE DESCRIPTION

The creator produces atmospheric soundbites and creates 3d renderings in multiple hour long videos. Channel meets standard rules of monetization. Channel had been monetized. In the past, the channel had gotten multiple notifications of reused content, yet no strikes. YouTube proceeded to demonetize channel and terminate partner program on grounds that channel reused content, upon appeal changed explanation to not demonstrating enough creative value.

ASSESSMENT

We assessed the situation and researched similar channels and practices. The creator had bought sounds from other platforms to include in their videos and had received notifications on reused content. YouTube has stated repurposing of content and seeming lack of unique value can lead to demonetization. There are multiple low effort ambience channels on YouTube clearly reproducing this kind of videos and amassing many views with low effort and often bootlegged content or content that has been copied many times. In this case, it was demonstrated though, that the niche content had value to the creator's community. Albeit not unique to the platform, the creator tried to actively create unique artistic value in addition to the general content the niche audience would have sought anyway.

PROCESS

After sending an in depth display of the creator's visual work, YouTube still argued the content did not have enough unique value and was repurposing the content to an extent that did not deem the channel fit for monetization. We passed on all valid points YouTube made to the creator and provided further advice within the bounds that the creator deems fit for their community. We also had to recommend to explore other means of crowdsourcing outside of the Platform, given we could not assess if YouTube will remonetize this ambience channel even if it adjusts their content further.

SPECIFICS

Upon research many similar channels were monetized, while seemingly investing far less effort and time into the compilation of their videos. The fact that the creator could demonstrate increased effort and community activity, made it difficult to fully comprehend the ruling.

CASE EXAMPLES (ANONYMISED)

Category: Talk / Livestream
Subscriber Count: 100k
Average Views: 50-300k
Highest Views per Video: 500k +

CASE 15: TARGETED HARASSMENT

SHORT CASE DESCRIPTION

The Creator contacted FairTube due to ongoing, targeted harassment and allegedly unfounded community strikes. The strike was said to not be reversible and the creator claimed that the harassment had not been taken seriously.

ASSESSMENT

Upon the first reporting, YouTube confirmed that the strike could indeed not be reversed, as the creator had deleted the content themselves.

The harassment issue was a problem that was first dismissed, referring to the separate official reporting form. Yet this had been already used and no help was received. The targeted harassment cases included multiple accounts of swatting and content production of a harassing nature, such as clips taken out of context and modified to ridicule the creator. We reaffirmed that the issue had been reported on multiple occasions and stressed the potential psychological harm on the target of harassment and the perceived inactivity on YouTube's side.

PROCESS

We requested a referral to somebody who is more experienced with issues of this nature. A second support member stepped in and asked for channel details and screenshots with proof. We sent a detailed report and examples of content produced to harass the creator. In our reporting we stressed that FairTube is not aware of all content that the creator had produced, yet the information displayed to us and further research clearly displayed targeted evidence of harassment towards the creator. Upon our stepping in, the channels in question were terminated, due to "repeated or serious violations of YouTube's content prohibition policy that made others feel harassed or threatened."

SPECIFICS

YouTube sent a very defined statement on their handling of harassment, yet it would be important for future cases to make sure that harassment is not easily dismissed/overlooked as it could lead to serious impact on creators mental health and their ability / motivation to further create content.

CASE EXAMPLES (ANONYMISED)

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Category: | Educational Content |
| Statistic: | 330k |
| Average Views: | 6-20k |
| Various Videos: | Multiple 1-10Million+ views |

CASE 27: DEMONETIZATION OF AN EDUCATIONAL CHANNEL

SHORT CASE DESCRIPTION

The creators produce educational videos on farming. YouTube demonetized multiple very popular, clearly educational videos, one of them amassing multiple millions of views and was not monetized although similar educational content on reproduction was.

ASSESSMENT

FairTube evaluated the case, and made sure to eliminate any problematic triggerwords included in the video's and channel's metadata, in specific concerning reproduction on the basis of YouTube's guidelines. This can generally lead to default demonetization on YouTube.

PROCESS

After correcting these, Youtube support was contacted and a check up was requested. Multiple monetizations were restored, including the most popular video on horse breeding. Furthermore YouTube mentioned specifics of examples of problematic thumbnails, such as pictures that indicated the animals are actively breeding, that could be exchanged and would then give the channel the option to be reviewed once more.

SPECIFICS

The educational value of the channel was apparent and the help that was provided by YouTube was informative and indeed educational for the creator to a level that further mistakes of this nature could be securely avoided in future.

CASE EXAMPLES (ANONYMISED)

Category: Documentation / Display of Niche Interest
Subscriber Count: 185k
Average Views: 10-60k
Highest Views per Video: 1 Million +

CASE 26: DEMONETIZATION DUE TO SUPPOSED REUSED CONTENT

SHORT CASE DESCRIPTION

The creator contacted us as their partnership status was revoked reasoning that content was reused and later the reasoning changed and said that it lacked creativity. The creator had already demonstrated that he was personally creating his content on emergency vehicles and that it did not involve reused content by providing original video evidence. His appeal was directly dismissed.

ASSESSMENT

The creator could credibly demonstrate to us, that the content was original and was produced under extensive effort, such as traveling to locations or filming specific emergency vehicle models upon request to cater to the niche audience.

PROCESS

We suggested and elaborated multiple options to YouTube that could have lead to a wrongful assessment of the situation, which included the possibility of similar sound patterns used by models of emergency vehicles that might have triggered the systems. This was dismissed by YouTube and the lack of creative value was then added as a reason by the support team. We then explained that this niche topic has very specific community needs and a fan base that sees creative value in the work the creator does. Similar as in train spotting, the differences matter to the community in question. We then received a further follow up explanation by YouTube stating that sensitive content was the issue. This however was never before mentioned and the creator has believably stated that they make sure that showing any sensitive content is specifically excluded from their videos. After the latest appeal however YouTube monetized the channel again, yet never stating a specific reasoning or explanation.

SPECIFICS

The fact that upon assessment and communication with the YouTube support team three different causes were added, made the situation quite complex and not very reproducible. It also added further months of investigation that cost the creator income and time. At some point the creator stated, that he had also deleted videos that were no longer valid from his channel. We could not establish a connection, but due to the lack of a specific explanation, we can not fully rule it out in hindsight.

CONTACT US



HELLO@FAIRTUBE.INFO

Fairtube e.V.
Wilhelm-Leuschner-Str. 79
60329 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

WWW.FAIRTUBE.INFO