

EU lawmakers vote to end 'Wild West' online

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The European Parliament on Thursday approved a proposal to impose unprecedented curbs on content online, including bans on the most intrusive methods of advertising, in a blow to Google and Facebook.

Lawmakers overwhelmingly voted in favour of their version of the

Digital Services Act (DSA), which is aimed at ensuring tougher consequences for platforms and websites that violate a long list of rules on content.

The DSA is a companion text to the EU's Digital Markets Act, which is specifically focused on the tech behemoths like Meta/Facebook, Alphabet/Google, Amazon, Apple and Microsoft.

EU member states in November already approved their own version of both laws, and highly delicate negotiations will now take place to reconcile the legislative texts.

"The largest platforms can no longer hide behind a veil of ignorance," Danish MEP Christel Schaldemose, who spearheaded the law through parliament, said after its adoption.

"They'll be forced to face up to the consequences of their algorithms," she said, calling the law a new "gold standard" in tech regulation.

Big tech companies that violate the rules face fines of as much as six percent of their [global sales](#).

"What happens on the internet, parents see it, it's the Wild West," said EU commissioner Thierry Breton, who tabled the original proposal in December 2020.

"We don't know what kids are doing anymore... harassment, [hate speech](#), attacks on democracy, [personal attacks](#), counterfeit products."

With the DSA, "what is allowed in [everyday life](#) will be allowed on the internet, but everything that is prohibited will be as well," he told RTL radio in France.

'Battle not over'

Some MEPs had hoped for a flat-out ban on online tracking for advertising, as well as more painful consequences for big tech companies when they let illegal or harmful content through.

The case to be tough was made in November by Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen, who urged lawmakers not to lose their resolve.

"The battle is not over," said French MEP David Cormand of the Greens group, who defended the DSA as a "first step".

"We need to be more ambitious in tackling the manipulative algorithms and the divisive business models of Big Tech," he said.

Striking compromise legislation will be up to the French government, which took over the EU's six-month presidency on January 1 and will be negotiating with senior MEPs on a final outcome.

During that time, big [tech companies](#) and other interests will continue to lobby furiously to influence the final law.

Breton deplored the "increased lobbying efforts", which he said were "in vain".

France's minister for EU affairs, Clement Beaune, said that the DSA was "an opportunity for Europe to set new global standards in regulating content of the major platforms."

The EU parliamentary vote "is a major step", he said.

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