

Twitter faces 'stress test' of Europe's tough new Big Tech rules

June 23 2023, by Kelvin Chan

A top European Union official is in Silicon Valley to check whether Twitter is ready to comply with the bloc's tough new digital rulebook, a set of sweeping new standards that the world's biggest online platforms all must obey in just two months.

European Commissioner Thierry Breton, who oversees digital policy, is the EU's point person working to get tech companies in line for the [Digital Services Act](#), which will force companies to crack down on [hate speech](#), disinformation and other harmful material on their sites. It takes effect Aug. 25 for the biggest platforms.

The law, along with [new regulations in the pipeline](#) for data and artificial intelligence, has made Brussels a trailblazer in the growing global movement to clamp down on Big Tech.

Breton tweeted about his meeting Thursday at Twitter headquarters to carry out a voluntary "stress test" to prepare for the new rules.

"The company is taking this exercise very seriously," he said, adding he had "constructive dialogue" with owner Elon Musk and new CEO Linda Yaccarino

The mock exercise tested Twitter's readiness to cope with the DSA's requirements, including protecting children online and detecting and mitigating risks like disinformation, under both normal and extreme situations.

Despite Musk's claims to the contrary, independent researchers have found misinformation—as well as hate speech—spreading on Twitter since the billionaire Tesla CEO took over the company last year. Musk has reinstated notorious election deniers, overhauled Twitter's verification system and gutted much of the staff that had been responsible for moderating posts.

Last month, Breton warned Twitter that it "can't hide" from its obligations after the social media site [abandoned the bloc's voluntary "code of practice"](#) on online disinformation, which other social media platforms have pledged to support.

Under the Digital Services Act, combating disinformation will become a legal requirement.

Musk has said [Twitter will comply](#).

"If laws are passed, Twitter will obey the law," Musk told the France 2 TV channel this week when asked about the DSA.

Breton's agenda Friday includes discussions about the EU's digital rules and upcoming [artificial intelligence](#) regulations with Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, whose company makes the popular AI chatbot ChatGPT.

The DSA is part of a sweeping update to the EU's digital rulebook aimed at forcing tech companies to clean up their platforms and better protect users online.

For European users of big tech platforms, it will be easier to report illegal content like hate speech, and they will get more information on why they have been recommended certain content.

Violations will incur fines worth up to 6% of annual global revenue—amounting to billions of dollars for some tech giants—or even a ban on operating in the EU, with its 450 million consumers.

Breton also is meeting Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, the dominant supplier of semiconductors used in AI systems, for talks on the EU's Chips Act to boost the continent's chipmaking industry.

The EU, meanwhile, is putting the final touches on its AI Act, the [world's first comprehensive set of rules](#) on the [emerging technology](#) that has stirred fascination as well as fears it could violate privacy, upend jobs, infringe on copyright and more.

Final approval is expected by the end of the year, but it won't take effect until two years later. Breton has been pitching a voluntary "AI Pact" to help companies get ready for its adoption.

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