

Threads countdown teases app's potential EU launch

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Instagram parent company launched Threads in July but EU users have been unable to access the platform.

The wait could be over for internet users in the European Union keen to sign up to Threads, an Instagram app.

Meta-owned Instagram launched Threads in the United States and elsewhere in July but EU users cannot access the platform because the company was wary of Brussels' regulatory oversight before any roll-out.

Now though, when anyone in the EU visits the Threads website there is a countdown timer that ends on Thursday at 1100 GMT. People outside of the EU see the usual log-in page.

EU users can also search for a "ticket" and find a digital invitation with a countdown and the words "Threads EU launch" as well as a QR code.

Speculation is now rising that this means that the app will be made available in the bloc. Contacted by AFP, Instagram refused to comment.

The Wall Street Journal had reported last month that Instagram planned to launch Threads in the EU in December.

Threads has been portrayed as a challenger to X, formerly known as Twitter, which remains one of the world's biggest social media platforms despite its struggles following tech tycoon Elon Musk's takeover in 2022.

Within the first few hours of Threads' launch in 100 countries, more than 30 million people signed up, according to Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta, which also owns Facebook.

The EU has built a powerful legal armory to rein in Big Tech, including the Digital Markets Act (DMA) that curbs how the world's "gatekeeper" companies do business online.

Meta had been wary of the DMA, a source close to the matter said in July.

The company has come under heavy scrutiny in Europe for how it

handles [personal data](#), and has struggled to comply with the EU's strict rules on [data privacy](#).

Since November, Facebook and Instagram users in Europe have been told they must pay to use Meta's social networks if they want to continue to avail of those EU data-privacy protections, or they can opt for a "free" version that harvests their personal data for targeted advertising.

That "pay for privacy" approach is running the gauntlet of two legal challenges.

Zuckerberg has said he wants a "public conversations app" for more than a billion people as he seeks to capitalize on Musk's chaotic ownership of Twitter and turn his app into the go-to platform for celebrities, companies and politicians.

Instagram has more than two billion users that it hopes will turn to its Threads spin-off.

X, meanwhile, says it has more than 200 million daily users.

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