

The European Union expands digital crackdown on toxic content, dodgy goods to all online platforms

February 16 2024, by Kelvin Chan



This photo shows the mobile phone app logos for, from left, Facebook and Instagram in New York, Oct. 5, 2021. The European Union is expanding its strict digital rulebook on Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024 to almost all online platforms in the bloc, in the next phase of its crackdown on toxic social media content and dodgy ecommerce products that began last year by targeting the most popular services. Credit: AP Photo/Richard Drew, file

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The EU's trailblazing Digital Services Act has [already kicked in](#) for nearly two dozen of the biggest online platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Amazon and Wikipedia. The DSA imposes a set of strict requirements designed to keep internet users safe online, including making it easier to report counterfeit or unsafe goods or flag harmful or illegal content like [hate speech](#) as well as a ban on ads targeted at children.

Now the rules will apply to nearly all online platforms, marketplaces and "intermediaries" with users in the 27-nation bloc. Only the smallest businesses, with fewer than 50 employees and annual revenue of less than 10 million euros (\$11 million), are exempt.

That means thousands more websites could potentially be covered by the regulations. It includes popular ones such as eBay and OnlyFans that escaped being classed as the biggest [online platforms](#) requiring extra scrutiny.

"Users, Member States and platforms can now use the tools under the DSA to shape a safer and more transparent online world," European Commission Executive Vice President Margrethe Vestager said in a press release. "This is a big milestone that reflects our fundamental EU values and principles."



European Union flags wave in the wind as pedestrians walk by EU headquarters in Brussels, on Sept. 20, 2023. The European Union is expanding its strict digital rulebook on Saturday, Feb. 17, 2024 to almost all online platforms in the bloc, in the next phase of its crackdown on toxic social media content and dodgy ecommerce products that began last year by targeting the most popular services. Credit: AP Photo/Virginia Mayo, File

Under the DSA, platforms must also be transparent about digital ads, including informing users why they're being shown a specific advertisement and who paid for it. Ads can't target users based on "[sensitive data](#)" such as political or [religious beliefs](#) and sexual preferences. Platforms must explain content moderation decisions, and will have to tell users why their post was taken down or account suspended.

The EU has already started investigating Elon Musk's social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, over suspicions it infringed the DSA's provisions including not doing enough to curb the spread of illegal content.

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