

EU probes Facebook, Instagram over election disinformation worries

April 30 2024



Facebook and Instagram are among 23 'very large' online platforms that must comply with the EU's new law.

The EU on Tuesday launched an investigation into Meta's Facebook and Instagram over concerns the platforms are failing to counter

disinformation ahead of EU elections in June.

The probe is under the EU's new Digital Services Act, a landmark law that cracks down on illegal content online and forces the world's biggest tech companies to do more to protect users online.

The European Commission said it suspected Meta's moderation of adverts was "insufficient" and that an increase in paid spots in those conditions could harm "electoral processes and fundamental rights, including consumer protection rights".

EU leaders are especially worried about Russian attempts to manipulate [public opinion](#) and undermine European democracy.

The probe seeks "to make sure that effective actions are taken in particular to prevent that Instagram's and Facebook's vulnerabilities are exploited by [foreign interference](#)," EU internal market commissioner Thierry Breton said.

"We suspect that Meta's moderation is insufficient, that it lacks transparency of advertisements and content moderation procedures," commission executive vice president Margrethe Vestager said in a statement.

Facebook and Instagram are among 23 "very large" online platforms that must comply with the DSA or risk fines up running up to six percent of a platform's global turnover, or even a ban for egregious cases.

Other platforms include Amazon, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube.

Meta did not comment on the investigation's focus, instead stating more generally that the US company had "a well-established process for identifying and mitigating risks on our platforms".

A Meta spokesperson added, "We look forward to continuing our cooperation with the European Commission and providing them with further details of this work."

Meta's wide reach

Brussels is especially concerned that Meta does not have an "effective" tool in place to monitor elections ahead of EU-wide polls June 6 to 9.

It pointed to Meta's decision to shut down CrowdTangle, a digital tool considered vital in tracking viral falsehoods.

Meta has said it will replace CrowdTangle with a new Content Library, a technology still under development.

The commission said the company had five working days to explain what actions it has taken to mitigate the risks from decommissioning CrowdTangle.

The EU's concern arises from the Meta platforms' reach in the 450-million strong bloc. Both platforms have more than 260 million monthly active users respectively.

The focus of the EU investigation is wide, and also includes Meta's move to reduce political content in Facebook and Instagram's recommender systems.

Brussels fears this could be in violation with the DSA's rules on transparency.

The EU also suspects that Meta's mechanism to flag [illegal content](#) is not sufficiently easy to access or user-friendly, the commission said.

There is no deadline by which the probe must end.

AFP currently works in 26 languages with Facebook's fact-checking program, in which Facebook pays to use fact checks from around 80 organizations globally on its platform, on WhatsApp and on Instagram.

Multiple probes

The DSA is one law in a bolstered EU legal armory to bring big tech to heel.

Brussels has shown it is willing to flex its legal muscle under the DSA, opening investigations into Elon Musk's X, TikTok and Chinese retailer AliExpress.

TikTok, owned by China's ByteDance, bowed to pressure from the commission last week and suspended a rewards program on its spinoff Lite app in France and Spain after Brussels threatened a suspension.

Another regulation is the political advertising law that will complement the DSA when most of its provisions will enter into force in late 2025.

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