

Like Brazil, the European Union also has an X problem

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The European Union could decide within months to take action against X, including possible fines, as part of an ongoing probe.

Elon Musk's woes are hardly limited to Brazil as he now risks possible EU sanctions in the coming months for allegedly breaking new content

rules.

Access to X has been suspended in South America's largest country since Saturday after a long-running legal battle over disinformation ended with a judge ordering a shutdown.

But Brazil is not alone in its concerns about X.

Politicians worldwide and digital rights groups have repeatedly raised concerns about Musk's actions since taking over what was then Twitter in late 2022, including sacking many employees tasked with content moderation and maintaining ties with EU regulators.

Musk's "free speech absolutist" attitude has led to clashes with Brussels.

The European Union could decide within months to take action against X, including possible fines, as part of an ongoing probe into whether the platform is breaching a landmark content moderation law, the Digital Services Act (DSA).

Nothing has yet been decided but any fines could be as high as six percent of X's annual worldwide turnover unless the company makes changes in line with EU demands.

But if Musk's reactions are anything to go by, another showdown is on the cards.

When the EU in July accused X of deceptive practices in violation of the DSA, Musk warned: "We look forward to a very public battle in court."

The temperature was raised even further a month later with another war of words on [social media](#) between Musk and the EU's top tech enforcer, Thierry Breton.

Breton reminded Musk in a letter of his legal duty to stop "harmful content" from spreading on X hours before an interview with US presidential challenger Donald Trump live on the platform.

Musk responded by mocking Breton and sharing a meme that carried an obscene message.

EU ban 'very unlikely'

Despite the bitter barbs, the European Commission, the EU's digital watchdog, insists that dialogue with X is ongoing.

"X continues to cooperate with the commission and respond to questions," the commission's digital spokesman, Thomas Regnier, told AFP.

Experts also agree that a Brazil-like shutdown in the 27-country EU is unlikely, although it has the legal right.

The DSA would allow the bloc to demand a judge in Ireland, where X has its EU headquarters, order a temporary suspension until the infringements cease.

Breton has repeatedly insisted that "Europe will not hesitate to do what is necessary".

But since X has around 106 million EU users, significantly higher than the 22 million in Brazil, the belief is that Musk would not want to risk a similar move in Europe.

"Obviously, we can never exclude it, but it is very unlikely," said Alexandre de Streel of the think tank Centre on Regulation in Europe.

Regardless of what happens next, de Streel said the case would likely end up in the EU courts, calling X "the least cooperative company" with the bloc.

Jan Penfrat of the European Digital Rights advocacy group said a ban was "a very last resort measure" and that X would "probably" not close shop in the EU.

"I would hope that the commission thinks about this very, very hard before going there because this (a ban) would have a tremendously negative effect on the right to freedom of expression and access to information," Penfrat said.

EU's X-File

The commission in July accused X of misleading users with its blue checkmarks for certified accounts, insufficient advertising transparency and failing to give researchers access to the platform's data.

That allegation is part of a wider probe into X, launched in December, and regulators are still probing how it tackles the spread of illegal content and information manipulation.

X now has access to the EU's file and can defend itself including by replying to the commission's findings.

The list of governments angry with Musk is growing. He also raised hackles over the summer in the UK during days of rioting sparked by online misinformation that the suspect behind a mass stabbing that killed three girls was a Muslim asylum seeker.

The billionaire, whose personal X account has 196 million users, engaged in disputes with British politicians after sharing inflammatory

posts and claiming a "civil war is inevitable" in the country.

Non-EU member Britain will soon be able to implement a similar law to the DSA with enforcement expected to start next year.

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