Online Platforms

The European Commission aims to foster an environment where online platforms thrive, treat users fairly and take action to limit the spread of illegal content.

What are online platforms and why are they important

Online platforms are strong drivers of innovation and play an important role in Europe's digital society and economy. They cover a wide range of activities including online marketplaces, social media, creative content outlets, app stores, price comparison websites, platforms for the collaborative economy as well as search engines. They increase consumer choice, improve efficiency and competitiveness of industry and can enhance civil participation in society.

Online platforms share key characteristics, such as the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate interactions between users, collection and use of data about such interactions, and network effects. These network effects make the use of the platforms with most users most valuable to other users.

Today, 1 million EU businesses are already selling goods and services via online platforms, and more than 50% of small and medium enterprises selling through online marketplaces sell cross-border.

The European Commission's approach to online platforms focuses on fostering a trusting, lawful and innovation-driven environment in the EU. To this end, the Commission identified key areas of interest
in its Communication on Online Platforms. The guiding policy principles are:

1. to create and maintain a level playing field for comparable digital services;
2. to ensure responsible behaviour of online platforms to protect core values;
3. to foster trust, transparency and ensure fairness on online platforms;
4. to keep markets open and non-discriminatory to foster a data-driven economy.

The Digital Services Act

The Commission adopted a proposal for a Digital Services Act (DSA) in December 2020. Together with a Digital Markets Act, the DSA will create a safer and more open digital space for all users and ensure a level playing field for businesses.

The DSA has 3 specific goals:

1. To protect consumers and their fundamental rights online more effectively;
2. To establish a powerful transparency and accountability framework for online platforms;
3. To foster innovation, growth and competitiveness within the single market.

EU Regulation on fairness and transparency in online platform-to-business relationship

The Regulation on online platform-to-business relationships puts in place a harmonised framework for minimum transparency and redress rights. It protects companies that depend on online platforms for reaching consumers, while safeguarding the innovation potential of platforms.

The EU observatory on the online platform economy accompanies the Regulation. It monitors and analyses the latest trends and issues in the online platform economy. As a business on an online platform, you can help identify the main issues by sharing your experiences through a dedicated website.

Recommendation on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online

The Commission issued a Recommendation on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online in March 2018. This builds on the Communication on tackling illegal content online of September 2017, translating political commitment into (non-binding) legal form.

Algorithmic transparency

At the request of the European Parliament, the Commission is carrying out an in-depth analysis of algorithmic transparency and accountability. The pilot project will provide an in-depth study of the role of algorithms in the digital economy and society. In particular, how they shape, filter or personalise information flows.

Regulation: Promoting fairness and transparency for business users online
Proposal for the Digital Services Act
Recommendation on tackling illegal content online
Staff working document on online platforms
Follow the latest progress and learn more about getting involved.
Landmark EU rules on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online entered into force this week. Platforms will have to remove terrorist content referred by Member States'
authorities within 1 hour. The rules will also help to counter the spread of extremist ideologies online - a vital part of preventing attacks and addressing radicalisation.

PRESS RELEASE | 03 June 2021
Commission seeks views on data sharing

The European Commission has launched an open public consultation on the announced Data Act aiming to create a fair data economy by ensuring access to and use of data. The consultation seeks to gather views from citizens, businesses, online platforms, academics, civil society, administrations and all interested parties. It is open until 3 September.

DIGIBYTE | 26 February 2021
Final reports of the EU Observatory on the online platform economy

The EU Observatory for the Online Platform Economy, which informs the policy work of the Commission, by providing independent views on some of the key questions that have arisen in connection to the platform economy is today publishing the final reports from the expert group following stakeholder feedback and reactions on the progress reports which were published for consultation in July 2020.

PRESS RELEASE | 08 February 2021
Safer Internet Day 2021: A better internet for children and young people

Last Tuesday, 9 February 2021, was Safer Internet Day. Launched in 2004 and promoted by the EU-funded network of Safer Internet Centres in Member States, the day was celebrated online in more than 170 countries worldwide. The theme "Together for a better internet" is a call for everyone to join in making the internet a safer and better place, especially for children and young people.
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**Related Content**

**Big Picture**

Online platforms and e-commerce

The EU wants to ensure businesses and citizens can use online platforms and e-commerce services no matter where they are in the EU.

**Dig deeper**

Geoblocking
The Commission put an end to unjustified geo-blocking rules, which undermine online shopping and cross-border sales in the EU.

Illegal content on online platforms

The European Commission adopted a recommendation on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online.

EU Observatory on the Online Platform Economy

The EU Observatory on the Online Platform Economy monitors and analyses the online platform economy, supporting the Commission in policy-making.

**See Also**

e-Commerce rules in the EU

The European Commission breaks down online barriers so that people can enjoy full access to all goods and services offered online by businesses in the EU.

The Digital Services Act package

The Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act aim to create a safer digital space where the fundamental rights of users are protected and to establish a level playing field for businesses.

**Source URL:** [https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/policies/online-platforms](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/policies/online-platforms)