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.

Digital labour platforms

Digital labour platforms create opportunities for businesses, workers and self-employed, as well as improved access to services for consumers. However, new ways of work also come with new challenges. It becomes increasingly difficult to correctly classify the employment status of people,
leading in some cases to inadequate labour rights and social protection for some. In addition, the use of algorithms in platform work can raise questions of accountability and transparency.

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.
Annual report lays out the challenges of protecting fundamental rights in the digital age

The European Commission has released its annual report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU.
PRESS RELEASE | 09 December 2021
Commission proposals to improve the working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms

The European Commission has proposed a set of measures to improve the working conditions in platform work and to support the sustainable growth of digital labour platforms in the EU.

PRESS RELEASE | 25 November 2021
European Democracy: Commission sets out new laws on political advertising, electoral rights and party funding

This week the European Commission presented a proposal on transparency and targeting of political advertising, as part of measures aimed at protecting election integrity and open democratic debate.

PRESS RELEASE | 07 June 2021
Security Union: EU rules on removing terrorist content online enter into force

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.

Browse 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.
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