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Press release | 15.12.2020

Commission proposal first step to end Wild West of Internet giants

Digital Services Act

Today, the European Commission has just presented the Digital Services Act, which will set new rules for market-dominant digital companies such as Facebook, Google and co. The long-awaited Digital Services Act is supposed to unify the Digital Single Market, create control for online platforms and to ensure fair competition, but it falls short of expectations. On 21 October, MEPs had called on the EU Commission to present a clear legal framework for online platforms, to formulate guidelines for dealing with tips on illegal content and to put an end to arbitrariness in blocking and deleting content by online platforms. Today's announcement kicks off negotiations between the Commission and the European Parliament and Council.

Kim van Sparrentak MEP, Greens/EFA group Member of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, comments:

"We welcome the European Commission's move to end the Wild West style Internet giants and to make online platforms accountable for how they spread content and when they remove content from users. More transparency in the dissemination of posts is a good first step to end the business model of polarising and leading to ever more extreme content, fake news and conspiracy narratives. We are also happy the Commission has heard our calls for clear and transparent procedures on how to handle content online. Unfortunately, the Commission has not quite taken the power over our fundamental rights out of platforms' hands. The Commission has missed an opportunity to break the supremacy of the big internet companies.

"It is clear our current competition tools are not fit for digital markets. Our society is becoming dependent on a very small number of platforms, who have an enormous power over both their competitors and consumers. The Commission has failed to limit the market supremacy of the tech monopolies. Although there are some good proposals, the key issue isn't being addressed: interoperability must become the standard for all communication platforms. The Commission needs appropriately strong powers to intervene to prevent monopolies from forming. We will defend this in the upcoming negotiations."

Marcel Kolaja MEP, Pirate Party & Greens/EFA Group shadow rapporteur on the Digital Services Act in the Committee on Culture and Education and coordinator in the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, comments:

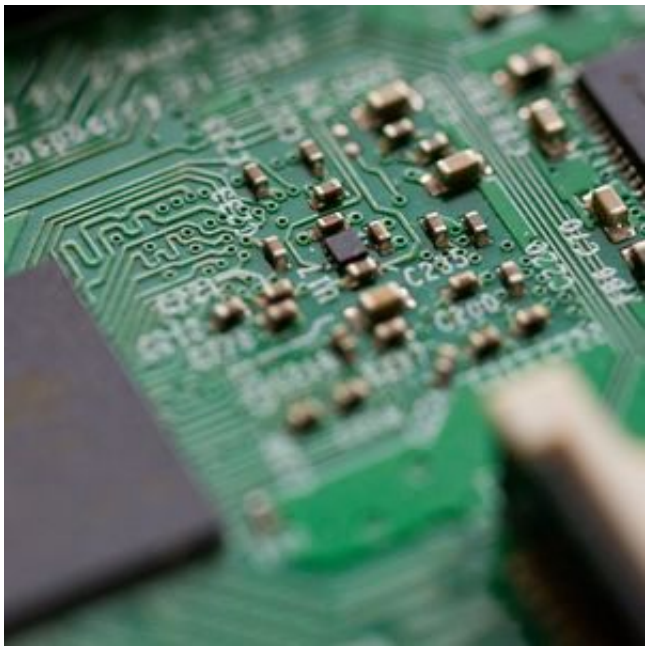
"The Internet should be human-centred and where any future rules will protect fundamental rights. In practice, that means ensuring strong encryption, safeguards for fundamental rights, giving people the possibility to stay anonymous on-line, and banning non-consensual micro-targeting and behavioural advertisement. Most importantly, a no monitoring obligation principle needs to be maintained. Upload filters would undermine fundamental rights. User freedom has to be at the top of our minds when we create new legislation.

"These proposals do not touch upon the business model of spying on users and spreading hate and disinformation. Personalised online advertising analyses and links our behaviour on the Internet and turns private interests into profit for Google, Facebook and Co. Unfortunately, the Commission has not dared to stop this unfair business practice and to join the European Parliament's demand for a strict limitation of targeted advertising and a prohibition of non-consensual cross-context behavioural advertisement."

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