

DIGITAL SERVICES ACT

Policy briefing

Weblink	https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act
Relevance	☐ National policy ☒ EU policy ☐ other: _____
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Short summary of the policy

The Digital Services Act (DSA) introduces rules for online services used by European citizens in their everyday life. These services include marketplaces, social media networks, app stores, and online travel and accommodation platforms.

Main objectives of the policy

The main goal of the DSA is to create a digital space that respects citizens and consumers' fundamental rights. By establishing a clear set of rules across the EU, the DSA also enables smaller platforms, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups to scale up in Europe, fostering innovation, growth and competitiveness.

The DSA is complemented by the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which includes rules for gatekeeper online platforms. Gatekeepers function as bottlenecks between businesses and consumers for digital services, affecting competition and the functioning of the EU internal market. Some of these services are also covered in the DSA, but for different reasons and with different types of provisions.

What does the DSA do for citizens?

The DSA strengthens online rights for citizens, giving them more control and protection, especially against illegal or harmful content.

With the DSA, personal digital rights include:

- Transparency in content removals: Platforms must explain why your content was removed or suspended.
- Options to appeal content moderation: Appeal decisions directly with the platform or via an out-of-court body.
- Easy flagging of illegal content: Report illegal content via a simple mechanism; platforms must respond and allow appeals.
- Enhanced protection for minors: Platforms must safeguard minors from age-inappropriate content and ban targeted ads for children.
- Feed options: On large platforms, choose non-personalised feeds to avoid algorithm-driven content.

- Ad transparency: Ads must be clearly labelled, with details on the advertiser and targeting criteria. Sensitive data-based ads are banned.
- Ban on dark patterns: Deceptive design tactics, like misleading pop-ups or consent buttons, are prohibited.
- Verified sellers: Marketplaces must verify and display seller details for transparency.

What does the DSA do for businesses?

The DSA offers businesses a unified, proportionate framework for operating in the EU, with benefits like legal certainty and scalability.

- One single set of rules across the EU: A unified framework replaces 27 regulations, ensuring legal certainty and easier scaling across the EU.
- A proportionate approach: Obligations are tailored to the size and impact of online services, with lighter requirements for micro and small companies.
- Simplified reporting of illegal content: Use a user-friendly mechanism to flag illegal content or goods, with priority for "trusted flaggers."
- Better protection against unfair content moderation: Appeal decisions via platforms or out-of-court bodies to protect your online presence.
- More transparency on marketplaces: Marketplaces must display seller information and perform random checks or use traceability technologies.

Context and relation to the Digital Europe Programme (DEP)

The Digital Services Act and the Digital Europe Programme are complementary instruments of the EU's broader digital policy agenda. While DSA establishes the regulatory framework for safer digital services, DEP provides the investment and capacity-building infrastructure needed to implement and operationalise that framework.

Key areas of intersection include digital public administration, cybersecurity capacity, AI governance, and the upskilling of the digital workforce across Member States.

Parts of the policy directly related to specific objectives (SO) in DEP

Table 1: DEP Specific Objective (SO) relevance to DSA

DEP SO	Relevance to DSA
SO2 – Cloud, Data and AI	DSA requires transparency in recommender systems and algorithmic decision-making used by very large online platforms (VLOPs). DEP investments in AI and data infrastructure support compliant, trustworthy AI systems.
SO3 – Cybersecurity	DSA mandates incident reporting and security obligations for intermediary services. DEP's cybersecurity strand supports Member States' Digital Services Coordinators and enforcement capacity.
SO4 – Advanced Digital Skills	DSA creates demand for legal, technical and compliance expertise. DEP-funded digital skills academies and training programmes help build the workforce needed for DSA implementation across the EU.
SO5 – Digital Transformation of Public Services	DSA establishes national Digital Services Coordinators and cross-border cooperation mechanisms. DEP supports the interoperability and digital infrastructure underpinning these governance bodies.
SO6 – Semiconductors	Trustworthy digital infrastructure underpins DSA's goals. DEP's semiconductor and hardware initiatives support the secure supply chain necessary for reliable online services.

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Activities in the DEP Work Programme 2025-27 contributing to the objectives of the policy

The following DEP Work Programme 2025–2027 topics are particularly relevant for supporting DSA implementation and national enforcement capacity:

Table 2: DEP calls contribution to DSA

DEP Area	Relevant Topics	Contribution to DSA
AI/Data for EU	Data Spaces for Health, Manufacturing	Supports trusted data sharing frameworks aligned with DSA transparency requirements
AI/GenAI and Applications	Testing GenAI at scale; AI-based solutions in healthcare	Fosters responsible AI deployment consistent with DSA risk-based obligations
Cybersecurity	National cybersecurity capacity building	Strengthens the technical infrastructure underpinning DSA enforcement by DSCs
AI/European Digital Innovation Hubs	EDIH network consolidation	Supports SME compliance with DSA obligations through advisory and testing services
Advanced Digital Skills	Sectoral digital skills academies; Higher education in digital areas	Builds legal, technical and compliance expertise needed for DSA implementation
Digital Public Services	eGovernment, interoperability, digital identity	Supports DSC administrative capacity and cross-border enforcement cooperation

DEP-funded projects supporting trusted AI, secure data spaces, digital skills, and eGovernment services directly underpin the DSA's goal of a safe and accountable digital environment. Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) are particularly well-placed to help SMEs understand and comply with DSA obligations, including notice-and-action processes, terms of service transparency, and trader verification.

Related policies and further information

For related events and updates, refer to: Shaping Europe's digital future (digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu) and the DSA enforcement tracker.

Related policy areas:

• GDPR (Regulation (EU) 2016/679)	• P2B Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/1150)
• ePrivacy Directive (2002/58/EC)	• European Media Freedom Act
• AI Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689)	• Digital Markets Act (DMA)
• Data Governance Act	• Audiovisual Media Services Directive
• Terrorist Content Online Regulation	• NIS2 Directive (Cybersecurity)
• Consumer Rights Directive	• Competitiveness Compass