



The European Centre for Algorithmic Transparency

Providing scientific and technical support for the Digital Services Act

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9 April 2024

Agenda

What is ECAT?

Short introduction to the Digital Services Act (DSA)

ECAT priorities: Investigations, research and community building

Q&A



ECAT's Purpose

To provide technical assistance and practical guidance for the enforcement of the DSA and research the long-running impact of algorithmic systems to inform policy-making and contribute to the public discussion.

ECAT – the basics

Part of the **Joint Research Centre**

The Commission's science and knowledge service #Science4Policy

Managed in collaboration with **DG Connect**

Commission policy on digital economy & society

DSA supervision & enforcement for VLOPS and VLOSEs

Team

- 35+ team members, mainly with scientific and technical backgrounds

Key goals of the DSA

For citizens

- Better protection of fundamental rights
- More control and choice
- Stronger protection of children online
- Less exposure to illegal content



For business users of online platforms

- Access to EU-wide markets through platforms
- Level-playing field against providers of illegal content



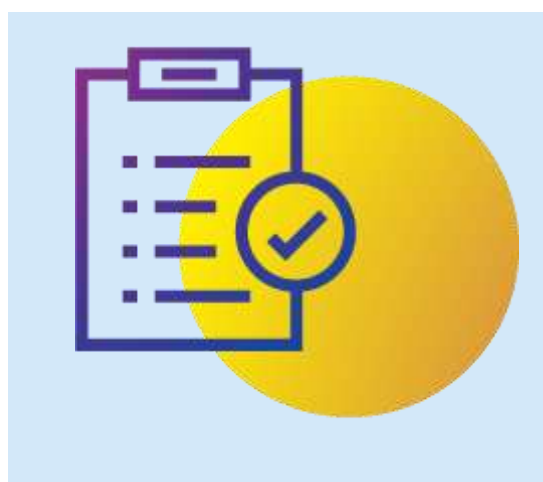
For providers of online platforms

- Legal certainty
- A single set of rules across the EU
- Easier to start-up and scale-up in Europe

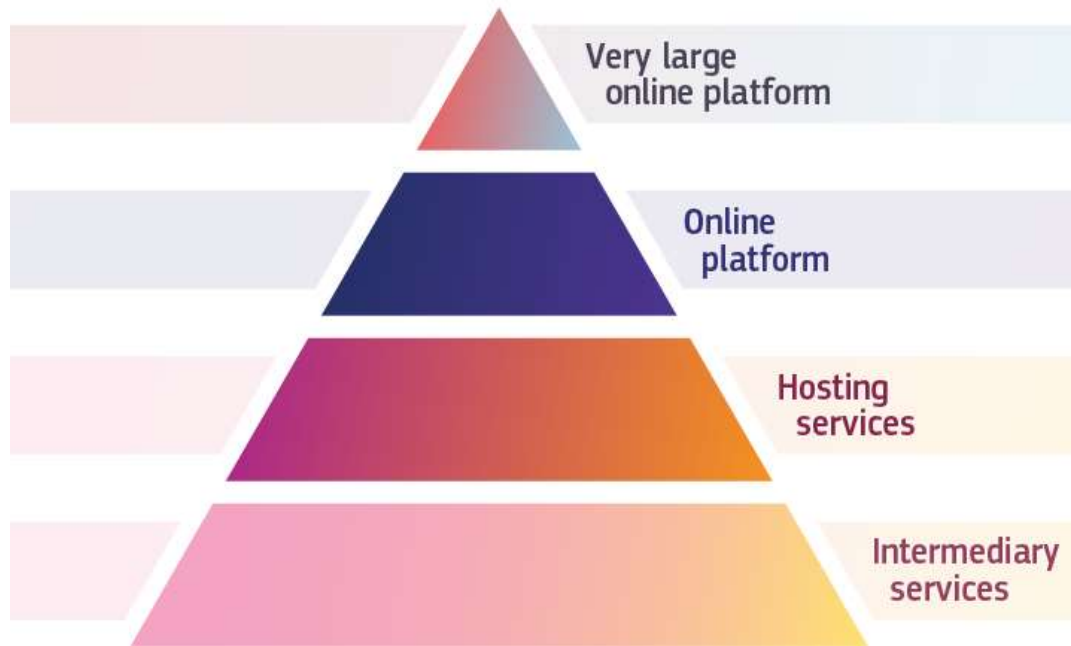
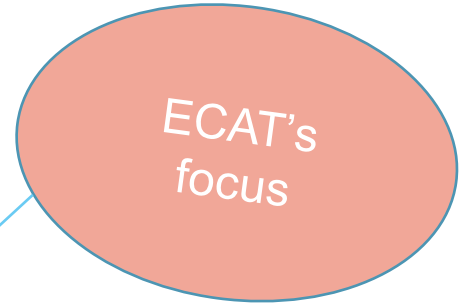


For society at large

- Greater democratic control and oversight over systemic platforms
- Mitigation of systemic risks, such as manipulation or disinformation



Who does the DSA apply to?



Very large online platforms and search engines pose particular risks in the dissemination of illegal content and societal harms. Specific rules are foreseen for platforms reaching more than 10% of 450 million consumers in Europe.

Online platforms bring together sellers and consumers such as online marketplaces, app stores, collaborative economy platforms and social media platforms.

Hosting services such as cloud and web hosting services (also including online platforms).

Intermediary services offering network infrastructure: Internet access providers and domain name registrars (also including hosting services).

Designated VLOPs & VLOSEs

Very large online platforms

Alibaba AliExpress

Amazon Store

Apple AppStore

Booking.com

Facebook

Google Play

Google Maps

Google Shopping

Instagram

LinkedIn

Pinterest

Pornhub

Snapchat

Stripchat

TikTok

Wikipedia

X

Xvideos

YouTube

Zalando

Very large online search engines

Bing

Google Search

What types of obligations does the DSA impose?

For all intermediary services, some of the obligations are:

Mandatory procedures to remove illegal goods

Content moderation transparency

Users can flag illegal content

Give users information about why they are seeing specific ads

Specific obligations for VLOPs and VLOSEs include:

Systemic risk assessments and mitigation measures

Independent audits

Researcher data access

How does ECAT support enforcement of the DSA?

Platform assessment and investigations

Systematic study of real-world algorithms and AI systems

Observation, measurement, experimental investigation and testing of algorithms to inform inspection methodologies

Scientific research and foresight

Community building

DSA investigations updates



PRESS RELEASE | 18 December 2023 | Brussels

Commission opens formal proceedings against X under the Digital Services Act

PRESS RELEASE | Publication 18 January 2024

Commission sends requests for information to 17 Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines under the Digital Services Act

PRESS RELEASE | 19 February 2024 | Brussels

Commission opens formal proceedings against TikTok under the Digital Services Act

PRESS RELEASE | 14 March 2024 | Brussels

Commission opens formal proceedings against AliExpress under the Digital Services Act

Thierry Breton @ThierryBreton

Today we open formal infringement proceedings against @X :

⚠ Suspected breach of obligations to counter [#IllegalContent](#) and [#Disinformation](#)

⚠ Suspected breach of [#Transparency](#) obligations

⚠ Suspected [#DeceptiveDesign](#) of user interface

[#DSA](#)

Thierry Breton @ThierryBreton

Today we open an investigation into [#TikTok](#) over suspected breach of transparency & obligations to protect minors:

📱 Addictive design & screen time limits

🐇 Rabbit hole effect

🗳️ Age verification

🔒 Default privacy settings

Enforcing [#DSA](#) for safer Internet for youngsters

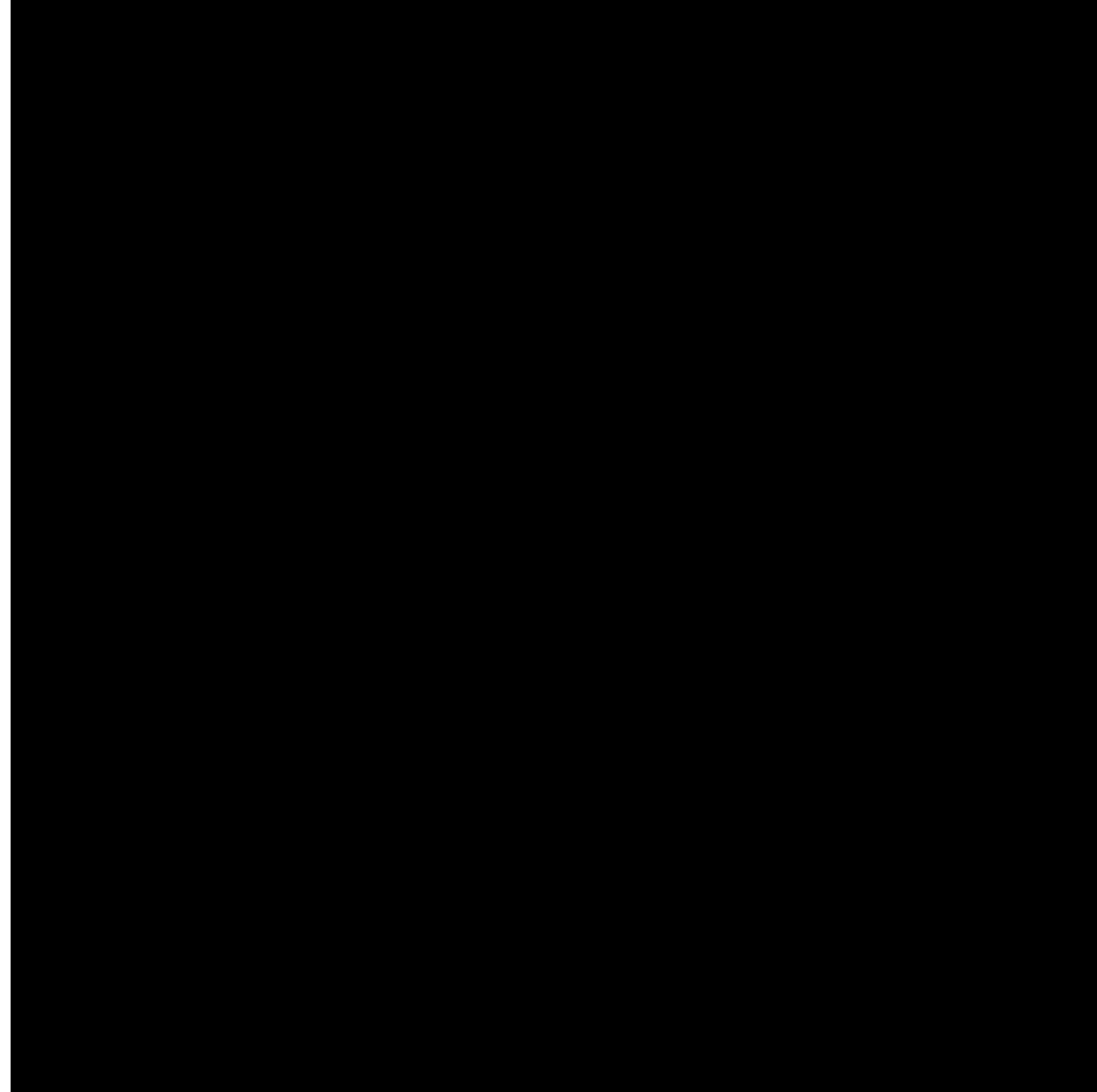
Thierry Breton @ThierryBreton · Mar 14

[#DSA](#) now running at full speed

— today:

◆ Investigation into [#AliExpress](#) on countering illegal products circulation

Investigations – demo video



How does ECAT support enforcement of the DSA?

Investigations

Algorithmic system inspections to support enforcement of the DSA

Technical tests on algorithmic systems to enhance the understanding of their functioning.

Advice on procedures to secure data access for regulators and researchers

Research

Study of the societal impact of algorithmic systems

Research on systemic risks associated with VLOPs and VLOSEs, and investigation of risk mitigation measures.

Development of practical methodologies towards fair, transparent and accountable algorithmic approaches.

Community building



ECAT research topics

Recommender systems – bias and discrimination

Impact of social media on mental health and wellbeing

DSA Art 40 research access to platform data

AI research mapping and indicators (e.g. Diversity in AI research)

Research – Recent publication

Analysis of the risks and opportunities for adolescents' mental health and well-being associated with Social Media Use (SMU) and risk mitigation proposals.

Finds that SMU entails both risks and opportunities for adolescents' mental health, influenced by individual characteristics, usage type, and SM content and design.

Highlights the need for SM platforms to contribute to risk mitigation through responsible design and how the current limitations in collecting SM data impact the research in this area.




Computers in Human Behavior Reports

Volume 14, May 2024, 100404



Review

Social Media Use and adolescents' mental health and well-being: An umbrella review

[Arianna Sala](#)^a  , [Lorenzo Porcaro](#)^b  , [Emilia Gómez](#)^a  

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Research

Study of the societal impact of algorithmic systems.

Identification and measurement of systemic risks associated with VLOPs and VLOSEs, and investigation of risk mitigation measures.

Development of practical methodologies towards fair, transparent and accountable algorithmic approaches.

Community building

Sharing of knowledge and facilitation of discussions on algorithmic transparency with international stakeholders.

Acting as a knowledge hub for research conducted through data access provided by the DSA.

Community building – data access for researchers

FAQs: DSA data access for researchers

Under article 40 of the Digital Services Act (DSA), vetted researchers will be able to request data from very large online platforms (VLOPs) and search engines (VLOSEs) to conduct research on systemic risks in the EU.

[Learn more here >](#)

Sharing information with researcher networks online

CPDP-ai
2024

Hosting workshops at major conferences to meet the academic community



Arranging special events like hackathons to encourage researchers to explore data access opportunities



Want to be part of the Community?

Stay up-to-date and sign up for our newsletter on:

algorithmic-transparency.ec.europa.eu

Questions welcome!

Contact:

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