

# Europe Expands Investigation of Elon Musk Over Spread of His Illicit BS

## Content

As Elon Musk's geopolitical influence grows because of his closeness to incoming President Donald J. Trump, regulators in Europe have faced questions about whether they would scale down an investigation of X, the social media network that Mr. Musk owns.

On Friday, European Union officials indicated that they were not backing off.

Regulators in Brussels [said](#) they would expand an investigation into X for potential violation of a law, called the Digital Services Act, intended to clamp down on online disinformation and illegal content. Officials said they had ordered X to hand over internal documents about the company's recommendation algorithm, as well as provide access to data that would allow regulators to study the platform's content moderation policies and understand why material on certain accounts may go viral. "We are committed to ensuring that every platform operating in the E.U. respects our legislation, which aims to make the online environment fair, safe and democratic for all European citizens," said Henna Virkkunen, the European Commission's executive vice president for tech sovereignty, security and democracy.

X did not respond to a request for comment.

The [Digital Services Act](#), passed in 2022, gives regulators wide powers to force social media companies to police their platforms for hate speech, misinformation and illegal content. Companies that do not comply can face fines of up to 6 percent of global revenue.

The European Union started an [investigation of X](#) more than a year ago, accusing the company of failing to address illicit content and disinformation. The probe came after Mr. Musk's dramatically scaled back X's content moderation policies.

The incremental development announced on Friday has wider significance because it shows that European regulators are pressing ahead despite Mr. Musk's ties to the incoming Trump administration. The investigation of X has illuminated a [widening trans-Atlantic divide over the issue of free speech](#). In the United States, the First Amendment provides wide protections for even the most offensive things people can say, and Mr. Musk and Vice President-elect JD Vance have criticized E.U. laws as a form of government censorship. European officials see some restrictions on speech as a necessary way to protect democracy and religious and ethnic minority groups.

More battles loom. Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram, is also under investigation for violating the Digital Services Act. Mark Zuckerberg, the company's chief executive, recently criticized the European Union when announcing that the company would end its fact-checking program in the United States and end some global restrictions on what people can say on issues like immigration and transgender rights.

E.U. officials have not indicated when the investigation of X will conclude. On Friday, regulators ordered the company to preserve internal documents and other information that could be part of the probe until the end of the year.

The post [E.U. Expands Investigation of X Over Spread of Illicit Content](#) appeared first on [New York Times](#).

EU asks X for internal documents about algorithms as it steps up investigation

Musk's company has been accused of manipulating systems to give far-right posts and politicians greater visibility

The European Commission has asked X to hand over internal documents about its algorithms, as it steps up its investigation into whether Elon Musk's social media platform has breached EU rules on content moderation.

The EU's executive branch [told the company](#) it wanted to see internal documentation about its "recommender system", which makes content suggestions to users, and any recent changes made to it, by 15 February.

X has been under investigation since December 2023 under the EU's content law – known as the Digital Services Act (DSA) – over how it tackles the spread of illegal content and information manipulation. The company has been accused of manipulating the platform's systems to give far-right posts and politicians greater visibility over other political groups.

The EU has come under growing pressure in recent weeks to take action after a series of interventions by Musk into European politics. Musk, who will be a part of Donald Trump's administration in the US, has angered many on the continent with attacks on its leaders as well as expressions of support for Germany's far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party.

"Today we are taking further steps to shed light on the compliance of X's recommender systems with the obligations under the DSA," the EU digital commissioner, Henna Virkkunen, said in a statement.

The commission played down reports this week that it was reviewing its investigations against big tech companies, stressing that they were continuing as normal and Trump's return to the White House did not affect its commitment to enforcing its laws.

Virkkunen implied that the EU would not hesitate to use the powers it had to ban or fine X if it was found to be in breach of the DSA. "We are committed to ensuring that every platform operating in the EU respects our legislation, which aims to make the online environment fair, safe and democratic for all European citizens," she said.

As well as its request for information on X's recommender systems and any recent changes by 15 February, the three-pronged investigation has also issued a "retention order" obliging the platform to preserve internal documents and information regarding future changes to the design and functioning of the recommender algorithm between 17 January and 31 December unless the commission's investigation concludes before the end of the year.

The commission has also issued a request for access to certain of X's commercial interfaces or APIs, which are used to automatically draw content from third parties.

Johnny Ryan, [a tech litigator](#), said it was "positive" that Virkkunen "is taking the opportunity to publicly signal that the EU will enforce its law on its soil".

He said the retention order was "an important step" and was used after the Romanian election manipulation involving TikTok.

Some European politicians have accused Musk of meddling in elections, such as with his [streamed conversation with Alice Weidel](#), the leader of the AfD, earlier this month. The commission has said Musk is free to speak his mind and can hold live streams with politicians but is assessing whether algorithms boost a single narrative and "shadow-ban" other views, posing a risk to fair elections. Musk has said the criticism is an affront to democracy and free speech.

The European Commission has asked X to hand over internal documents about its algorithms, as it steps up its investigation into whether Elon Musk's social media platform has breached EU rules on content moderation.

The EU's executive branch told the company it wanted to see internal documentation about its "recommender system", which makes content suggestions to users, and any recent changes made to it, by 15 February.

X has been under investigation since December 2023 under the EU's content law – known as the Digital Services Act (DSA) – over how it tackles the spread of illegal content and information manipulation. The company has been accused of manipulating the platform's systems to give far-right posts and politicians greater visibility over other political groups.

The EU has come under growing pressure in recent weeks to take action after a series of interventions by Musk into European politics. Musk, who will be a part of Donald Trump's administration in the US, has angered many on the continent with attacks on its leaders as well as expressions of support for Germany's far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party.

“Today we are taking further steps to shed light on the compliance of X's recommender systems with the obligations under the DSA,” the EU digital commissioner, Henna Virkkunen, said in a statement.

The commission played down reports this week that it was reviewing its investigations against big tech companies, stressing that they were continuing as normal and Trump's return to the White House did not affect its commitment to enforcing its laws.

Virkkunen implied that the EU would not hesitate to use the powers it had to ban or fine X if it was found to be in breach of the DSA. “We are committed to ensuring that every platform operating in the EU respects our legislation, which aims to make the online environment fair, safe and democratic for all European citizens,” she said.

As well as its request for information on X's recommender systems and any recent changes by 15 February, the three-pronged investigation has also issued a “retention order” obliging the platform to preserve internal documents and information regarding future changes to the design and functioning of the recommender algorithm between 17 January and 31 December unless the commission's investigation concludes before the end of the year.

The commission has also issued a request for access to certain of X's commercial interfaces or APIs, which are used to automatically draw content from third parties.

Johnny Ryan, a tech litigator, said it was “positive” that Virkkunen “is taking the opportunity to publicly signal that the EU will enforce its law on its soil”.

He said the retention order was “an important step” and was used after the Romanian election manipulation involving TikTok.

Some European politicians have accused Musk of meddling in elections, such as with his streamed conversation with Alice Weidel, the leader of the AfD, earlier this month. The commission has said Musk is free to speak his mind and can hold live streams with politicians but is assessing whether algorithms boost a single narrative and “shadow-ban” other views, posing a risk to fair elections.

Musk has said the criticism is an affront to democracy and free speech.