

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001753/24
to the Commission
Virginie Joron (PFE)
(18 September 2024)**

Subject: Difficult end to term for Thierry Breton

On 13 August 2024, the Commission criticised ⁽¹⁾ Thierry Breton, Internal Market Commissioner, for speaking out ⁽²⁾ without permission against X (formerly known as Twitter) before the social network broadcast an interview by its boss, Elon Musk, of US presidential candidate Donald Trump during the election campaign. Thierry Breton resigned from the Commission on 16 September 2024.

The dispute is evidence that some decisions taken by former Commissioners spark controversy and are not ‘business as usual’.

1. Was Commission Vice-President Margrethe Vestager aware of Thierry Breton’s initiative in advance and did she give it the green light ⁽³⁾?
2. Does the Commission consider that initiative interference in the electoral process of a third country?

Submitted: 18.9.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Vestager on behalf of the European Commission
(20 November 2024)**

On 11 August 2024, Mr Musk announced a likely increase of X’s user traffic for a specific date due to a planned live-streamed event.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) ⁽¹⁾ requires designated very large online platforms and search engines, including X, to have adequate measures in place to address potential systemic risks, which may be caused by traffic increase.

This can, for example be done through the adoption of measures mitigating risks of amplification of posts by its millions of users containing illegal content, disinformation or which are contrary to the terms and conditions.

In this respect, it is noteworthy that X’s terms of service ban hateful content and set rules on the moderation of violent content and to ensure civic integrity.

The letter was sent to X by Mr Breton on 12 August 2024 in his capacity as the Commissioner responsible for implementing the DSA, without involvement of the College of Commissioners.

That letter did not raise any issues with the live broadcasting of the interview itself. It also took no view on the context of the interview nor the political views of the participants in that interview.

The Commission strictly follows a non-interference policy in third-country electoral processes and remains committed to upholding electoral neutrality.

All acts and decisions adopted by the Commission on the basis of the DSA are taken within the limits of the Commission’s powers and are subject to judicial review.

¹ <https://www.lejdd.fr/international/la-commission-europeenne-se-distancie-de-thierry-breton-apres-sa-confrontation-avec-elon-musk-148554>;
<https://www.ft.com/content/09cf4713-7199-4e47-a373-ed5de61c2afa>

² <https://x.com/thierrybreton/status/1823033048109367549> <https://x.com/ThierryBreton/status/1835565206639972734>

³ Commission working methods, https://commissioners.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0dbda7ed-b7fb-4d7e-9e62-6c8b0f54be62_en?filename=working-methods.pdf

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022R2065>