

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001816/24
to the Commission
Tom Vandendriessche (P/E)
(25 September 2024)**

Subject: Commission enquiry into Meta's shadow bans

On 2 April 2024, I asked the Commission a question regarding the use of shadow banning on social media. Drawing on its oversight powers, on 30 April 2024, the Commission initiated formal proceedings against Meta, *inter alia* with regard to shadow banning practices and its 'political content policy', whereby political content is given a less prominent place in recommendation systems.

This gives rise to the following questions:

1. Is the Commission examining the impact of shadow banning on the recent elections?
2. Does shadow banning discriminate against certain political figures or beliefs?
3. What measures is the Commission considering to ensure the transparency and fairness of recommendation systems on social media, with a view to preventing shadow banning and political bias?

Submitted: 25.9.2024

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

As mentioned by the Honourable Member, the Commission initiated formal proceedings on 30 April 2024 against Meta *inter alia* 'for shadow banning' practices ⁽¹⁾.

In addition, the Commission is examining the potential impact of Meta's practices, including shadow banning, on the systemic risks to which its services give rise, as referred to in Article 34 of Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 (DSA) ⁽²⁾. However, the Commission cannot disclose further details on the ongoing investigation.

As referred to in Recital 55 DSA, shadow banning may consist in the demotion of content in ranking or in recommender systems, as well as in limiting accessibility by one or more recipients of the service or blocking the user from an online community without the user being aware.

The Commission is investigating whether Meta's practices, including the policy linked to the 'political content approach' that demotes political content in the recommender systems of Instagram and Facebook (including their feeds), are compliant with its DSA obligations, including the obligation to provide a clear and specific statement of reasons for any restrictions imposed on the visibility of specific items of information laid down in Article 17 DSA.

The investigation will focus on the compatibility of this policy with the transparency and user redress obligations under the DSA, as well as the requirements to assess and mitigate risks to civic discourse and electoral processes.

⁽¹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_2373

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1-102.