

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001504/25
to the Commission
Mariusz Kamiński (ECR)
(11 April 2025)

Subject: Telegram as a tool used by the Russian authorities and the Commission's slow and inadequate response

The Russian Telegram platform is widely used by the Russian authorities and organised crime groups. The Kremlin treats it as a safe and effective tool not only for spreading propaganda and disinformation, but also for carrying out specific acts of sabotage on EU territory. One example is a group recruited and instructed via Telegram to conduct a campaign against Poland's Law and Justice Government, President Andrzej Duda, Ukraine and NATO ⁽¹⁾.

Authorities in the Netherlands and Lithuania have warned that Telegram is being used as a 'notice board' for drug trafficking, as well as other serious crimes, such as paedophilia and human trafficking.

During a meeting of the Special Committee on the European Democracy Shield (EUDS) on 27 March 2025, representatives of the Estonian Consumer Protection and Technical Regulatory Authority pointed out that cooperation with Telegram in the prosecution of the perpetrators of these crimes and the removal of illegal content is very limited.

Despite the seriousness of the threats that it poses, Telegram, after opening an office in Brussels, enjoys full freedom of activity in the territory of the EU. At the same time, by understating the number of users, it is able to evade obligations regarding the transparency of algorithms imposed on VLOPs. Experts and regulators indicate that the actual number of users exceeds the threshold of 45 million.

1. Given the examples presented of the use of Telegram by the Russian authorities and criminal groups, is the Commission cooperating with Member States, Europol and Eurojust to thoroughly assess and counter this threat?
2. Is the Commission working with the Belgian regulatory authority and other national authorities to urgently conduct a thorough assessment to determine whether Telegram should be classified as a VLOP?

Submitted: 11.4.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(20 June 2025)

The Commission is not directly involved in specific criminal investigations. The Commission cooperates with Eurojust and Europol ⁽¹⁾ in enabling and supporting the EU's judicial and law enforcement cooperation.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) ⁽²⁾ established the European Board for Digital Services ('the Board'), an independent advisory group composed of the Member States' Digital Services Coordinators (DSC) and chaired by the Commission ⁽³⁾.

The Board Working Group 7 — Orders and criminal issues — provides for exchanges and discussions on the cooperation with law enforcement authorities to tackle illegal content online and to support the Commission's assessment of systemic and emerging issues across the EU under the DSA. This relates to the orders referred to in Articles 9 and 10 and to the notifications under Article 18 of the DSA ⁽⁴⁾.

In accordance with Article 33 of the DSA, the Commission designates as very large online platforms (VLOP) or very large online search engines (VLOSEs), respectively those services with a number of average monthly active recipients in the EU (AMAR) equal to or exceeding 45 million.

The information published on the online interface of Telegram, indicates that its overall service had fewer than 45 million AMAR as of February 2025 ⁽⁵⁾.

The Commission services have discussed the number of AMAR with the legal representative of Telegram and will continue to actively monitor the updated AMAR related information due by August 2025 as well as all other information available to it ⁽⁶⁾.

¹ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/poland-investigating-russian-espionage-security-agency-says/>

⁽¹⁾ See, for example, Eight countries launch Operational Taskforce to tackle violence-as-a-service <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/eight-countries-launch-operational-taskforce-to-tackle-violence-service#:~:text=Europol%20is%20at%20the%20heart,developed%20under%20OTF%20GRIMM%20progress.>

⁽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.

⁽³⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-board>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/working-group-7-european-board-digital-services-orders-and-criminal-issues>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://telegram.org/tos/eu-dsa>.

⁽⁶⁾ Pursuant to Article 33(4) DSA, the Commission may designate a service, on the basis of self-reported data or information requested pursuant to Article 24(3) DSA or any other information available to the Commission.

The Commission services are in close contact with the relevant authorities, particularly the Belgian DSC ⁽⁷⁾ which is competent for supervising Telegram's compliance with the DSA ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ More information on the role of Digital Services Coordinators can be found on: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-dscs>.

⁽⁸⁾ Pursuant to Article 3(n) DSA, the Digital Services Coordinator of establishment encompasses the Digital Services Coordinator of the Member State where the legal representative of the provider of an intermediary service is established.