

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004983/25
to the Commission
Stefano Cavedagna (ECR)
(17 December 2025)

Subject: Trusted flaggers under the Digital Services Act

Online reviews have become a central decision-making tool in the hospitality sector. More than 90% of travellers consult online reviews before making bookings, and around 80% state that such reviews significantly influence their choice of hotels and restaurants.

However, the credibility of this system is increasingly undermined by the growing volume of fake reviews and illegitimate user- or AI-generated content intended to artificially improve or damage a business's reputation. This situation places hospitality operators at a competitive disadvantage and limits the ability of consumers to make informed choices and undermines their trust.

1. What measures is the Commission taking to ensure that hospitality operators can more effectively manage misleading, inauthentic and fake reviews, including by receiving timely and effective consideration by the platforms hosting such reviews, as required under the Digital Services Act (DSA)?
2. Can the Commission confirm that the forthcoming guidelines on trusted flaggers under Article 22 of the DSA will clarify the criteria and procedures governing who may obtain trusted flagger status and how applications for trusted flagger status are to be assessed?
3. As trusted flagger status is increasingly requested by various sectors, can the Commission confirm that national hospitality associations may also be eligible to become trusted flaggers and therefore challenge fake reviews on behalf of their member establishments under the DSA?

Submitted: 17.12.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(5 March 2026)

While illegal content is defined by EU or national law and not by the Digital Services Act (DSA) itself, fake reviews from traders may constitute illegal content.

The DSA provides a comprehensive framework to address illegal content online. Platforms must process notices in a timely and diligent manner and provide statements of reasons for content moderation decisions, together with an effective redress possibility through an internal complaint-handling mechanism.

Should the result of the dispute resolution mechanism be unsatisfactory, certified out-of-court dispute settlement bodies ⁽¹⁾ offer swift, efficient and cost-effective means of resolving disputes.

Users and traders may submit complaints to the competent Digital Services Coordinator (DSC) ⁽²⁾ for lack of compliance with DSA by service providers. The DSC may initiate action.

Fake reviews may also represent a systemic risk to a high level of consumer protection. Very large online platforms are therefore required, under the DSA, to assess and mitigate such risks.

The trusted flagger mechanism ⁽³⁾ is operational. DSCs grant this status in accordance with the DSA's criteria, such as a particular expertise in identifying illegal content. More than 50 trusted flaggers have already been designated, and their notices must be processed with priority.

The Commission is preparing guidelines to further support this mechanism.

Industry associations representing collective interests, including in the hospitality sector, are encouraged to apply for trusted flagger status.

⁽¹⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-out-court-dispute-settlement>.

⁽²⁾ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-dscs#1720699867912-1>.

⁽³⁾ Article 22 of the Digital Services Act.

EU consumer legislation ⁽⁴⁾ and Code of Conduct ⁽⁵⁾ provides transparency requirements and reliability for online reviews. They prohibit several commercial practices by traders in relation to consumer reviews.

⁽⁴⁾ Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and amending Council Directive 84/450/EEC, Directives 97/7/EC, 98/27/EC and 2002/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council ('Unfair Commercial Practices Directive').

⁽⁵⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news-events/news/commission-welcomes-code-conduct-reliable-online-reviews-tourism-accommodation-2025-09-01_en.