

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002011/26
to the Commission
Virginie Joron (PFE)
(13 May 2026)**

Subject: Weaponisation of animal cruelty on social network: the Commission stands idly by

Since early 2026, we have seen a surge in sophisticated scams on social media ⁽¹⁾. Malicious individuals are circulating staged images of alleged animal cruelty to encourage donations to online fundraising campaigns. This content, which is often fabricated or manipulated, is used for the purposes of scams that have nothing whatsoever to do with animal welfare.

The Digital Services Act ⁽²⁾, in particular Articles 16, 28, 34, 66 and 67 thereof, lays down due diligence obligations for platforms regarding illegal content and entrusts the Commission with supervisory and sanctioning powers.

Given this urgent state of affairs, can the Commission say:

1. Whether it intends to open investigations or formal proceedings against platforms that fail to comply with their obligation to moderate and remove such manifestly illegal content?
2. Whether believes the proliferation of these organised scams to constitute a systemic risk within the meaning of Article 34, particularly in respect of to consumer protection and the dissemination of illegal content?
3. How it can justify prioritising sanctions against symbolic elements ⁽³⁾ (such as ‘blue checkmarks’) over fighting criminal networks that are ripping off Europeans?

Submitted: 13.5.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(29 June 2026)**

Under the Digital Services Act (DSA) ⁽¹⁾, when providers of hosting services are made aware of illegal content on their services they must act expeditiously to remove or to disable access to it if their wish to benefit from the exemption from liability provided by the DSA.

Article 16 DSA requires providers of hosting services to put in place mechanisms allowing any user to notify content they consider illegal and to process such notices in a timely, diligent and non-arbitrary way.

Articles 34 and 35 DSA require providers of very large online platforms (VLOPs) to diligently identify, assess and mitigate systemic risks stemming from the design, functioning or use made of their services, including the dissemination of illegal content and any actual or foreseeable negative effects for the exercise of fundamental rights.

The Commission is competent to supervise and enforce compliance with the DSA of VLOPs and of very large online search engines. The Commission will not provide comments on potential or ongoing investigations, but it can confirm that fraudulent schemes are part of the systemic risks within the meaning of Article 34 of the DSA.

The two objectives raised in the third question are not in tension. In its first non-compliance decision under the DSA, the Commission found that the provider of X’s use of the ‘blue checkmark’ for ‘verified accounts’ deceives users ⁽²⁾.

By allowing users to purchase verified status, it misleads users about authenticity and can itself heighten their exposure to scams and impersonation fraud.

Action on deceptive design and action against fraudulent content are therefore mutually reinforcing rather than alternatives and the Commission continues to draw on the full range of its supervisory and enforcement powers.

¹ [https://www.30millionsdamis.fr/actualites/article/6315-arnaques-sur-Internet-30-millions-damis-appelle-a-la-vigilance/?sword_list\[0\]=Adopter&sword_list\[1\]=un&sword_list\[2\]=chien&cHash=ea756fb4aad69d30ad77d6e298abaf02](https://www.30millionsdamis.fr/actualites/article/6315-arnaques-sur-Internet-30-millions-damis-appelle-a-la-vigilance/?sword_list[0]=Adopter&sword_list[1]=un&sword_list[2]=chien&cHash=ea756fb4aad69d30ad77d6e298abaf02)

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).

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_2934

⁽¹⁾ 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.

⁽²⁾ Commission fines X EUR 120 million under the Digital Services Act | Shaping Europe’s digital future.