

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-002235/25
to the Commission
Tiemo Wölken (S&D)
(4 June 2025)**

Subject: Abuse of copyright infringement claims to censor the press

In March 2025, Investigate Europe ⁽¹⁾ and other media outlets revealed that Soft2bet, a gambling firm headquartered in Cyprus and Malta, is linked to 114 online casinos that have been blacklisted by Member States. Since the publication of the investigation, anonymous actors have filed false US Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) complaints to de-index these news articles from Google in the EU. In over 60 complaints, fake claimants copied the original investigation and backdated it, making Google believe that their copy was the original article and/or posed as Investigate Europe, filing infringement claims against outlets that co-published or shared the investigation. This has led to the de-indexing of genuine articles about Soft2bet in Greece ⁽²⁾, Poland ⁽³⁾, Malta ⁽⁴⁾, Estonia ⁽⁵⁾ and other countries.

1. How will the Commission ensure that journalistic work published within the EU is not subject to false copyright complaints, so as to guarantee that Google and other search engines properly filter false infringement claims in the future?
2. Is the Commission aware of Google's use of potentially error-prone algorithmic or AI filtering systems to assess copyright claims?
3. Is the Commission aware of any other cases of systematic abuses of copyright protections in the EU aimed at censoring the press?

Submitted: 4.6.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(25 July 2025)**

Under EU law, the enforcement of copyright must respect fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of expression and of information.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) ⁽¹⁾ establishes a balanced framework for online intermediaries, and their providers are responsible for tackling illegal content and protecting rights such as media freedom.

The DSA requires the providers of such online intermediaries to act diligently, objectively and proportionately when applying content moderation, with due regard to freedom of expression and media pluralism.

The providers of Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs), such as Google Search, must also mitigate systemic risks, including by adapting moderation processes.

Providers of intermediary services may rely on automated means to detect and remove or otherwise restrict illegal content (such as the non-authorised use of copyright protected content), as long as the content moderation meets the requirements of the DSA, including certain additional transparency requirements ⁽²⁾.

The Commission is directly enforcing the DSA vis-à-vis designated VLOSEs and, where necessary, it takes steps to ensure that their providers comply with the regulation.

In addition, the directive (EU) 2024/1069 ⁽³⁾ protects persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings initiated to silence public debate.

¹ <https://www.investigate-europe.eu/posts/shady-bets-blacklisted-gambling-sites-connected-to-soft2bet-award-winning-european-firm>

² https://lumendatabase.org/notices/50067895?access_token=INKWQV49dp1dmRZMCAkVUg

³ https://lumendatabase.org/notices/50130061?access_token=CYq0sYjCl-OzG_o0T8QpHQ

⁴ <https://lumendatabase.org/notices/50550335>

⁵ https://lumendatabase.org/notices/50266670?access_token=kZ9oB1Hqs377Y87Afzrkrq

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ Article 15 of the DSA requires providers of intermediary services to make publicly available reports on their content moderation, including a description of any use of automated means and any safeguards applied.

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj>.