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Answer given by Mr Breton
on behalf of the European Commission
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Freedom of expression and information and democratic participation are at the core of the EU action to shape the online environment.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) proposal¹ is a comprehensive reform to rebalance the responsibilities of online services. By doing so, the due diligence obligations of major platforms, including their role in facilitating the public debate, will be subject to clear principles, transparency and accountability.

Whilst recognising that the freedom of contract of online platforms should in principle be respected, the proposed DSA requires platforms to be transparent on any policies and measures used for the purpose of content moderation and obliges them to act in a diligent, objective and proportionate manner in applying and enforcing such restrictions, taking into account fundamental rights as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU². The proposal also includes rules for very large online platforms to assess and mitigate negative effects their systems have on freedom of expression.

The DSA will give all users possibilities to contest decisions taken by online platforms to remove content, including when these decisions are based on platforms' terms and conditions. Users will have the right to complain directly to the platform, choose an out-of-court dispute settlement body or seek redress before the national courts.

Recognising that democracy requires more determined action to preserve open democratic debate, the European Democracy Action Plan³ announced actions to promote transparency in political advertising, fight against hate speech, address disinformation and foreign interference, developing accountability standards for online platforms in this regard and promote respect in the public debate.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act-ensuring-safe-and-accountable-online-environment_en

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2250