



Brussels, 04 November 2021

Dear Minister Högerberg,

I am writing to you on behalf of a group of international civil society organisations and think tanks advocating for a safer and more transparent online environment, in which human rights are effectively protected.

We are currently facing a democratic crisis in Europe. Far too much power is in the hands of unaccountable private technology companies with huge implications for our societies and the realisation of our rights. Recent revelations from Facebook whistleblowers such as Sophie Zhang and Frances Haugen have rightly deepened citizens' mistrust over Big Tech's ability to self-regulate, disclose, and act on systemic harms - including the protection of minors and democratic discourse.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) is a crucial and welcome opportunity to hold online platforms to account and ensure a safer and more transparent online environment for all. The success of these new rules will ultimately be determined by the strength of the enforcement system. If the DSA is to live up to its ambition, it must include a strong and independent EU-level system for enforcement in addition to well-funded and resourced national Digital Services Coordinators, which avoids the pitfalls of fragmentation and delay that has plagued other EU legislation such as the GDPR.

As the Council nears the agreement of its General Approach for the DSA, we urge you to support **an EU-level enforcement model** to hold very online large platforms to account. This means empowering **a functionally and politically independent enforcement and monitoring unit** that could be part of the European Commission in the short-term or be placed in an independent, specialized EU agency to play this oversight role.

By establishing EU-level enforcement powers and matching this with adequate resources, the DSA will be given the best chance of ensuring meaningful and consistent checks of compliance with due diligence measures by the very large online platforms from the outset - including via risk assessment, independent audit and meaningful transparency.

Almost every day we see new reports of harms associated with large tech companies. There is no time to waste. We count on Member States to stand with European citizens in pushing for an ambitious DSA capable of meeting the digital challenges of our time.

We would be happy to discuss the issue of DSA enforcement with you or a member of your team at the earliest opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Avaaz
Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties)
Defend Democracy

European Digital Rights (EDRi)
Fair Vote UK
Global Witness
Peter Tatchell Foundation
Stiftung Neue Verantwortung (SNV)
SumOfUs
The Signals Network
Transparency International EU
Uplift
Netwerk Democratie