

European Parliament Approves of "Meme Law"

Written by Marco Attard
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The European Union is set to bring about sweeping changes to the internet as the European Parliament votes in favour of a new online copyright law, one with two controversial components, Article 11 and Article 13.



Dubbed the European Union Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market, the legislation demands platforms (such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter) take more measures against the sharing of copyrighted materials, all while promising the internet remains "a space for freedom and expression." The voting result was tight, with 384 votes in favour, 274 against and 36 abstentions, and marks the end of a legislative process started back in 2016.

The most infamous component of the directive is Article 13. It requires online platforms to filter or remove copyrighted material, and is worded loosely enough to be interpreted as a ban on all user-generated content (such as memes) infringing on said copyrighted material. The directive does not specify how the platforms identify and remove content, even if an earlier version pointed out the use of "proportionate content recognition technologies."

Article 11 is another source of controversy-- informally known as the "link tax," it demands search engines and news aggregators pay for displaying snippets of news they link to. Back in January Google responded to the proposal by suggesting it pull its news service from Europe, and [Search Engine Land](#) has mockups of how a Google search for "latest news" will look like following the implementation of the link tax (it is just a set of empty boxes).

Bringing about more pain to internet users is Article 12a. It states only the official organisers of a sports match can post any videos or photos of the match in question, bringing a ban to the posting of viral sports gifs and even, depending on how the law is interpreted, even photos

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taken by people present at the stadium.

As such, it should come to no surprise a lot of people are not too happy with the directive. A Change.org petition was signed by 5 million users, and over 100000 protesters took to European streets across Germany over the weekend. However there is very little stopping the directive from becoming European law, unless it fails to gain approval by the Council of European Union, something requiring at least one key country going against it on the 9 April vote.

Should all EU member states accept the directive, they will have 2 years to implement it.

Go [European Parliament Approves New Copyright Rules for the Internet](#)

Go [EU's Parliament Signs Off on Disastrous Internet Law: What Happens Next? \(Electronic Frontier Foundation\)](#)