



## Commission, online platforms and civil society increase monitoring during Romanian elections

Brussels, 5 December 2024

In the context of the ongoing Romanian elections, the Commission has stepped up its monitoring of TikTok under the [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#). This relates to the exercise of the Commission's competences under the DSA and does not address the Romanian electoral process, which is a matter for the Romanian authorities and ultimately the Romanian people.

The Commission has issued a 'retention order' to TikTok under the DSA, ordering the platform to freeze and preserve data related to actual or foreseeable systemic risks its service could pose on electoral processes and civic discourse in the EU. This is done to preserve available information and evidence in the event of a further Commission investigation of TikTok's compliance with its obligations under the DSA.

TikTok must preserve internal documents and information regarding the design and functioning of its recommender systems, as well as the way it addresses the risk of intentional manipulation through coordinated inauthentic use of the service. The Commission is ordering preservation of documents and information regarding any systematic infringement of TikTok's terms of service prohibiting the use of monetisation features for the promotion of political content on the service. The retention order concerns national elections in the European Union between **24 November 2024 until 31 March 2025**.

The order follows information received by the Commission in the context of the ongoing Romanian elections, including recently [declassified information pointing to foreign interference from Russia](#). At this stage, the Commission is monitoring compliance and has no position on the question of whether TikTok may have infringed obligations under the DSA.

### Strengthened monitoring and cooperation

The Commission is also convening a meeting of the [European Board for Digital Services Coordinators](#) on Friday 6 December to discuss with all Digital Services Coordinators on the steps taken so far in this context, and how to respond to emerging evidence, such as indications that accounts in other Member States have targeted the Romanian diaspora.

Additionally, the Commission is raising the evidence made available within the informal Cyber Crisis Task Force, which includes the European Commission, the EEAS, Europol and ENISA (the EU Cybersecurity Agency). The Task Force is in close contact with the Romanian cybersecurity authorities.

The Commission has stepped up engagement with TikTok under the Digital Services Act. This includes requesting clarifications, data, and evidence through formal requests, while forcefully recalling TikTok's obligations to effectively identify and mitigate election-related risks in line with the [election guidelines issued](#) under the Digital Services Act.

In parallel, Signatories of the [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#) have also activated the Rapid Response System (RRS) for the Romanian elections. This cooperation system of the Code ensures rapid and effective cooperation during electoral periods. It has proven to be a useful and effective tool in exchanging information between civil society organisations, fact-checkers and online platforms on time-sensitive content that they deem to present threats to the integrity of the electoral process.

The [Romanian-Bulgarian hub \(BROD\)](#) of the [European Digital Media Observatory](#) - which is also participating in the Rapid Response System - has been monitoring the Romanian online ecosystem and has identified several disinformation narratives and tactics such as violation of electoral law,

unmarked political content (including through influencers) and suspicion of coordinated inauthentic behavior.

## Background

On Friday 29 November, the Commission has sent a [request for information](#) to TikTok, asking the platform to provide more information on its management of the risks of information manipulation. In particular, the Commission is requesting TikTok to provide detailed information on how it analysed and mitigated the risk of inauthentic or automated exploitation of its service and the risks stemming from its recommender systems.

The Commission is also asking information about TikTok's efforts to enable a wider range of third parties to conduct public scrutiny, as well as have access to publicly accessible data to detect, identify and understand systemic risks related to electoral processes. On 02 October, the Commission had already sent an initial request for information to TikTok regarding the design and functioning of its recommender systems in relation to elections.

On 29 November, the Commission services held an online [roundtable](#) with VLOPs and VLOSEs, the Romanian Digital Services Coordinator ANCOM, relevant state authorities and civil society organisations to gather information and ensure preparedness for the ongoing Romanian elections. TikTok, Meta, Google, Microsoft, and X were among the participants who attended the roundtable. During the meeting, the Commission's services requested the VLOPs and VLOSEs to share information on their risk assessment and mitigation measures in the context of the Romanian Presidential elections on 24 November and 8 December as well as the Parliamentary elections on 1 December 2024.

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Quote(s):

*"We ordered TikTok today to freeze and preserve all data and evidence linked to the Romanian elections, but also for upcoming elections in the EU. This preservation order is a key step in helping investigators establish the facts and adds to our formal requests for information which seek information following the declassification of secret documents yesterday. We are also intensifying contacts with digital and cyber regulators across Europe in light of emerging evidence of systematic inauthentic activity. I am committed to diligent and robust enforcement of the Digital Services Act."*  
Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy

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