# EU stands firm on digital regulations amidst US trade tensions



The European Union remains steadfast in its commitment to its digital regulations, asserting that it will not alter its tech rules to secure a trade deal with the United States, even in light of recent demands from the Trump administration. Henna Virkkunen, the European Commission vice-president responsible for tech sovereignty, addressed the issue during an interview with various European and international publications, including The Guardian.

Virkkunen emphasised the EU's dedication to maintaining a digital landscape that is equitable, secure, and democratic, stating, “We are very committed to our rules when it comes to the digital world." She asserted that the digital regulations apply uniformly to all companies regardless of their origin, be they European, American, or Chinese. “We are not specially targeting certain companies, but we have this risk-based approach in all our rules,” she clarified.

The backdrop to these comments includes recent criticisms from Trump’s senior trade adviser, Peter Navarro, who accused the EU of deploying "lawfare" against major US tech firms. The rhetoric has intensified, with notable figures such as Meta's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, alleging that the EU is "institutionalising censorship." Trump's administration has voiced strong opposition to European efforts, including the imposition of fines and anti-trust investigations concerning major companies like Apple and Facebook.

Virkkunen pointed out that larger tech firms often face heightened obligations due to their significant market presence. “When you are a bigger player, then there are more obligations, because you are posing a bigger risk,” she remarked. She made her comments following Trump’s unexpected announcement of a 90-day pause on tariffs. Despite this, the EU still grapples with existing 10% tariffs on certain imports, alongside a possible 25% on automobiles and metals entering the US.

Even as the EU welcomes efforts towards a dialogue on "reciprocal" tariffs, Virkkunen remarked, “We want to have a good trade agreement with the USA and we don’t want to have a trade war.” Nevertheless, the Commission is prepared for various retaliatory measures if negotiations falter. France has been particularly vocal in advocating for a response to the tariffs imposed on European goods.

Appointed to her role in December, Virkkunen oversees a wide array of responsibilities, including efforts to protect European democracy from misinformation and the regulatory environment surrounding big tech firms under the EU's new digital framework. Notably, the Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act are tools aimed at ensuring fair competition and reducing online harms.

Recent enforcement actions have included scrutiny of companies such as Apple and Alphabet for potential violations of the Digital Markets Act. Virkkunen underscored that the intention behind these investigations is not to impose harsh penalties but rather to ensure compliance with the established rules.

The EU’s ambition to foster technological innovation comes against a backdrop of concern regarding its relative economic stagnation compared to the US and China, particularly in the realm of artificial intelligence (AI). Virkkunen noted that approximately 80% of technology utilised within Europe is sourced externally, presenting a significant challenge moving forward. She has proposed the creation of up to five AI gigafactories in the EU to advance the development of AI technologies.

As discussions surrounding the EU's AI Act continue, there have been rising anxieties among creatives about the protection of their copyrights in an era of generative AI. Virkkunen acknowledged these concerns, stating, “It looks that now further steps have to be taken here.” She indicated that the Commission was considering various licensing models to strike an equitable balance between supporting creative industries and facilitating AI training.

Through her initiatives, Virkkunen aims to provide a conducive environment for innovation while ensuring that appropriate protections are in place for content creators and rights holders in an evolving digital landscape.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.scl.org/european-commission-issues-work-programme-for-2025/> - This source details the European Commission's 2025 work program, which includes initiatives on digital regulations and tech sovereignty. It supports the EU's commitment to its digital landscape and regulatory framework.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_Services_Act> - The Digital Services Act is an EU regulation aimed at ensuring fair competition and reducing online harms, which aligns with Virkkunen's oversight responsibilities.
* <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/the-2025-crypto-policy-landscape-looming-eu-and-us-divergences/> - This article highlights the EU's divergent digital policy stance compared to the US, particularly in areas such as crypto regulation, which reflects the EU's strong commitment to its digital regulations.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/sep/20/mark-zuckerberg-says-eu-institutionalising-censorship-with-new-regulations> - Mark Zuckerberg's comments on the EU institutionalizing censorship with its regulations reflect the kind of criticisms the EU faces from major tech companies, similar to the rhetoric mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.reuters.com/technology/eu-apple-investigation-over-digital-markets-act-2023-05-22/> - Recent enforcement actions against companies like Apple underscore the EU's determination to enforce its digital regulations, specifically the Digital Markets Act, as noted by Virkkunen.