

European Commission designates Whatsapp as a VLOP under the DSA

IRIS 2026-2:1/10

*Amélie Lacourt
European Audiovisual Observatory*

Under Article 33 of the Digital Services Act (DSA), online platforms with an average of at least 45 million active monthly recipients in the EU are classified as Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and must comply with the DSA's strictest rules.

The European Commission now supervises 21 designated VLOPs and Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs). On 26 January, it officially designated WhatsApp as one of them. The platform's "Channels" feature indeed allows users to share information, updates, and announcements with a large audience of WhatsApp users, thereby reaching the threshold set by the DSA. However, the Commission clarified that WhatsApp's private messaging service, which enables users to send text messages, voice notes, photos, videos, and documents, as well as to make voice and video calls, is explicitly excluded from the scope of the DSA.

As a VLOP, WhatsApp's Channels will, among other things, be required to duly assess and mitigate any systemic risks, such as violations of fundamental human rights and freedom of expression, electoral manipulation, the dissemination of illegal content, and privacy concerns, stemming from its services.

Once a platform is designated as a VLOP or a search engine as a VLOSE, the designated online service has four months to comply with the DSA. Meta, the provider of WhatsApp, therefore has until mid-May 2026 to comply with the obligations of the EU Regulation. Compliance will be supervised by the European Commission and the Irish media regulatory authority and Digital Services Coordinator (*Coimisiún na Meán*).

Commission designates Whatsapp as Very Large Online Platform under the Digital Services Act

<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-designates-whatsapp-very-large-online-platform-under-digital-services-act>

