IMCO Committee adopts Report on addictive design of digital platforms

IRIS 2023-10:1/8

Ronan Ó Fathaigh
Institute for Information Law (IViR)

On 25 October 2023, the European Parliament's Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) adopted an important new Report on the addictive design of online services and consumer protection in the EU single market. Notably, the Report stressed that the issue of addictive design is “not sufficiently covered” in existing EU legislation, and if unaddressed could lead to “further deterioration” in public health, especially affecting minors. Crucially, the Report called on the European Commission to examine which policy initiatives are needed and present legislation against addictive design, where “appropriate and necessary”.

The first draft of the Report was published in July 2023, with compromise amendments published on 18 October 2023. It opens by noting that many digital services, such as online games, social media, streaming services for films, series or music, online marketplaces or web shops and dating apps are “designed to keep users on the platform for as long as possible so as to maximise the time and money they spend there”; and many online services are “designed to be as addictive as possible”. Further, the Report expresses alarm that certain platforms and other tech companies “exploit psychological vulnerabilities” to design digital interfaces for commercial interests that “maximise the frequency and duration of user visits, so as to prolong the use of online services and to create engagement with the platform”.

In this regard, the Report calls on the Commission to examine which policy initiatives are needed and present legislation against addictive design, where appropriate and necessary. Notably, if the topic remains “unaddressed”, Parliament should be the “frontrunner and use its right of legislative initiative”. In additon, the Report “demands” that in its review of existing EU legislation on addictive design, the Commission puts forward a digital “right not to be disturbed” to empower consumers by turning all attention-seeking features off by design. The Report also urges the Commission to foster ethical design of online services by default; and calls on the Commission to create a list of “good practices” of design features that are not addictive or manipulative and ensure users are fully in control and can take “conscious and informed actions online without facing an information overload or subconscious influencing”.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

Finally, the Commission is currently reviewing the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive, Consumer Rights Directive, and Unfair Contract Terms Directive, and the Report urges the Commission in its review to ensure a high level of protection in the digital environment with attention to tackling the growing issues around the "addictive, behavioural and manipulative design of online services".

European Parliament, New EU rules needed to make digital platforms less addictive, 25 October 2023

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20231023IPR08161/new-eu-rules-needed-to-make-digital-platforms-less-addictive

Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, Final Compromise Amendments 1 - 22 on the Draft Report on addictive design of online services and consumer protection in the EU single market, 18 October 2023

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/IMCO/DV/2023/10-25/15-CAs_AddictiveDesignEN.pdf

Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, DRAFT REPORT on addictive design of online services and consumer protection in the EU single market (2023/2043(INI)), 19 July 2023

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/IMCO-PR-750069_EN.pdf

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026