

“Stop Killing Videogames”: The European Commission response to the Citizen's initiative

IRIS 2026-7:1/24

*Joan Ramon Rodriguez-Amat
European Audiovisual Observatory*

On 16 June 2026, the European Commission published its response to the Citizens' Initiative “Stop Destroying Videogames”, which gathered over 1.29 million signatures across at least seven member states (ECI(2024)000007). The Citizens' Initiative, established under Regulation (EU) No 2019/788, is designed to allow citizens to call for new EU legislation. In this case, the request was for publishers to leave games in a playable state after ending commercial support, and to prevent remote deactivation of games post-sale. The campaign notably followed the controversial removal of Ubisoft's *The Crew* from active life in April 2024, blocking access for all buyers and sparking outrage in gamer communities. It also gave rise to a judicial process driven by UFC-Que Choisir in France (31/03/2026) which had also been involved in similar issues such as the fight against the programmed obsolescence of Nintendo Switch controllers (04/04/2023).

The Commission acknowledged the importance of consumer expectations in the digital gaming sector, highlighting that evolving business models – such as “live service” games – raise new questions about ownership and access. However, the Commission response acknowledged the importance of the video games sector and noted that the intellectual property regulatory framework allowed rights holders to remain free to determine whether and how their protected works may be used.

Furthermore, the Commission built its response on the sufficient existing consumer protections, among which are the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD) 2005/29/EC; Directive 93/13/EEC on unfair terms in consumer contracts; or the Digital Services Directive (EU) 2019/770:

“Any regulatory measures intended to ensure that video games continue to function or are preserved after online services are discontinued would therefore have to be balanced against the rights of consumers, and the rights of the holder of the relevant intellectual property rights and contractual arrangements involved as well as with the legitimate interests of rights holders.” (p. 9)

Therefore, rather than proposing legislation, the Commission committed to “explore with the industry the possibility of elaborating a self-regulatory code of

conduct to promote better standards for the sunseting of games” (p. 12) as well as to work with consumer authorities to strengthen awareness of the applicable consumer rights.

Although no new legal requirements are proposed, the Commission insists on the relevance of the sector in the European context, and the issue remains on the EU agenda. The initiative may still influence ongoing legislative discussions, such as the Digital Fairness Act, still under formulation, which is intended to challenge unlawful “dark patterns” and promote ethical design, complementing the recent Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act.

The European Commission's response is in line with the one provided to a similar UK initiative (UK, July 2024) to which the government responded: “There are no plans to amend UK consumer law on disabling video games. Those selling games must comply with existing requirements in consumer law and we will continue to monitor this issue.” Instead, in California, the more recent Protect Our Games Act (AB 1921 Digital Games: Ordinary Use) would require publishers who sell digital games or downloadable content within the state to provide “ordinary use” access for three years after the last sale or download. If a game is to be discontinued, publishers must offer measures enabling continued play – in particular, providing an offline mode or allowing community servers – unless this is impossible for security or legal reasons (AB 1921). The Senate Standing Committee on Business, Professions and Economic Development passed the bill on 29 June 2026. This reflects emerging global thinking on consumer rights and digital ownership that establish the video games sector as the battlefield.

Commission will engage with industry following European Citizens' Initiative on the disabling of videogames by publishers

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_1369

