



Open Letter to President von der Leyen on defending digital sovereignty



ECPMF



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No Comments

ECPMF joined more than 40 leading European and international civil society organisations, media freedom groups, and democracy advocates, as well as academics, journalists, and public figures from across the continent penned a letter to the President of the European Commission to resist US coercion and to defend Europe’s sovereign right to regulate technology in the public interest.

Brussels, 2 September 2025

Dear President von der Leyen,

We write to you to urge you to stand firm in the face of renewed US attacks on Europe’s sovereignty and democracy.

Despite the US-EU trade deal agreed last month, in which the EU’s digital rulebook appeared to escape unscathed, President Trump is now threatening to impose additional tariffs and export controls on countries that dare to regulate American technology corporations. The EU, which has passed the Digital Markets Act, Digital Services Act, and AI Act among other laws designed to ensure technology serves the public interest, is first in the firing line.

While the Trump administration complains about unfair “discrimination” and “protecting free speech”, these are merely convenient pretexts for the administration’s true aim: to help American corporations escape democratic oversight in Europe and other parts of the world, including rules that would limit their ability to interfere in democratic debate and democratic elections, violate the rights and freedoms of individual European citizens, and undermine fair competition.

The US State Department has instructed its diplomats to launch a concerted assault on the DSA, and is reportedly considering imposing sanctions on EU and Member State officials responsible for enforcing the regulation. These are not the actions of an ally raising legitimate

concerns about specific policy decisions; they are the acts of an adversary willing to use any means necessary to weaken its opponent.

These brazen attacks on Europe's regulatory sovereignty are the clearest demonstration yet that the EU's conciliatory approach to US demands is not working. Far from placating the US government, the EU's efforts to find compromise – including accepting a one-sided trade deal and delaying urgent antitrust and digital enforcement – have only encouraged the US administration to push for more.

Time and again, the present US administration has demonstrated that it only respects strength. The moment has come for Europe to firmly defend its regulatory sovereignty and take urgent steps to discourage further interference in its internal affairs.

At a minimum, this should include pressing ahead with ongoing investigations of US tech giants under the DSA, DMA, and the EU's competition laws. When laws are broken, there must be real consequences. But it is time to explore tougher measures, including targeting these corporations with retaliatory measures under the EU's Anti-Coercion Instrument, and using export controls to limit US access to critical EU technologies. Europe should also actively align on a common response with other nations facing US coercion.

In April, you rightly defended the EU's "untouchable" digital regulations, describing them as "sovereign decisions" that are "not in the packages of negotiation". You also signalled your willingness to apply "a wide range of countermeasures...in case the negotiations are not satisfactory" including the Anti-Coercion Instrument. We welcome your commitment to defending the EU's sovereignty and believe the time has come to put such countermeasures into effect.

Already, Europe's historic failure to comprehensively tackle its dependence on a handful of digital gatekeepers has deeply harmed the continent's competitiveness, prosperity, sovereignty and democracy. At a time when Big Tech and its political allies are doubling down in their efforts to consolidate power and influence in Europe, further inaction could prove both politically and economically catastrophic.

Our message is clear: European democracy and the rights and freedoms of European citizens are not for sale, at any price.

Signed by:

Organisations

- Enforce – Irish Council for Civil Liberties
- European Digital Rights (EDRi)
- LobbyControl

- Open Markets Institute
- Defend Democracy
- Digitalcourage
- Balanced Economy Project
- Rebalance Now
- The Good Lobby
- Xnet, Institute for Democratic Digitalisation
- ‘NEVER AGAIN’ Association
- Foxglove
- European Fem Institute
- New School of the Anthropocene
- Panoptikon Foundation
- Bits of Freedom
- World Economy, Ecology & Development
- AlgorithmWatch
- Lie Detectors
- Asociația pentru Tehnologie și Internet (ApTI)
- Society of Journalists (Warsaw)
- Media Diversity Institute
- Wikimedia Germany e.V.
- WeMove Europe
- Zentrum für Digitalrechte und Demokratie
- Avaaz Foundation
- Yapay Gündem
- VoxPublic
- Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties)
- Politiscope
- Homo Digitalis
- Association of European Journalists in Belgium (AEJ Belgium)
- Community Media Forum Europe
- IDPAD Hackney / Ligali
- Waag Futurelab
- Transparency International EU
- D64 – Center for Digital Progress
- European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
- Future of Tech Institute
- SOMO
- European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)
- Global Forum for Media Development
- The Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH)
- Federación de Consumidores y Usuarios CECU
- People vs Big Tech
- European Federation of Public Service Unions

- Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT)
- International Press Institute (IPI)
- IMS (International Media Support)
- DataRights

Individuals

- Robin Berjon, Principal, Supramundane Agency
- Adele Walton, Bereaved Families for Online Safety
- Sonja Lokar, President, Women's Lobby of Slovenia
- Alberto Alemanno, Jean Monnet Professor in EU Law at HEC Paris
- Nicholas Shaxson, Berlin: Technology and Human Rights Fellow, Carr-Ryan Center, Harvard Kennedy School
- Friederike Diaby-Pentzlin, Prof (em), International Economic Law, University for Applied Sciences, Technology, Business and Design, Wismar
- George Riekeles, Associate Director, European Policy Centre
- Paul Timmers, CEO, iivii
- Francesca Bria, Honorary Professor at the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose at UCL
- John Ozbay, CEO, Cryptee
- Dr Toyin Agbetu, Lecturer of Anthropology, UCL
- Marietje Schaake, Author, The Tech Coup

“Open Letter to President von der Leyen on defending digital sovereignty”. Ecpmf.eu, 2.08.2025.

<https://www.ecpmf.eu/open-letter-to-president-von-der-leyen-on-defending-digital-sovereignty>