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Copyright reform: it's the final countdown

This Tuesday MEPs will cast the final vote in a long running process to reform the EU's copyright law. Their decision will define whether consumers will be able to continue enjoying the internet as a place where they can easily share content with friends and family or be at risk of seeing their uploads systematically blocked by automated filters.

The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) calls on the European Parliament to reject article 13 (now article 17) of the proposed law and prevent that large-scale, systematic filtering of online content becomes the new norm.

If adopted, article 13 (now article 17) will leave online platforms little choice other than to use upload filters to prevent any unlicensed copyrighted content from ending up online. Experience¹ shows that such filters cannot properly distinguish between content which infringes copyright rules and material which does not (for example caricatures and parodies, for which there are exceptions).

As a consequence of automated filtering, things that consumers do online regularly, such as sharing pictures and holiday videos with background music, are likely to be frustrated since there is a high risk that such content will be blocked due to copyright concerns. This would have a negative effect on the smooth functioning of the internet and on consumers' freedom of expression.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"If article 13 passes, upload filters will radically change how the internet currently functions. This would punish millions of consumers who use the internet the way it is meant to be used: to express themselves, to create, to share and to have fun.

"We fully support the aim of ensuring fair remuneration for creators, but this should not happen to the detriment of consumers. There is a very high risk that the new law will do more harm than good. This is not the modernised copyright law that creators and consumers need but rather another attempt to protect an industry that has consistently resisted to deal with the impact of technological change on their business model."

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¹ See examples in background document:

https://www.beuc.eu/publications/background_document_copyright_plenary_march_2019.pdf

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