

Big changes are coming to online copyright across the European Union. After years of debate and negotiations, politicians have passed sweeping changes following a final vote in the European Parliament.

The changes have proved controversial, with critics being opposed to two specific parts of the law: Article 11 and Article 13. They form part of the wider regulations which were passed.

The European Union Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market, to use its full name, requires the likes of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to take more responsibility for copyrighted material being shared illegally on their platforms.

It's become known by the most controversial segment, Article 13, which critics claim will have a detrimental impact on creators online. YouTube, and YouTubers, have become the most vocal opponents of the proposal.

On April 15, 2019, the European Council – the political body composed of government ministers from each of the 28 EU member states – [voted to adopt into EU law](#) the copyright directive as passed by the European Parliament in March. Six member states (Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden) voted against adopting the directive while three (Belgium, Estonia and Slovenia) abstained from the vote. The remaining 19 member states all voted for the directive.

But it's not completely over yet. On May 23, the Polish Prime Minister's office announced it would bring a court case against Article 13 to the Court of Justice of the European Union. In a tweet, the [Prime Minister's office](#) said that the entire directive "fuels censorship and threatens freedom of expression."

Unless the Polish court case changes anything – and that's a big if – individual member states will have two years to turn the new rules into their own national law. To help clear things up, here's WIRED's guide to the EU Directive on Copyright.

The Directive on Copyright and its most controversial component, Article 13, requires online platforms to filter or remove copyrighted material from their

websites. It's this article that people think could be interpreted as requiring platforms to ban memes, but more on that later.

The Directive on Copyright would make online platforms and aggregator sites liable for copyright infringements, and supposedly direct more revenue from tech giants towards artists and journalists.

Currently, platforms such as YouTube aren't responsible for copyright violations, although they must remove that content when directed to do so by the rights holders.

Proponents of the Directive on Copyright argue that this means that people are listening to, watching and reading copyrighted material without the creators being properly paid for it.