

Meta's Threads app launches across EU in blow to competitor X

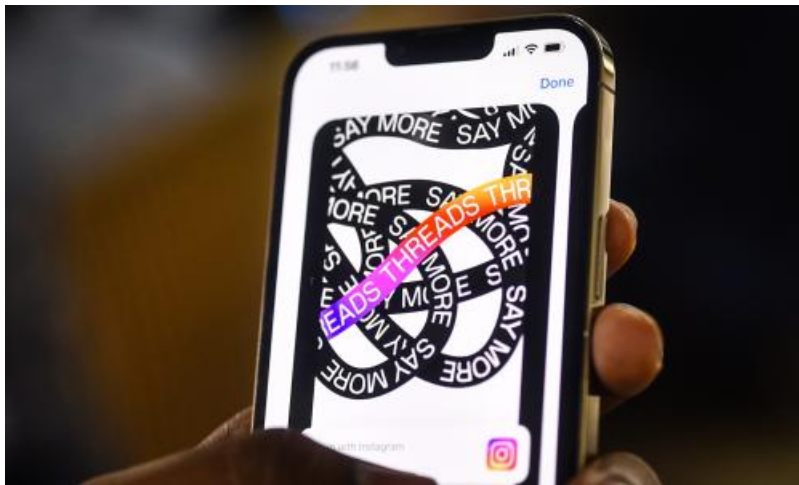
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Threads launched in the European Union on Thursday, further expanding the Meta-owned platform's user base and dealing another blow to competitor Twitter/X. Meta's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, announced the launch in a post on Threads. Threads, known as a "Twitter killer" app, launched in July 2023 and was immediately available in the US and more than 100 other countries, including the UK. However, its debut on the continent lagged due to strict privacy laws in the region. Before launching in the EU, Meta first needed to seek approval from the European Commission over the app's privacy provisions. Many speculated the delay was due to the EU Digital Markets Act, which addresses a variety of big tech antitrust and privacy concerns – including sharing content across platforms. Meta did not specifically cite the act as the reason for the delay, but the Instagram executive Adam Mosseri said: "The complexities with complying with some of the laws coming into effect next year are significant." Creating an account on Threads requires users to have an Instagram account. In other markets, users were at first unable to delete their Threads account without deleting their linked Instagram account. Meta changed the setting in November. However, with Thursday's launch, Meta is giving users the option to browse Threads without creating a profile on the app or on Instagram. "People who use Threads without a profile can browse content on Threads, search for accounts, share content via link copying or platform sharing, and report Threads content, but can't create a post or interact with content," Meta said in a blogpost announcing the change. Threads launched in July 2023 and quickly amassed more than 100 million users in its first week. The platform has since seen a large drop off in active users, but Zuckerberg in earnings calls has remained steadfast that the platform would eventually reach its goal of 1 billion users. "I'm highly confident we're going to be able to pour enough gasoline on this to help it grow," he said. X has meanwhile continued its downward spiral, losing several of its top advertisers and shrinking its daily active users by 13% since Elon Musk took over as CEO in 2022. Bloomberg reported X's revenue slumped to \$2.5bn in 2023, a significant decline from years prior. In addition to the EU launch, Meta announced on Thursday it would create more interoperability with Threads – meaning it would allow posts on Threads to appear on other social platforms. The project is related to the "fediverse", a collection of social networks that allow data and posts to be shared between them. "Making Threads interoperable will give people more choice over how they interact and it will help content reach more people," Zuckerberg said on Threads. "I'm pretty optimistic about this."