

# TikTok questioned by EU over Lite app that ‘pays’ users for watching videos

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The EU has given TikTok 24 hours to provide a risk assessment over a new service it has launched amid concerns it could encourage children to become addicted to videos on the platform. The watch-and-get-rewarded application, TikTok Lite, launched in France and Spain this month, in effect offers users prizes such as Amazon vouchers, gift cards via PayPal or TikTok's Coins currency for points earned through "tasks". The "tasks" include watching videos, liking content, following creators or inviting friends to join TikTok. The European Commission said TikTok, owned by China's ByteDance, should have carried out a risk assessment before deploying the app and it now wants "more details". Its intervention comes months after sweeping new laws under the Digital Services Act (DSA) came into force requiring tech companies and social media platforms to follow new rules on services offered to users and the removal of illegal content. In February this year the commission opened a formal investigation into TikTok to assess whether it may have breached the DSA in areas linked to the protection of minors and advertising transparency, as well as risk management in relation to addictive design and harmful content. The investigation into the safeguarding of children on TikTok includes age verification – an issue highlighted by a Guardian investigation into the platform last year. The commission said the request for further information on TikTok's internal controls did not prejudice potential further steps, while at the same time warning that it "has the power to impose fines for incorrect, incomplete or misleading information" in response to its requests. It said its request related to concerns about "the potential impact of the new task and reward lite programme on the protection of minors, as well as on the mental health of users, in particular in relation to the potential stimulation of addictive behaviour". Last year the US surgeon general, Vivek Murthy, issued a formal US-wide warning that social media presented a "profound risk of harm" to the mental wellbeing of children and adolescents. In September TikTok was fined €350m by the EU's lead regulator for breaching privacy laws regarding the processing of children's personal data. Alongside the 24-hour deadline for the risk assessment, TikTok must provide the other information by 26 April, the commission said. The company said it would honour the request. "We have already been in direct contact with the commission regarding this product and will respond to the request for information," a TikTok spokesperson said. The company has said rewards are restricted to those aged over 18, who have to verify their age, and payments are capped at €1 (£0.85) a day.