

TikTok to be fined for breaching children's privacy in EU

Publication Date: 2023-08-04

Author: Lisa O'Carroll

Section: Technology

Tags: TikTok, Social media, Privacy, Children, Internet safety, Digital media, European Union, news

Article URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/aug/04/tiktok-to-be-fined-for-breaching-childrens-privacy-in-eu>



TikTok is to be fined potentially millions of pounds for breaching children's privacy after a ruling by EU data protection regulator. The European Data Protection Board said it had reached a binding decision on the Chinese-owned video-sharing platform over its processing of children's data. The regulator had "adopted a dispute resolution decision" after TikTok submitted legal objections to an earlier ruling in Ireland, home of the company's European headquarters. The fine is expected to be issued within the next four weeks. The EU decision follows an investigation, opened in 2021, by the data protection commissioner in Ireland into TikTok's level of compliance with the EU's general data protection regulation and how it handles the data of children aged 13 to 17. On Friday, TikTok announced a number of new features for European users aimed at improving compliance with new European Union regulations on content, which come into force on 25 August. Under the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA), TikTok, Google, Facebook and other large online platforms will be required to police illegal content on their platforms, prohibit certain advertising practices, and share data with authorities. After TikTok agreed to a voluntary "stress test" in its Dublin HQ last month, the EU technology commissioner, Thierry Breton, said the company needed to do more work to be fully compliant. Breton told CNN: "TikTok is dedicating significant resources to compliance. Now it's time to accelerate to be fully compliant." On Friday, the company said new measures it had taken to comply with the DSA included: making it easier for EU users to report illegal content; allowing them to turn off personalised recommendations for videos; and removing targeted advertising for users aged 13 to 17. It said: "We will continue to not only meet our regulatory obligations, but also strive to set new standards through innovative solutions." Earlier this year, TikTok was fined £12.7m by the UK data watchdog for illegally processing the data of 1.4 million children aged under 13 who were using the service without parental consent. The British information commissioner said the company had done "very little, if anything" to check who was using the platform and remove underage users, despite having received internal warnings that it was flouting its own terms and conditions. A 2022 survey by the UK regulator Ofcom showed that more than 60% of eight- to 17-year-olds who use social media had a TikTok account in their own name.