Meta begins rolling out end-to-end encryption across Messenger and Facebook

Facebook's parent company has begun rolling out end-to-end encryption across Messenger and Facebook, Meta announced on Thursday. The company's vice-president for Messenger, Loredana Crisan, said the encryption was built on the Signal protocol and Meta's own Labyrinth protocol. Crisan said the new features announced as part of the rollout took years to develop because the company's engineers, designers, cryptographers and others rebuilt the app from the ground up. "We worked closely with outside experts, academics, advocates and governments to identify risks and build mitigations to ensure that privacy and safety go hand-in-hand." Messenger has had opt-in encrypted messaging since 2016, and the move was first flagged by the Meta CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, in 2019. The company had previously intended to roll out the feature by default in 2022, but delayed the launch amid concerns it would prevent Meta detecting child abuse on its platform. Under the changes, Meta will no longer have access to the contents of what users send or receive, unless one user in a chat chooses to report a message to the company. The new features will be available immediately but the company said it would take some time for Messenger chats to be updated with default end-to-end encryption. It will take months for end-to-end encryption to be rolled out to the more than 1 billion users on the platform. Users will receive a prompt to set up a recovery method to restore their messages once the transition is completed. The move is likely to raise concern among law enforcement and child protection groups, which have argued against companies implementing end-to-end encryption. The former UK home secretary, Suella Braverman, in September urged Meta not to go ahead with the plan. "Meta has failed to provide assurances that they will keep their platforms safe from sickening abusers," she said. "They must develop appropriate safeguards to sit alongside their plans for end-to-end encryption." End-to-end encryption will not apply to Instagram for now, but the company said in August that the change would apply to Instagram shortly after the Messenger upgrade was completed. WhatsApp conversations are already encrypted. Other new features being rolled out include the ability to edit a message for up to 15 minutes after it was sent, disappearing messages lasting 24 hours, control over whether a user can see you've read their message, and the ability to listen to voice messages in 1.5 or 2 times speed.