

Facebook and Instagram users in Europe can pay for ad-free versions

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Facebook and Instagram users in the European Union will be charged up to €12.99 a month for ad-free versions of the social networks as a way to comply with the bloc's data privacy rules, parent company Meta said on Monday. Starting in November, users on desktop browsers can pay €9.99 (\$10.50) a month, while Apple iOS or Android users will pay roughly €12.99. The higher prices reflect commissions charged by the Apple and Google app stores on in-app payments, the company said in a blogpost. The fee will cover all linked Facebook and Instagram accounts until March, when Meta will start charging €6 for each additional account on the web and €8 for smartphones. Meta is rolling out the subscription option after the European Union's top court ruled that under EU data privacy rules, the company cannot justify using personal details to target people with personalised ads unless it receives their consent first. The company's main way of making money is to tailor ads for individual users based on their online interests and digital activity. "We believe in an ad-supported internet, which gives people access to personalised products and services regardless of their economic status," read a blogpost from Meta. The company added that it respected "the spirit and purpose of these evolving European regulations, and [we] are committed to complying with them". Under the EU's Digital Markets Act legislation, Meta platforms will have to gain explicit consent before tracking a user for advertising purposes. The paid option "balances the requirements of European regulators while giving users choice and allowing Meta to continue serving all people", the company's statement reads. Earlier this month it was reported that European regulators were looking at the size of the charges and whether they were too expensive for people who do not want to be targeted by adverts. Users aged 18 and older in the EU's 27 member countries, plus Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein will still have the choice of continuing to use Facebook or Instagram with ads. Meta said it was looking into how to "provide teens with a useful and responsible ad experience" given the European privacy ruling.