

Copyright: MEPs update rules for the digital age

- Fair pay for work done by creative industry and news publishers
- Copyright rules must be enforced on line, as well as in the “physical” world
- Protection of freedom of expression taken on board

Plans to update of EU copyright rules for today’s online world and ensure fair pay for artists and journalists were backed by the Legal Affairs Committee on Wednesday.

The committee approved its position in a tight vote by 14 votes to 9, with 2 abstentions, and adopted by the same majority a decision to enter into negotiations with the Council, the other arm of the legislator.

After the vote, rapporteur [Axel Voss, \(EPP, DE\)](#) said:

"This vote marks the first step of the parliamentary procedure to adopt copyright laws fit to meet the challenges of the internet. The last laws to address copyright in the information society date back 17 years and the internet of today is fundamentally different to what it was in 2001.

Creators and news publishers must adapt to the new world of the internet as it works today. There are opportunities but there are also important drawbacks. Notably, news publishers and artists, especially the smaller ones, are not getting paid due to the practices of powerful online content-sharing platforms and news aggregators. This is wrong and we aim to redress it. The principle of fair pay for work done should apply to everyone, everywhere, whether in the physical or online world.

The committee position aims to ensure that widely recognised and observed copyright principles apply to the online world, too. A world which certainly must remain a champion of freedom of expression, but in which our rules-based society should also be reflected."

Fair pay for artists and journalists

Many of the committee’s amendments aim to ensure that artists, notably musicians, and news publishers, are not deprived of fair remuneration for their work, by the strategies of sharing

platforms and news aggregators.

For example, the text limits what elements of a news article news aggregators can share without needing to pay the rightholder a licence fee. It also requires sharing platforms either to pay fees to rightholders whose content is uploaded on these platforms or to ensure that an upload containing copyrighted material is blocked if the platform will pay no fee.

While protecting freedom of expression and innovation

The committee also sought to ensure that copyright law is observed online without unfairly hampering the freedom of expression that has come to define the internet.

Thus, the measures put in place by upload platforms to control that uploads do not breach copyright, must also be designed in such a way so as not to catch “non-infringing works”. These platforms will moreover be required to establish easy redress systems through which a person can request the reinstatement of an upload if he considers that it was wrongly taken down due to an alleged breach of copyright.

The committee text also specifies that uploading to online encyclopaedias in a non-commercial way, such as Wikipedia, or open source software platforms, such as GitHub, will automatically be excluded from the requirement to comply with copyright rules.

Stronger negotiation rights for authors and performers

The committee also strengthens negotiation rights of authors and performers. It enables them to “claim” additional remuneration from the party exploiting their rights when the remuneration originally agreed is “disproportionately” low compared to the benefits derived from the exploitation of the work.

The text also says that the benefits should include “indirect revenues” too. Likewise, the committee also grants authors and performers a right to revoke or terminate the exclusivity of an exploitation licence of their work if the party holding the exploitation rights is considered not to be exercising this right.

Better exceptions for education, cultural heritage and text and data mining

The text also deals with exceptions from copyright general rules for text and data mining, illustrations used for education and for cultural heritage institutions such as museums or libraries.

Next steps

The decision to start negotiations will be announced at the opening of the July plenary session on 2 July. At this moment, MEPs can challenge this decision and request that a plenary vote be taken on whether to launch negotiations or not.

Background

The proposed directive on copyright in the digital single market aims to ensure that artists (especially small ones, for example musicians), news publishers, authors and performers benefit from the online world and the internet in the 21st century.

The latest general rules in force on copyright in the digital world date back to 2001, a time vastly different to the realities faced today by all operators. Moreover, most of the copyright exceptions in EU law are currently optional and do not apply across borders.

Further information

[Statement by the rapporteur, Axel Voss \(EPP, DE\), after the vote](#)
[Profile of the rapporteur, Axel Voss \(EPP, DE\)](#)

[EP research: digital market legislation in progress](#)
[Multimedia package: digital single market](#)

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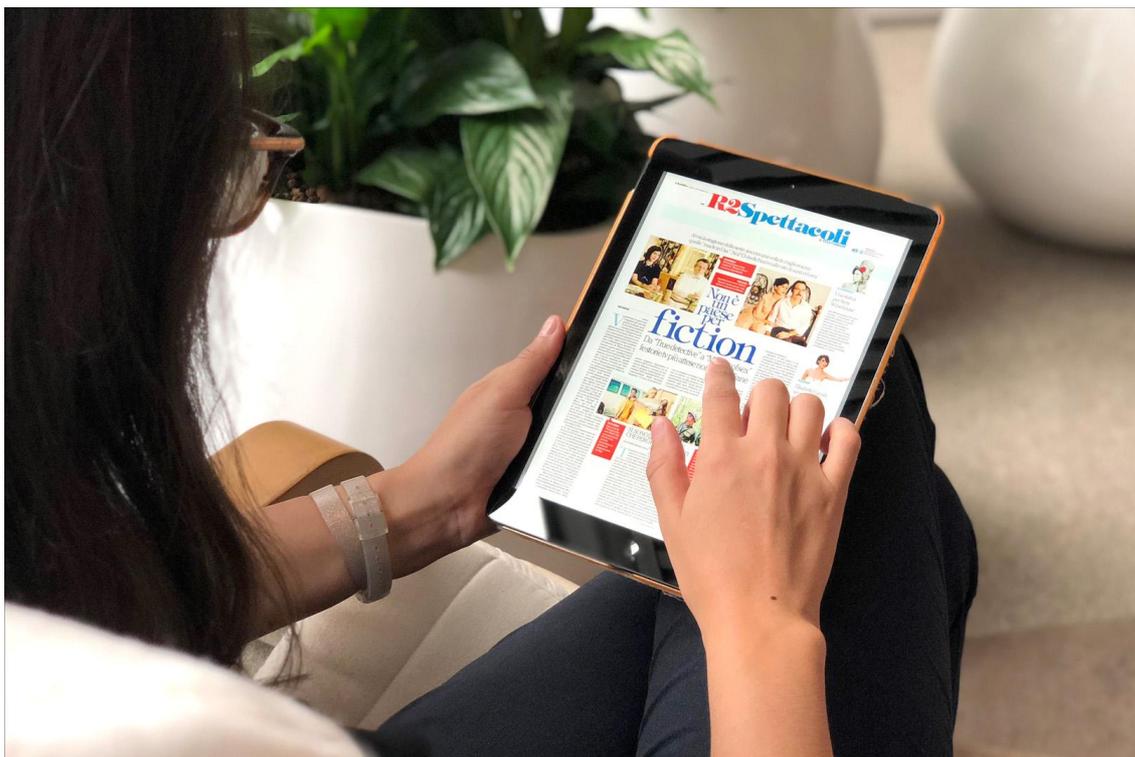
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