European Parliament

2019-2024

Committee on Culture and Education

07/07/2023

Opinion on Virtual worlds – opportunities, risks and policy implications for the single market
Rapporteur: Laurence Farreng

Compromise amendments (CAs)

CA 1 - Paragraph 1
Covers: AM 1 S&D, AM 2 ECR, AM 3 Renew, AM 4 the Left, AM 5 Greens

1. Believes that virtual worlds or 'metaverses' *constitute* a *significant step* in the *development of the internet that has the potential to impact all areas of citizens' lives, namely in education, culture, arts and design, music, entertainment and social activities and interactions; stresses that, although there is no standardised definition (AM 1),* they can be *understood (AM 5)* as a simulation of real-time, immersive 3D or 2D spaces in which users can interact; *takes the view that virtual worlds can generate synergies with Web 3.0 (AM 3);*

CA 2 - Paragraph 2
Covers: AM 6 Greens, AM 7 EPP, AM 8 Renew, AM 9 the Left, AM 10 S&D, AM 12 S&D

2. Calls for the *European Union (EU)* to adopt a comprehensive strategy for virtual worlds; *believes that this strategy must be sustainable and human-centric, while safeguarding the values of the European Union and fundamental rights; (AM 6, 10); stresses that such strategy should aim at* harnessing *and promoting* (AM 7) the innovation and progress of *relevant sectors such as* video games*, including technologies such as VR, XR, game engines, haptics, which are key building blocks for digital skills and for the metaverse(s), as well as the cultural, economic and educational benefits that emerge from them (AM 7, 12)*; *stresses the need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the development of European metaverses, which combine technology and content (AM 8);*

CA 3- Paragraph 3
Covers: AM 13A S&D (first and third part), AM 14 the Left, AM 15 Greens, AM 16 Renew, AM 17 ECR

3. Calls for the EU, in view of the strategic autonomy considerations raised by virtual worlds, to ensure *adequate (AM 15) and efficient (AM 17)* investment in this field; *welcomes the VR/AR Industrial Coalition launched by the European Commission as part of the Media Audiovisual Action Plan (AM 16)*; notes that the Horizon Europe and Creative Europe programmes both fund augmented and virtual reality projects; *acknowledges the need to*

increase (AM 13) the budgets of these programmes, *in order* to foster a *prominent* (AM 13) EU strategy for immersive technologies *and to address the challenges of inclusivity and accessibility to virtual worlds (AM 13)*;

CA 4 - Paragraph 4
Covers: AM 25 Greens, AM 26 S&D

4. Emphasises the importance of developing metaverses for the EU's cultural and creative ecosystems, as new spaces for creativity and expression, *which can be used to promote European cultural and linguistic diversity (AM 26)*; insists on ensuring *society-wide* (AM 25) accessibility of metaverses in order to make them truly democratic spaces, *fostering digital literacy and access to quality and affordable internet as a basic right, ensuring connectivity and accessibility for all, and notably those living in rural areas and facilitate the inclusion of vulnerable groups (AM 26)*;

CA 5 - Paragraph 4 a (new) - *cultural heritage*
Covers: AM 38 Renew, AM 59 EPP, AM 48 EPP

4 a (new) Welcomes the impact that virtual worlds can have in safeguarding and promoting European cultural heritage, by making it possible to offer personalised experiences to users, for educational or tourism purposes (AM 38); recalls the need to protect European strategic cultural assets and their integrity, including European cultural heritage, in virtual worlds (AM 53, 57, 48, 59);

CA 6 - Paragraph 4 b (new) - *Market structure*
Covers: AM 13B S&D (2nd part), AM 22 EPP, AM 30 Renew, AM 36 Greens

4 b (new) Notes that 'metaverses' or virtual worlds can be subject to economic speculation (AM 48), monopolistic tendencies or market concentration (AM 36); underlines the need to move towards a decentralised approach to European virtual worlds, comprising both larger and smaller operators at the various levels of the value chain (AM 36, AM 9); stresses that SMEs, which make up the vast majority[1] of Europe's cultural and creative ecosystems, must therefore also be able to take advantage of immersive technologies, without being held back by entry barriers that would only benefit large digital companies (AM 30); calls for increasing access to funding for SMEs and start-ups (AM 22); stresses that this can contribute to a reduction of dependency on third countries and strengthen European leadership (AM 13, AM 30);

CA 7 - Paragraph 5
Covers: AM 31 S&D, AM 32 Greens, AM 33 EPP, AM 35 ECR, AM 34 the Left

5. States that virtual worlds *and technologies of augmented and virtual reality (AM34)* can significantly impact education and research by transforming how we acquire knowledge; stresses that metaverses can allow for better visualisation of educational content, *awareness*

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[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018IP0499&rid=10
https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/fr_fr/topics/government-and-public-sector/panorama-europeen-des-industries-culturelles-et-creatives/ey-panorama-des-icc-2021.pdf?download

raising and (AM 31) increased possibilities for collaboration between learners *educators, as well as being a form of promoting (AM 33)* distance and lifelong learning; *highlights the potential of virtual worlds to empower individuals and bridge the digital divide through education, promoting digital literacy among all society groups and reducing inequalities (AM 31);*

CA 8 - Paragraph 5a, 5b, 5c - Education
Covers: AM 11 EPP, AM 18 EPP, AM 19 EPP, AM 20 EPP, AM 28 S&D, AM 49 Negrescu, AM 52 Renew

USERS - AM 11, AM 18, AM 52,
5 a (new) Believes that the development of virtual worlds should coincide with raising European citizens' awareness of their responsible usage (AM 52); Calls for the EU to ensure sufficient investments in the field of digital literacy in order to promote the development of critical thinking users in the digital world (AM 18);

CREATORS - AM 19, AM 28, AM 49
5 b (new) Emphasises the pressing need to foster STEAM education, skills connected to cultural and artistic creation (AM 19), training and upskilling of workers in the field of virtual worlds (AM 28), including AI (AM 49), all of which are key for the building of metaverses (AM 19), in order to create and keep talent within the European Union, avoiding a brain drain towards other markets and facilitating the harmonisation of training and mutual recognition of qualifications across Member States;(AM 28)

TEACHERS - AM 18, AM 20
5 c (new) Underlines the importance of granting support to teachers and educators in the process of equipping students with the necessary knowledge base to safely navigate through the virtual worlds; calls on the Member States and the EU in this regard to encourage upskilling of teachers to become digitally competent and proficient with technology;

CA 9 - Paragraph 6
Covers: AM 40A Greens (1st part), AM 42 S&D, AM 43 ECR, AM 41 the Left, AM 53, AM 57

6.   Stresses that an EU strategy for virtual worlds must *be aligned* (AM 40) with an appropriate framework to ensure the protection and promotion of intellectual property*, in particular authors' rights and copyright, and stresses the need to protect artists and their creations, European cultural heritage and landscape (AM 53, 57) in the virtual worlds (AM 42)*; notes that most intellectual property systems in the metaverses are based on blockchain technology, and believes that non-fungible tokens can represent a new source of revenue for the EU's cultural ecosystem;

CA 10 - Paragraph 6 a (new)
Covers: AM 44 Greens, AM 40B Greens (2nd part)

6 a (new) Notes that metaverses and ancillary digital technologies can be characterized by high levels of energy consumption; stresses that an EU strategy for the virtual worlds must

assess the environmental impact and sustainability of these new technologies, including by raising citizens' awareness on such impact;

CA 11 - Paragraph 6 b (new) - *BIK+ / harmful behaviour*
Covers: AM 21 EPP, AM 23 EPP, AM 29 EPP, AM 47 S&D, AM 51 S&D, AM 46 Renew

6 b (new) Considers that virtual worlds can also create risks, and that these spaces should be regulated to prevent any abuses linked to harmful behaviour, such as any form of harassment, bullying, discrimination and surveillance of people (AM 47), in a digital environment or due to inappropriate use (AM 46); emphasises the need to ensure a safe and healthy environment where cybersecurity, privacy, transparency and the rights and needs of the users are properly preserved and protected (AM 47); stresses the importance of protecting children and minors in the virtual worlds, through a thorough implementation of the existing European legislation and strategies such as the DSA and the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+), to tackle cyberbullying (AM 21), safeguard physical and mental health (AM 29), ensure online safety and a positive use of the metaverses (AM 51);

CA 12 - Paragraph 6 c (new) - AI
Covers: AM 37 EPP, AM 39 EPP

6 c (new) Invites the Commission to consider the impact of its horizontal digital legislation, such as the AI Act, on culture, including the definition and ownership of cultural and academic works, and to present, if necessary, initiatives in this area to safeguard and promote the European cultural and creative ecosystem;

CA 13 - Paragraph 6 d (new) - Monitoring
Covers: AM 55 S&D, AM 58 S&D

6 d (new) Notes that future developments of the virtual worlds should be guided by ethical and human centric principles, in line with EU legislation such as the General Data Protection Regulation, the Digital Services Act, the Digital Market Act and the Copyright Directive; Calls on the Commission for a close and continuous monitoring on the development of virtual worlds, to identify issues and challenges that may arise and that are not addressed by the current legal framework or that may need further harmonisation among Member States;