



Response from the European Public Health Association (EUPHA) on Digital Services Act package: open public consultation

The European Public Health Association (EUPHA) is an umbrella organisation for public health associations and institutes across Europe. Founded in 1992 by 15 members, EUPHA now has 79 members from 47 countries, including 41 national associations of public health and bringing together around 23'000 experts in public health research, practice and policy.

In line with the European Commission (EC) Health Strategy, EUPHA recognises the strong link between health and economic prosperity and is committed to support the integration of health in all policies; with those two key principles in mind EUPHA values the Commission's efforts to deepen the internal market and to clarify responsibilities for digital services and welcomes the opportunity to share its views on the Inception Impact Assessment on the Digital Services Act (DSA) Package. As digitalization is permeating all aspects of society, EUPHA through its Digital health section ([EUPHA-DH](#)) works to explore how can it be fruitfully employed to [sustain public health goals](#) of quality, accessibility, efficiency and equity of healthcare and prevention.

With reference to the proposition of a new EU Digital Services Act Package we would like to stress how the online world and the daily use of digital means have direct effects on population health; in particular, online platforms have revolutionized how people communicate about health and access information on health, with massive impacts on health literacy and health education, and in turns, on behavioural risk factors and health outcomes. Internet and social media introduced "interaction" in communication about health, (as compared to unidirectional communication of traditional media where it was not possible to share or comment on published content), this bolstering general population's active role in health decisions. Although new services and technologies have great potential to promote population health and wellbeing, they have also created new risks to European citizens exposing them misinformation and fake news. Many examples exist on how freedom of communication in the digital age has brought detrimental effects to public health, including bolstering vaccine hesitancy and anti-vaccination movements.

We are convinced that clear rules framing the responsibilities of digital services and online platforms would contribute to unveil their potential of supporting health promotion, channelling scientific evidence and positively influencing healthy lifestyles and behaviours. We believe EUPHA's vision of improved health and well-being and narrowing health inequalities for all Europeans can be pursued harmonising the responsibilities of online platforms and information service providers; we urge the European Commission to reinforce the oversight over platforms' content as a way to strengthen its health mandate and protect its citizens health and well-being.

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The European Public Health Association, or EUPHA in short, is an umbrella organisation for public health associations in Europe. Our network of national associations of public health represents around 20'000 public health professionals. Our mission is to facilitate and activate a strong voice of the public health network by enhancing visibility of the evidence and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals. EUPHA contributes to the preservation and improvement of public health in the European region through capacity and knowledge building. We are committed to creating a more inclusive Europe, narrowing all health inequalities among Europeans, by facilitating, activating, and disseminating strong evidence-based voices from the public health community and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals to achieve evidence-based change.

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