

User Rights and the DSA: A New Tool For Civil Society Tool to Hold Platforms Accountable

Under the EU Digital Services Act (DSA), **any individual or organization** can challenge content moderation decisions made by platforms. [User Rights](#) is the **first certified dispute settlement body in Europe focused on social media platforms**. We offer an independent, structured process to review platform decisions. The process is **free of charge for complainants**—platforms are required by law to cover the costs under Article 21 of the DSA.

What User Rights Does and How It Works

- We review moderation decisions made by platforms **TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn**. These include:
 - **Takedowns or restrictions**: where content is removed, visibility is limited, or accounts are suspended without justification.
 - **Refusals to remove content**: where platforms decide to leave reported content online, even if it violates platform rules or the law.
- We currently handle cases in **English, German, and French**. All cases are reviewed by legal professionals, based on the **original language and context** provided by the complainant.
- Submitting a case is **simple**: just complete the short form at [user-rights.org](#). After that, User Rights takes over and there is nothing else the complainant needs to do—we contact the platform, request a written explanation, assess the decision, and issue a detailed written opinion.
- **Platforms are required to cooperate in good faith**, including by providing a justification for their decision. Our assessments are designed to be useful to complainants and clear to platforms, and they often lead to practical outcomes.
- Complaints can **reclaim reasonable expenses** from platforms when winning a case.

Why This Matters for Civil Society

- **Refer cases**: CSOs can submit complaints on behalf of themselves or representing others (see Article 86 of the DSA) when content has been wrongly removed or when reported harmful content has been left up—especially in cases involving harassment, misinformation, or hate speech.
- **Support affected communities**: Inform users about their rights under the DSA and help them access the User Rights mechanism. Our opinions can support further action—whether through appeals, legal processes, or public advocacy.

- **Shape better standards:** User Rights works closely with academia and civil society to strengthen the role of out-of-court dispute settlement (ODS) mechanisms under the DSA. We established an [Academic Advisory Board](#) to foster dialogue on ODS, and organisations such as the [Center for Democracy & Technology](#) and the [Gesellschaft für Freiheitsrechte](#), alongside various scholars, have already contributed to shaping good practices. We are committed to promoting meaningful oversight and helping define what effective platform governance should look like.

What Sets User Rights Apart

User Rights is not only the first certified ODS body in Europe focusing on social media—it also aims to set a **high standard** for what independent review can achieve under the DSA. We collaborate with civil society and researchers to improve the system, case by case.

- **Independence:** [Financial independence of ODS bodies](#) is essential. We are fully independent, with our funding coming exclusively from case fees, as envisioned by the DSA. We received no upfront funding from platforms or governments.
- **Legal and linguistic expertise:** Each case is reviewed by legally trained professionals. We assess content in its original language, with no machine translation, ensuring that linguistic nuance and cultural context are fully understood.
- **Context-sensitive and reasoned decisions:** Our reviews are grounded in the context provided by the complainant. We issue clear, structured decisions that explain the basis for our assessment and show how individual concerns are addressed.
- **Fundamental rights analysis:** Where appropriate, we assess the [impact of moderation decisions on fundamental rights](#) such as freedom of expression, non-discrimination, and safety, in addition to platform rules and applicable law.
- **Efficiency and effectiveness:** Our process is accessible and fast. While our decisions are not binding, they are often effective: In nearly half of all cases, platforms already reverse their decision after receiving our request and the context provided even before User Rights issues a final decision. In the disputes where platforms do not immediately reverse the original measure, 75% are decided in favor of the complainant. Based on the responses received so far from platforms, in around half of the cases where User Rights decides against the platform, the platforms implement the decision – and implementation rates continue to rise.
- **Transparency and reporting:** User Rights works with its Academic Advisory Board and civil society partners to develop good practices in transparency. We will publish regular, detailed reports on the cases we review and the responses of platforms. These reports will support public accountability and shed light on systemic issues in content moderation.

To learn more or submit a case: user-rights.org/en. For **questions or more information**, contact info@user-rights.org. To discuss **synergies or anything else**, feel free to reach out directly to niklas@user-rights.org.

Quick Submission Guide and FAQs

You can submit cases on our website – completely **free of charge**. Our submission form will guide you through all necessary steps and ask for the relevant information. It is available in three languages: **English, German, and French**.

Not sure if your case is eligible? **Just give it a try** – the worst that can happen is that we have to close the case, and we will let you know why. There are no fees, no hidden costs. If you have questions about whether your case is admissible, you can always **contact us** for more detailed information.

What **languages** do we support?

- We review content in **English, German, and French**, and we conduct our procedures in these three languages.

What **moderation measures** can you contest?

- **All of them.** Whether it's content removal, content demotion, account suspensions, temporary restrictions, or decisions not to remove content after you reported it – we review all types of content moderation decisions.

When should you come to User Rights?

- You can submit a case to User Rights **directly after** a platform has taken a moderation decision restricting content. You are **not** required to go through the platform's internal appeal process first – although you may choose to do so.
- If you reported content to a platform (for example, because it violates their rules), and **they decided to leave it online**, you can challenge that decision with us.

What's **in scope** at User Rights?

- **Almost everything.** This includes: **hate speech, incitement to violence, bullying and harassment, insults and defamation, and other harmful or illegal content.**
- We also review cases involving **misinformation**, especially when it poses harm and the platform has chosen not to act. This may include **election-related misinformation**, misinformation that could **incite violence, conspiracy theories**, and, depending on the platform's rules, **climate change denial**.
- User Rights can also review potential violations of EU sanctions rules – for example, complaints concerning the distribution of **content by sources or broadcasters listed on EU sanctions lists**.

- In most cases, we assess decisions based on the platform's own **policies**, **European fundamental rights law**, and, where relevant, **German criminal law or EU law**.

What's **not** in scope?

- Some subject areas fall outside our mandate. These include issues such as **copyright violations**, **data protection law**, and cases involving **Child Sexually Exploitative Material** or other content harmful to children, such as depictions of abuse. For these types of cases, we recommend submitting reports to specialized organisations such as [eco](#) or [FSM](#), via [their shared online portal](#).

What do you need to submit a case?

Please prepare the following:

- If you're challenging the **removal or restriction** of your content, make a **screenshot of the notification** you received from the platform (e.g. the message informing you about the removal or restriction). You'll be asked to upload it in our submission form.
- If you are challenging content that is **still online** and should be removed: First, report it to the platform. If they inform you that the content will **not** be removed, take a **screenshot of their response** and submit it along with a **link to the content**.

To **learn more or submit a case**: user-rights.org. For questions or more information, **contact** info@user-rights.org.