

Top Hungary court backs clampdown on internet comments

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A boy uses on a computer in Csobanka, Hungary, on February 23, 2011

A top Hungarian court ruled Wednesday that website operators are responsible for abusive internet comments made on pages under their control, even if the questionable statements are moderated or removed on request.

The EU member's constitutional court rejected a complaint by the

Association of Hungarian Content Providers (MTE)— whose members include popular online news sites—against an earlier [supreme court ruling](#).

The supreme court had said some "below-the-line" [comments](#) about a real estate company advertising on an MTE webpage were "humiliating" and "crossed the boundaries of free speech".

On Wednesday, the constitutional [court](#) upheld the ruling that operators should be responsible for comments on their websites, even if they are moderated or removed immediately on request.

"The internet is not a lawless space, responsibility must be taken," it said in a statement.

The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ) however said the ruling meant "unconditional responsibility" for [website operators](#).

That will make it risky to allow any commentary at all on websites, TASZ said, adding that it would restrict political debate, and have a "chilling effect" on freedom of speech.

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