

Facebook, Twitter not fully complying with consumer rules: EU

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have made an effort to comply with EU consumer protection rules, but that Facebook and Twitter have not made all the required changes.

"While Google's latest proposals appear to be in line with the requests made by consumer authorities, Facebook and, more significantly, Twitter, have only partially addressed important issues about their liability and about how users are informed of possible content removal or contract termination," the Commission, the EU's executive arm, said in a statement.

The three major internet companies had published on Thursday the changes they are making to comply with the demands of European regulators, which must be implemented in all languages by spring.

Some of those changes include having the right to withdraw from an online purchase, being able to lodge complaints in Europe rather than in California where the companies are based, and the platforms being responsible towards EU consumers in the same way as offline services.

"I am pleased that the enforcement of EU rules to protect consumers by national authorities is bearing fruit, as some companies are now making their platforms safer for consumers; however, it is unacceptable that this is still not complete and it is taking so much time," said Vera Jourova, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality.

The European Union's demands to the US internet giants were made in November 2016 following numerous complaints by consumers in Europe about being hit with fraud and scams when using their websites.

There were also concerns by consumer protection authorities about requesting the removal of illegal content.

The Commission said unlike Google, Facebook and Twitter have not set

up deadlines to deal with the requests of national authorities.

"We have worked with the Consumer Protection Cooperation Network (CPC) and the European Commission to ensure our Terms and Conditions are more transparent," a Facebook spokesperson said in reply to an AFP inquiry.

"We're grateful to have had the opportunity to work with the CPC to put appropriate changes in place, and will make further updates to our terms later in the year."

Facebook noted that it has long had tools in place to inform members of the social network about content removal and said that it intends to expand those tools later this year.

Monique Goyens, director general of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), said the situation with the social media companies showed that the EU needs to update consumer law to strengthen sanction powers.

"What this shows is that there is a need for real sanction powers when a company does not respect EU law," she said in a statement.

"The incentive for companies to comply with the law is rather low. These fines should not be symbolic but a real deterrent, going up to a percentage of the company's annual worldwide turnover," she added.

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