

Who Writes the Rules Campaigners

22 June 2021

Dear Rapporteurs of the European Parliament,
Dear Members of the Council of Europe,
Dear President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen
Dear Executive Vice President of the European Commission, Margrethe Vestager
Dear Vice President of the European Commission, Věra Jourová
Dear Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli
Dear Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry Breton
Dear Rapporteurs of the European Parliament

We are six women who work and live in the European Union. Between us, we: research online abuse, run nonprofits to help refugee and immigrant women code, fight gender-based violence with tech, develop inclusive AI policy, campaign on women's rights, and run tech companies. We write this open letter to you — the policymakers shaping our collective digital futures — to raise awareness on vital elements that remain absent from your critical work.

As advocates of and for racialised and marginalised women, we come together to represent those [disproportionately impacted by the systemic threats to their online democratic experience](#).

The [#The BrusselsSoWhite campaign](#) highlighted that there is a persistent and systemic exclusion of racialised people from European decision and policymaking processes — even concerning policies where these groups are most likely to experience harm. More recently, [Politico's analysis on employees within the Commission](#) confirmed the Commission is overwhelmingly male and white. **Furthermore, the systemic harms from many social media platforms — censorship, hate speech, disinformation, radicalisation and algorithmic injustice means that racialised and marginalised digital citizens experience two forms of exclusion: 1) from writing the rules of their tech platform experience and, 2) from the involvement in the literal writing of regulatory tech policy rules by states that govern them.**

We write to you in the context of the numerous proposals moving forward within the EC at present, most notably the Digital Services Act and the proposals on DMA, AI Regulation, and EDAP. Like you, we also see the opportunity for transformative, meaningful change. Recognising the scope of the DSA, we welcome its expressed inclusion of the protection of fundamental rights and the specific reference to the experience of vulnerable groups within the preamble. **This, however, is where the commitment ended.** Sadly, though the explanatory articles for the draft mention the need to mitigate harm to marginalised people, *nothing* is outlined that addresses enforcement, implementation or where the responsibility lies beyond member states.

This is not good enough. European citizens expect the EU to do better.

The reality is apparent: those already marginalised are not included. We do not write the rules. As advocates and survivors, we want to be part of the rule-making to effectively shape our online experiences, not just share our trauma. We know that exclusion already results in tech policy that [doesn't go far enough in acknowledging or protecting us](#), so change is a point of necessity.

As the European Commission embarks on these ambitious, interlinked regulatory processes, there is scope and precedent to ensure those whom Big Tech disproportionately harms are protected online and given the power to write the rules. It is your responsibility to regulate Big Tech; you're accountable to European citizens.

We request:

- For the European Commission to publicly outline the indicators and accountability mechanisms it will adopt to ensure the DSA mitigates and ends the harms that racialised and marginalised women face.
- For the European Commission to outline how it will continue to mitigate Big Tech's impact on racialised and marginalised women, above and beyond the DSA, ensuring that implementation of the mechanisms mentioned above is as robust as the legislation.

Signed,

Who Writes the Rules Campaigners:

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Whose Knowledge?

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International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)
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