

MEPs in last-minute meeting ahead of crunch EU copyright vote

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News

MEPs were meeting on Tuesday in a last-minute effort to agree a compromise that will be acceptable to a majority of deputies ahead of a key vote next week on the reforming EU copyright rules.



Photo credit: Fotolia

The meeting also comes 24 hours before the deadline set for amendments to be submitted to the draft law which has generated massive opposition from various quarters.

On 12 September, the full plenary of the European Parliament is due to vote on all accepted amendments in a bid to agree a final position on the draft. If agreement is reached the dossier will then go to member states for a final decision.

The controversial law is aimed at updating existing legislation to “fit the digital age” and has seen intense lobbying campaigns from both sides of the debate, with those who believe digital players are exploiting news and media content without properly remunerating the creators, pitted against opponents of the proposed rules who said it posed a threat to a free and open internet.

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Parliament’s rapporteur on the dossier is German deputy Axel Voss, who has presented what he hopes will be a compromise.

The debate on the directive has resumed since the end of the summer recess with high profile campaigns from all sides.

Agence France Presse has reportedly launched a highly active campaign calling on MEPs to support the introduction of a neighbouring right to protect journalism, while the Association of European Innovative Media Publishers criticised AFP for their campaigning via their news platform. It has accused them of taking advantage of their dominant position.

The music and film industry, meanwhile, has launched a new site called Europe for Creativity encouraging MEPs to support Article 13, arguably the most controversial clause in the draft.

Some 165 leading screenwriters and directors, including UK director Mike Leigh, have signed a petition calling on the Parliament to next week adopt the latest version of the EU copyright directive.

The declaration, unveiled at the Venice Film Festival, is backed by the Federation of European Film Directors, the Federation of Screenwriters and the Society of Audiovisual Authors.

The petition reads, “Together, we have been calling on the European institutions to adopt a directive on copyright in the digital single market that introduces an unwaivable right to proportionate remuneration for authors, collected directly from the on-demand platforms by the collective management organisations representing us, the authors.”

Campaigners from civil society, NGOs, Wikipedia and internet rights activists have also resumed their efforts to convince MEPs to vote for a copyright directive “that will not force large online platforms to institute censorship of uploads.”

Celebrities such as Stephen Fry and Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales have also joined in the fierce, EU-wide campaigning, joining the chorus of those calling on MEPs not to pass a law that, they insist, “will create censorship online.”

On Tuesday, one well-placed parliamentary insider told this website, “The question remains as to what compromise will emerge from today’s meeting and if it is something that will be acceptable to a majority of MEPs.

“Regardless of the compromise, it is unlikely that there will be a solution that will please both sides of the debate and so it’s anyone’s guess as to what will happen next week on this highly politician and contentious file.”

Further comment came from Dimitar Dimitrov, EU policy director for Wikimedia, who told this website, “The copyright changes discussed will change fundamental principles of the internet. They would be another step toward less openness and more corporate control.

“Wikipedia happened thanks to the open internet. But unlike others, we don’t want to close the door behind us. We want the internet to remain an open place where new concepts can challenge current practices.

“This is why we are concerned. This reform seems to enshrine current monopolies, while users and small-time creators are being overlooked. They struggle with the incompatibility of our everyday digital reality and copyright. There is a reality gap that we need to fix here.”

About the author

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[Culture and Education](#) [5]

[Internal Market](#) [6]

Categories

[Copyright](#) [7]

[Digital single market](#) [8]

[Culture, media and sport](#) [9]



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- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/culture-and-education>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/internal-market>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/copyright>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/digital-single-market>
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