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# Access to news and information content online will be restricted

## What was proposed?

The European Commission proposed that online services should pay for linking to articles that are up to twenty years old. Almost every news link with an explanatory extract (a snippet) placed in a search engine will be subject to a fee. The Commission hopes that the payment will reach the publisher of the original news.

## What is the problem?

If a service facilitating access to aggregated news content needs to pay for linking, it may decide to exclude some links or news outlets from their service to avoid the costs. As a result, a lot of information will not be accessible to users through online search, for example. Experience from Spain shows that smaller publishers will suffer most. The news will come exclusively from big publishers and companies who have enough negotiating power to contract the flow of the snippet levy revenues.

## Why is this important?

The snippet levy creates barriers to freedom of information and expression. The Commission failed to provide a clear definition of what online news services are, so it could include almost all types of publications. Each member state will have its own definition of "news". Furthermore, it is not clear who benefits from the snippet levy. The proposal was made despite clear evidence from Spain and Germany where this experiment was carried out and failed.

## Will the proposal fix the problem?

No. The Commission proposes a solution that does not properly address the problem of revenue loss of publishers, while limiting users' access to information. The publishers claim that they lose revenue because readers read the snippets and do not follow through to the original content. The challenges for modern news media are too complex to solve with a simple transfer of revenue from one industry to another, and need to be addressed with policies that do not affect users.

## How can this be fixed?

This measure does not address the challenges of the digital era, and harms access to information. The only option is to remove the snippet levy from the proposal.

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