

Tech

EU Commission to continue engagement with adult content creator industry, despite no-show at event

The Commission is considering hosting a roundtable with the industry, Euractiv understands.

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Updated to clarify attribution of quotes.

While the European Commission's scheduled participation and subsequent no-show at a panel on the future of the adult content sector and its intersection with policy, technology, and innovation raised eyebrows, the executive's interaction with the sector is not set to slow down anytime soon.

Eleonora Esposito, a case-handler officer at the Commission's Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content, and Technology (DG CONNECT), was scheduled to speak at an event on the 22 October panel happening alongside the Berlin Porn Film Festival.

Ana Ornelas, who represented the advocacy group Digital Intimacy Coalition at the panel, told Euractiv that it would be a historic moment for the adult creator industry, as it would be the Commission's first participation in such an event.

However, one source told Euractiv that the evening before the panel, the Commission dropped out, instead sending a statement to be read out.

The Commission did not attend the panel for "organisational reasons," spokesperson Patricia Porapat told Euractiv, adding that it "remains dedicated to ensuring that an effective regulatory dialogue is maintained with all stakeholders."

However, three sources told Euractiv that the EU executive is considering organising a roundtable with the industry in the coming months.

But just before the roundtable was scheduled to take place, The Portuguese Platform for Women's Rights (PpDM) issued an open letter expressing "strong opposition" to the Commission's participation in the event as "the harms of this industry [porn] are systemic and cannot be reformed or sanitised."

In a statement to Euractiv, the group's President, Ana Sofia Fernandes, and board member Diana Pinto said the word "sanitised" refers to superficial attempts to make the pornography industry appear less harmful without addressing the root issues of exploitation and violence.

"Pornography is fundamentally incompatible with human dignity. Attempts to 'regulate' this industry, akin to 'regulating' slavery, whether by regulating the age of consumers or improving recording settings, do not eliminate its inherent violations," they added.

The letter was also posted on X by the UN Special Rapporteur for Violence Against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem.

The Commission "should certainly engage with all stakeholders, including those hosting and creating pornography to prevent violence and exploitation", but doing so at an event that "celebrates" pornography would very likely be perceived to mean a legitimisation of the industry, Alsalem told Euractiv.

In Ornelas's view, the adult content creator industry is fighting for similar things to women's rights organisations. For example, "the performers are the first ones who want to fight gender-based violence in the porn industry" because they are the ones that have to go through it, she said.

However, Ornelas said that adult content industry stakeholders at the conference included a wide variety of stakeholders ranging from sexual education to sex tech, not just porn.

This was a "missed opportunity" and disappointing for Ornelas, but the creators "will create more opportunities."

Alessandro Polidoro, a lawyer working with the adult content industry and victims of gender-based violence, said, "Society is ready for a frank conversation about sex, and it's up to EU institutions to facilitate it."

"This is a great opportunity to bring together anti-porn organisations and the sex-positive community," who "are both united in their fight against misogyny and 'rape culture', and they are both very aware of the damages made by Big Tech."

Their disagreement revolves "around the stigma associated with sex work", but times have changed, Polidoro said.

Two Italian MEPs from the European Conservatives and Reformists group, Paolo Inselvini and Elena Donazzan, also questioned the Commission's potential presence at the conference. **They asked** whether it tied in with measures to protect minors and how such a decision was made.

Euractiv contacted the two MEPs for comment, but they had not responded by the time of publication.

Adult content creators are affected by the EU's digital rulebook, specifically content moderation and safety rules in the Digital Services Act (DSA). They have been asking for more of a seat at the table, particularly in **AI policy**, including deepfakes.

The DSA has increasingly veered into porn platforms. Major platforms have been **designated** as Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) by the Commission, meaning they must fulfil similar requirements to the likes of Facebook and X.

[Edited by Alice Taylor-Braçe]

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