



Press remarks by Executive Vice-President Ribera on the imposition of interim measures on Meta to preserve free access to WhatsApp for rival AI

Brussels, 9 June 2026

Thanks a lot to all of you for being here so that I can share with you that today we have adopted interim measures requiring Meta to restore free access to WhatsApp for rival AI assistants.

Until January this year, Meta allowed AI assistants to interact with WhatsApp users, just as it allows other businesses to do, like online travel agents. This means that users could interact with their preferred AI assistants on WhatsApp. It could be Meta's own assistant, or those of others such as ChatGPT, Perplexity or smaller ones like Luzia or Poke.

But, as you may remember, in October last year, Meta announced that it would ban all competing AI assistants from WhatsApp from 15 January 2026. All except its own assistant.

And so it did. From 15 January, only Meta's assistant, Meta AI, remained accessible on the platform.

The Commission opened an abuse of dominance investigation and, after we issued a Statement of Objections on 6 March in our interim measures proceedings, Meta announced that it would give rivals access to WhatsApp again, but that access could be subject to a fee.

The problem is that this fee is so high that, in practice, it is not economically sustainable for competitors. The result is that access remains, in practice, blocked for all AI assistants except, of course, Meta's own assistant.

Meta gave no convincing justification for its policy changes. It seems that Meta expects to leverage the vast reach and likely dominance of WhatsApp to benefit its own AI assistant and to foreclose rivals.

It is now a critical time. AI markets are developing exceptionally fast, and AI assistants are expected to become an important way for consumers all across Europe to access and use AI.

We cannot let large digital incumbents leverage their dominance of the past to dictate who in Europe gets to compete and who gets to innovate in AI.

You know that we respect the laws and procedures with full guarantees. You know that our competition investigations can take time, because our system is one that respects the rule of law and rights of defence.

Therefore, when the damage can happen quickly and there is a risk of companies being forced to leave the market, we need to use our tools. We need to take action to protect the status quo.

This is why our interim measures powers exist.

It is true that we do not use these powers very often. The last time was in 2019. When we do use interim measures, we make sure that they are necessary and that we do not impose a disproportionate burden.

But when it is necessary to use these interim measures, like it is in this case, we use them. And let me be clear: this will be the case again if similar circumstances arise.

Today's measures will remain in place until our investigation is done or, at the latest, until June 2029, three years from now.

In doing so, we do not ask Meta to do something new, to implement some new technical engineering solution, or to put in place something technically burdensome.

It is quite simple. We just ask Meta to go back to what they were doing by themselves until January this year. Nothing more.

This will allow the Commission to investigate this matter in depth while safeguarding competition in the growing market for AI assistants.

In our main investigation, we will take account of all arguments, including those being provided by Meta. But, importantly, we will be able to do so without the risk of serious harm to competition that could be almost impossible to repair.

Without these measures, it could be too late by the time the investigation is over. The market could have tipped, as we saw in digital markets in the past.

AI assistants, large and small, existing ones as well as solutions that are still being developed, will now be able to retain free and open access to WhatsApp as a key access route to users in Europe in that period.

We are preserving choice for citizens across Europe on the AI assistants they want to use with WhatsApp, without that decision being made for them.

Just to give you a figure, there are about 6,700 AI start-ups in Europe. We are an innovative continent, and we want to bet on this digital economy.

And we hope many of them will seize the opportunity to benefit from these interim measures and bring their innovative solutions to EU citizens.

What we do not want to see is that they do not even have the chance to try.

Non-European companies can, of course, do the same. In fact, half of the complainants in this case are AI companies from the United States, because our rules do not intend to be protectionist or to close our markets.

Our rules try to be fair. They do not care about nationality. They care only about the interests of European consumers and ensuring a level playing field.

We have learned our lessons from developments in technology markets in the past. Failure by competition authorities to act quickly enough in some cases might have meant that dominant players became so entrenched that markets were no longer contestable.

That is what we want to avoid. We cannot let this happen in AI. There is too much at stake.

Preserving contestability in AI markets is essential to safeguard innovation in Europe, our strategic autonomy and, of course, choice for European citizens.

So I think that this is an important measure to communicate personally. We hope that we can solve this case following our investigation process, according to the law, respecting the rights of defence, and deciding on this case before the end of this three-year period.

Thank you.

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