

# Position Paper: Why UX evaluation should get into online platforms regulation?

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## 1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

To make online platforms more accountable to users and to public authorities, new regulations are being discussed, drafted, and implemented to "empower the user". For compliance purposes, user interface features and user experience (UX) are likely to be scrutinized by regulations governance structure. Nevertheless, UX evaluation metrics are absent from regulations implementation agenda. As a user researcher working on online platform user rights, I personally witnessed this gap with a specific regulation: the Digital Services Act (DSA).

The Digital Services Act is a new regulation from the European Union that aims to create "a safe, predictable, and trustworthy online environment" through a risk-based approach. Hence, the DSA is fundamentally about risk audit and risk mitigation. According to the DSA, recommender systems are one of the main source of risk. Thus, to reach its goals the regulation sets out a governance structure around "Very Large Online Platforms"(VLOPs) and "Very Large Online Search Engines" (VLOSEs), online platforms with at least 45 million active EU users per month. One key part of the governance structure are researchers, national institutions like Digital Services Coordinators (DSCs) and European institutions like the European Centre for Algorithmic Transparency (ECAT).

For example, the DSA article 27 and 38 introduce user control mechanisms. But how the DSCs and ECAT will evaluate the UX of these user control mechanisms remains to be seen. Hence the question I would like to touch upon during the workshop: Why UX evaluation should get into online platforms regulation?

## 2 PROPOSAL

Based on my personal experience I would like to tackle this question from the perspective of user needs for transparency and control.

In 2022, I led the YouChoose project at Tracking Exposed (now AI Forensics), defined by Cory Doctorow as a browser extension that "replaces the YouTube recommendations with recommendations from many services from across the the internet, selected according to criteria that you choose (hence the name)." During 6 months, I explored the implications of user agency on YouTube. To inform this exploration, I reviewed the cognitive science sense of agency literature, interviewed end-users and content creators. Two conclusions stood out (1) content creators' need for agency over the recommender system was highly impacted by their media literacy and the power relation with the platform; (2) there is a lack of understanding of user needs for control and transparency.

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53 As transparency or control features are designed to comply with the regulation, user satisfaction seems to be  
54 overlooked. Consequently, all the users I interviewed did not find any added value in transparency or control mechanisms.  
55 To sum up, I would like to introduce this discussion on user need for transparency, control and talk about potential  
56 ways to adapt UX evaluation metrics to this specific issue.  
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