

## **Open Letter to the President of the European Commission**

### **Subject: Upholding European Sovereignty and Legal Autonomy in Response to Unilateral United States Sanctions on European Citizens in connection with the Digital Services Act**

Brussels, 21 January 2026

Dear President von der Leyen,

We write to you to express our profound concern regarding the recent decision by the authorities of the United States of America to impose unilateral restrictive measures against the former Commissioner, Thierry Breton as well as Josephine Ballon, Anna-Lena von Hodenberg, Imran Ahmed and Clare Melford due to their involvement in establishing and enforcing the Digital Services Act. These measures, adopted outside any multilateral framework and without judicial process, directly affect individuals acting within the scope of European legal order and public life.

Such actions raise serious questions about respect for European sovereignty, legal autonomy, and the principle of comity between long-standing partners. When a third country asserts extraterritorial coercive measures against European citizens for actions taken in accordance with European law and democratic mandates, the matter transcends individual cases and becomes an institutional issue for the European Union as a whole.

The European Union has consistently maintained that sanctions are a legitimate instrument only when grounded in international law, proportionality, due process, and multilateral consensus. Unilateral sanctions targeting European nationals for political or regulatory actions within the European Union undermine these principles and risk establishing a precedent that erodes the Union's capacity to govern independently in areas falling under its exclusive or shared competences.

As Members of the European Parliament, we therefore call upon the European Commission, as Guardian of the Treaties and representative of the Union's general interest, to take decisive action in response. This should include, inter alia:

- A formal political and legal assessment of the compatibility of the United States' measures with international law and transatlantic commitments.

- Consideration of reciprocal restrictive measures or proportionate countermeasures to protect European citizens and institutions from extraterritorial coercion.
- Activation or expansion of existing Union instruments designed to counter foreign coercive measures, including protective and blocking mechanisms where appropriate.
- Clear diplomatic communication that the European Union will not accept the targeting of its officials, former officials, or citizens for the legitimate exercise of their public or professional functions within the Union.

This appeal is not a rejection of transatlantic partnership. On the contrary, it is grounded in the conviction that a strong partnership between the European Union and the United States must rest on mutual respect, legal reciprocity, and recognition of each other's constitutional orders. Silence or inaction in the face of such measures risks normalising unilateral coercion and weakening the Union's credibility as a geopolitical and legal actor.

We trust in your leadership to ensure that the European Union responds with unity, proportionality, and resolve, safeguarding both its citizens and its institutional integrity and deterring any future unilateral sanctions.

Respectfully,

Markéta Gregorová, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA group

Brando Benifei, Member of the European Parliament, S&D Group

Helmut Brandstätter, Member of the European Parliament, Renew Group

Saskia Bricmont, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA Group

Veronika Cifrová Ostrihoňová, Member of the European Parliament, Renew Group

David Cormand, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA Group

Matthias Ecke, Member of the European Parliament, S&D Group

Alexandra Geese, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA Group

Nathalie Loiseau, Member of the European Parliament, Renew Group

Erik Marquardt, Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA Group

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