

Agreement on Electronic Commerce

2026/0191(NLE) - 13/07/2026 - Preparatory document

PURPOSE: to approve the agreement on electronic commerce.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: since 2017, a group of WTO members, including the European Union, has been negotiating an Agreement on electronic commerce. In December 2024, a final text was presented for incorporation into the WTO agreements, but the WTO General Council failed to reach a consensus in 2025. In March 2026, 67 members, including the EU, decided to provisionally implement the Agreement, pending its formal incorporation into Annex 4 of the WTO Agreement.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council should approve the Agreement on electronic commerce.

The Agreement establishes the **first ever set of global baseline rules on digital trade**. It is an economy-wide agreement covering goods, services, and information. Government procurement, government services and government-held information are excluded from the Agreement's scope.

The Agreement includes:

- trade facilitation disciplines that can lead to more seamless digital trade both within countries and across borders (e.g., provisions on paperless trading, electronic contracts, electronic authentication and electronic signatures);
- provisions to improve trust in the digital trade environment for both consumers and businesses (e.g., provisions on unsolicited commercial electronic messages, online consumer protection, cybersecurity, or open internet access);
- provisions leading to a more reliable international digital trade environment, ensuring that consumers and companies continue to access the internet and electronic services at affordable prices (e.g., provisions on electronic payments or telecommunications services);
- a prohibition of customs duties on electronic transmissions;
- a development component, aiming to enable and facilitate the participation of consumers and companies from developing countries in digital trade;
- a horizontal exception for measures for the protection of personal data and privacy.

Acceptance of the Agreement shall take place by deposit of an instrument of acceptance with the Director-general of the WTO. The Agreement on Electronic Commerce shall enter into force, for those members of the WTO that have accepted it, on the 30th day following the date of deposit of the 45th instrument of acceptance.