

The complaint

Ms I has complained about the interface of eToro (UK) Ltd's platform which she says caused the closure of two of her Contracts for Difference ('CFD') positions and prevented her from making a profit. She said she suffered a loss of \$848.09 rather than making a profit of \$1,000 if the trades hadn't closed.

What happened

Ms I had CFD positions in gold and oil and on 1 August 2024 she tried to edit the stop loss amount on both. Ms I's then current stop loss was -\$500 and her take profit was +\$500 on both trades. She wanted to amend both to -\$600 so deleted the -\$500 and added \$600 but the app automatically assumed she had entered +\$600 and closed the trades. Ms I said she had clicked 'update' and that the app should have given her a warning or stopped her from editing the amount to a higher price.

Ms I raised her concerns with eToro. eToro responded to Ms I on 8 August 2024. It said;

- Ms I hadn't realised that entering a positive amount of stop loss without a minus sign would mean it automatically changed the stop loss to the minimum possible stop loss percentage.
- If Ms I had clicked outside of the relevant trading instruction box she would have seen a written text informing her that the stop loss couldn't be set higher than a specific amount.
- But Ms I immediately clicked on update rather than anywhere else on the box which resulted in editing the stop loss without the minus sign and the positions closed.
- There was no technical error, so it couldn't provide Ms I with a refund.
- It had raised Ms I's suggestion with its product team regarding the functionality and how it could be made better.

Unhappy with the outcome, Ms I brought her complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service. Our investigator who considered the complaint didn't think eToro needed to do anything more. He said;

- Without Ms I entering the minus sign eToro's platform had reasonably assumed the stop loss was for plus \$600 and not minus \$600.
- He provided screenshots from eToro's platform which showed where Ms I would have edited the amount, but she didn't enter a minus.

Ms I didn't agree. She questioned the logic of having to press outside of the relevant order box and whether it made sense. She said eToro had since fixed the issue based on her case so why would it do so unless a change was necessary. She used other platforms and none of them had this bug. She said she didn't delete the minus sign which should have been there automatically. She thought the logic was too clear for the investigator to have misunderstood.

The investigator gave Ms I further information as provided by eToro, but she maintained there was a global standard which other platforms adhered to but not eToro in her case. Ms I's comments didn't change the investigator's opinion about the case and Ms I requested her case be reconsidered. So, it has been passed to me to decide in my role as ombudsman.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

After doing so, I've reached the same conclusion as the investigator and broadly for the same reasons. I'll explain why.

I accept Ms I's logic that the stop loss needs to be lower than the 'take profit' and current position to limit the downside. She says other platforms would have warned her if the stop loss was higher. But Ms I also needed to ensure that she input the correct information – in this case including a minus sign – otherwise the platform would, not unreasonably in my opinion, assume the position was positive.

It's Ms I's recollection that she didn't remove the minus sign that was present when she tried to amend the stop loss figure. Ms I says it should have already been in place. eToro's platform requires the user to input stop loss values with the appropriate sign to indicate whether the amount is positive or negative and the platform reads the value exactly as entered. So, if the minus sign wasn't present when the update was submitted, the update would interpret the figure as a positive value which I don't find unreasonable.

eToro told us the platform doesn't automatically add or remove minus signs during edits and relies entirely on the user's input to determine the intended value. So, this suggests to me that it is more likely Ms I removed the minus sign during the edit.

And it looks like Ms I was aware of the need to add a minus sign for the stop losses she wanted when she contacted eToro via chat on 2 August 2024 and asked whether it was;

'possible that the trades have closed because I didn't put a minus in front?'

But I appreciate Ms I was relatively new to eToro's platform so this question may have been her attempt to understand what had gone wrong from her perspective. However, I don't think eToro is being unreasonable to expect its users to include the relevant plus or minus sign when applying a stop loss figure.

After amending the amount from 500 to 600 Ms I clicked on the 'update' button and the stop loss was updated on the positive figure she had input. eToro told us that if Ms I had clicked outside of the order field after inputting the positive figure and before pressing 'update' she would have seen a warning emboldened in red;

'STOP LOSS AMOUNT CAN'T BE HIGHER THAN \$0.00 | LEARN MORE'

I appreciate Ms I's question about why she would click outside of the order box – in order for the warning to be shown – rather than just 'update' for her stop loss to be amended. eToro told us the reason the warning message may not appear is related to how its platform validates input. When Ms I edited the numerical field eToro's system performed a real time valuation check once she clicked outside of the input field or pressed 'Enter'. It was this that would have triggered any applicable warnings such as entering an excessive or invalid amount.

By clicking 'Update' without clicking outside of the field or pressing 'Enter' the system assumed Ms I had finalised her input and applied the change as input by treating 600 as a positive value. As no minus sign was included and no validation was triggered beforehand, the platform accepted the input and applied the stop loss.

Ms I has questioned why eToro has since changed its interface if there was nothing wrong with it. But eToro has confirmed that it hasn't and the interface remains the same. However it suggested to its product development team regarding the functionality of the specific scenario and how it could be improved. eToro told us it understood that its platform process could be unclear, particularly to those new to the platform and it has since made some improvements to the trade window.

eToro has said that it would always look to improve functionality of its platform when its customers make suggestions which it has done and it's encouraging to see that it has improved the user experience to reduce the risk of unintended actions like Ms I's. But I'm not persuaded that Ms I's cause for complaint or her suggestion that the interface be changed is evidence that the service eToro provided wasn't – at the time – operated as eToro intended it to or wasn't fit for purpose.

I appreciate Ms I's frustration and that the edit to her stop loss wasn't challenged in that it would need to be lower than the 'take profit' and current position to limit the downside. But the platform offers an execution only service and it's not for eToro to interpret an intended action.

I have sympathy for the position Ms I is now in. She says she was confident of the trades and has lost out on a potential profit of \$1,000. While it's not this service's role to tell a firm how it should manage its business – that falls to the regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority – I can consider whether the outcome of the service eToro offers treats its customers fairly. In this case, while I appreciate Ms I's disagreement, the responsibility for ensuring the stop loss information she input was correct.

While it's good to know that eToro has since updated to the trade window to prevent such unintended errors the fact remains that it was Ms I who input the stop loss details and it was her responsibility to ensure the information she input was correct. So, while I appreciate if Ms I had seen a warning about the stop loss input edit she would no doubt have amended it, but that doesn't mean the fault lies with eToro as it amended the stop loss as instructed by Ms I.

It follows that I'm not persuaded it would be fair or reasonable of me to ask eToro to compensate Ms I for the loss she suffered or her hoped for profit of \$1,000.

Taking all the above into account, I don't uphold Ms I's complaint. I'd like to assure Ms I that I have thought very carefully about the circumstances of her complaint, but I'm not persuaded the lack of warning given about the unintended stop loss edit would lead me to uphold the complaint over and above Ms I's own responsibility to ensure she input the edit correctly.

No doubt Ms I will understandably be disappointed with my conclusion. But I hope I have been able to explain how and why I have reached it.

My final decision

For the reasons given, I don't uphold Ms I's complaint about eToro (UK) Ltd.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Ms I to accept or reject my decision before 27 October 2025.

Catherine Langley
Ombudsman