

Platforms

Background

Platforms are the world's largest online businesses providing multiple services, often acting as social networks. The most known are Google, Apple, Facebook, Twitter and others. Platforms are a new regulatory and technological phenomenon and as such they have received regulatory attention only in recent months. They are facing numerous challenges such as data processing and collecting transparency, abuse of dominant position, transparent search algorithms etc.

Platforms are currently regulated by the [eCommerce Directive](#) that removes almost all liability, for the content they are hosting, from intermediaries. Google is also subject of many EU antitrust investigations.

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on platforms and their data practices in September 2015. Results were announced on 25 May 2016.

The Commission recognised that the majority of businesses highlight a perceived unfair exploitation of a marked imbalance, by platforms, in bargaining power across the supply chain, and that online platforms effectively control access to important data bases. The unfair practices of platforms include: imposing unfair terms and conditions, unilaterally modifying market access conditions, lack of transparency on tariffs etc. The Commission will now gather additional information over the next six months on B2B practices in order to examine more closely the precise scale and impact of unfair trading practices on suppliers.

EACA position

Platforms are mostly funded by advertising which they display and through which they collect significant amount of users' data. Users do not know how their data is being collected or processed. Advertisers and agencies have to work with the same platforms because only they can provide data sets allowing us to meaningfully reach consumers. This means that the ad industry is held to ransom over data it cannot access but whose collection it partly funds. EACA advocates for more transparent data practices of big platforms and audibility of their business practices.