Digital Platforms - Fairness Principles

At the heart of the digital economy are the providers of digital services, app developers and entrepreneurs who build the services that offer consumers the best in innovation, creativity and competitive prices. To deliver our services, we rely on a handful of globally dominant digital platforms - such as app stores and intelligent voice assistants, in some cases vertically integrated platforms - to facilitate access to and transactions with consumers.

Today, a small number of global platforms are increasingly dominant, leading to economic or technical challenges for business users. They are also increasingly vertically integrated, acting both as a player and a referee. When they play fair, they are gateways to the digital market and make a positive contribution to the digital economy. By contrast, when these platforms become gatekeepers, and in particular when they unfairly favour their own services over competing third-party services, they tilt the playing field, resulting in harm to consumers and service providers and preventing the digital economy from reaching its full potential.

As part of its mission to deliver a vibrant, diverse and competitive digital economy, the EU should ensure that globally dominant platforms respect the following principles:

Fair competition
Providers of digital services and apps should have a fair chance to compete on the merits, regardless of who provides the digital service, develops the app or owns the platform.

No self-preferencing
Platforms should not discriminate against third-party services in order to give an unmerited technical, economic or other business advantage to competing services they own or control.

Real consumer choice
Consumers should have the possibility to choose freely from a variety of different services. Platforms should respect and not override users' choice, in particular to advantage their own competing offerings. Platforms should not artificially restrict choice for app developers and digital services, including the choice to offer their users different payment mechanisms and other default options.

Freedom of communications with users
App developers and providers of digital services should be free to communicate with their users. In particular, they should be able to freely communicate special deals, promotions, or other offers without interference from platforms.

Access to data about users
Data related to users of third-party services and apps should not be the property of platforms. Such ownership claims by platforms inappropriately interfere with the business relationship between a user and the service provider they have chosen to use.

Transparency
Platform rules for third-party services and consumers should be transparent. Compliance should be predictable and free from capricious interpretation by the platform.