

Meeting between Cabinet Vestager and Google

2 December 2021, 15:30 – 16:00

Participants:

EU: Deputy Head of Cabinet Christiane Canenbley, Werner Stengg

Google: [REDACTED] at Google
and colleagues

Summary:

Google first discussed the Digital Markets Act and Digital Services Act. They shared their perception that the French presidency wanted to conclude the files before the French elections. The files seem well aligned. On the Digital Markets Act, they shared their concern on the scope and the self-preferencing idea. Their core argument towards the Parliament was the need for regulatory dialogue and the opportunity to individually justify certain practices. They outlined their ambition to ensure compliance with the rules. Cabinet Vestager explained the aim to conclude a clean and directly applicable legislative file.

On the DSA, Google highlighted the discussions in some fora on targeted advertising bans or the fundamental change of platform content moderation rules. They expressed their concern on the latest draft in the IMCO Committee, which contained an opt-in clause for personal advertising. They pointed to the need to preserve privacy enhancing technology (such as clustering people in a way that prohibits de-anonymisation), as well as a balance between privacy and competition. An opt-out clause for personal advertising would be most problematic for actors such as news publishers. Google highlighted that its advertising system was already very advanced in giving users transparency and control. The trend goes away from the need for big data and towards the need for smart data. Google noted its increasingly able to do the same with less data or using synthetic data.

Cabinet Vestager explained that the aim was to have positions by the co-legislators to enter into interinstitutional discussions, as well as the background of overall discussions on the concern about online advertising.

On the issue of publishers, Google explained that they understand the issue and want to value, as well as support publishers, outlining their existing activities. Their concern is the must carry requirement, coupled with calls for a must pay requirement, especially as the definition of a publisher is challenging. For example, they recently had to suspend Russia Today Germany from Youtube for Covid disinformation.

Cabinet Vestager explained the context of these discussions and agreed that definitions are challenging, while highlighting the relevance of quality journalism.