

Brussels, 5 March 2021

European Press Publishers are seriously concerned that the Google Privacy Sandbox further reinforces Google's gatekeeper role

The European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA) and the European Magazine Media Association (EMMA) are greatly concerned about the statement from Google on 3 March concerning its proposed model following the phase-out of third-party cookies on its services. The company had previously announced its intention to implement such a phase-out by the end of 2022. This will affect the advertising market and disrupt the business model of the digital press.

It has now become a reality, as digital media companies have been warning the legislators for years, that Google no longer needs cookies due to its market power. With the help of huge quantities of data collected through its services, inter alia the market leading Chrome browser, Google is able to make much more sophisticated use of personalised advertising than other market players.

Following a phase-out of third-party cookies in its Chrome browser, Google proposes its own solution, the Google Privacy Sandbox, and commits to not build other identifiers to track internet users. All this is now perfecting the Privacy Sandbox, which in reality is a "black box", centralising all data collection within the Chrome browser, that will further erode the transparency of data collection and processing online, and can therefore hardly be described as privacy-friendly. What Google is pursuing with FLoC would ultimately lead to a further strengthening of the gatekeeper position of Google's Chrome browser. While it will no longer be possible for third parties to understand and process data records in a meaningful way, Google would be able to further expand its own first party data monopoly via its various interfaces such as browser profiling.

Such a landmark change in the functioning of the digital economy must not be decided by one private tech giant that is able to shift the online environment through its business policy decisions. Any such change will disproportionately affect smaller players, who cannot adapt their business model in a meaningful way to the new solution proposed by Google. All long-term data-based business models would completely and absolutely depend on Google, which can unilaterally and without consequence decide and change any rules. Therefore, we call on the European legislators to use the proposed Digital Markets Act as an opportunity to limit the discretionary power of the gatekeeper platforms, safeguard fair competition and the sustainability of press in Europe.

ENPA, the European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA) is the largest representative body of newspaper publishers across Europe. ENPA advocates for 16 national associations across 13 European countries, and is a principal interlocutor to the EU institutions and a key driver of media policy debates in the European Union. www.enpa.eu.

EMMA, the European Magazine Media Association, is the unique and complete representation of Europe's magazine media, which is today enjoyed by millions of consumers on various platforms, encompassing both paper and digital formats. EMMA represents 15,000 publishing houses, publishing 50,000 magazine titles across Europe in print and digital. www.magazinemedia.eu