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Ms. Ursula von der Leyen

President

European Commission

January 16 2025

Dear President von der Leyen,

As you begin your second term as President of the European Commission, we encourage you to build on the progress made toward a more accountable digital world during your first term. In particular, we write in support of bold structural actions to end Google’s monopoly over digital advertising technologies (“adtech”) —a critical step towards Europe’s democracy, media landscape, and strategic autonomy.

The European Union’s pioneering regulations, including the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA), have set a global standard and emboldened our allies to address the power of dominant platforms. However, Europe’s democracy is still at risk. Recent events have underscored how the consolidation of power over vital tech platforms jeopardizes our independence and undermines efforts to enforce our laws.

The urgent task is to reduce Europe’s reliance on foreign platforms by reclaiming control over critical digital infrastructure. Of particular importance is the Commission’s upcoming decision concerning Google’s adtech monopoly. A decision in this case is expected soon and follows the EU’s Statement of Objections issued last year finding that Google’s conflicts in the adtech market likely require a structural separation.

We welcome Commissioner Teresa Ribera’s recent statement affirming that a divestiture of Google’s ad tech monopoly is still on the table and encourage the Commission to pursue strong structural remedies while supporting enforcers to defend such measures in court.

Adtech serves as the economic engine of the open web, and underpins much of Europe’s news and entertainment business. However, Google’s unchecked dominance, stemming from its 2007 acquisition of DoubleClick, has stifled competition and consolidated its control over every segment of the adtech market. The US Justice Department, in its case aligned with the Commission’s investigation, has noted that Google dominates the tools advertisers use, the systems publishers rely on, and the key exchange where these parties meet. A Google executive memorably described this conflict as “as if Goldman or Citibank owned the New York Stock Exchange.”

This market imbalance also erodes Europe’s media landscape. Stagnating revenues for news publishers have raised concerns about the risk of news deserts, where communities are deprived of access to independent journalism. This decline hampers the role of the press in supporting democratic discourse and leaves space for misinformation to take root. As we saw during the riots in the United Kingdom over the summer, this fusion of platform power with political influence threatens sovereignty, economic stability, and public safety.

To address this crisis, we recommend two immediate actions:

First, European regulators investigating anticompetitive practices in digital markets should be given the resources and authority to implement structural remedies that restore fair competition. Decisive action in the Google investigation is a necessary first step.

Second, once digital markets have been renewed with judicious use of structural remedies, the Commission should actively seek to foster European innovation. This includes leveraging public procurement, resourcing and enforcing the DSA and DMA, and investing in a "European Tech Deal" to support our startup ecosystem and foster more trustworthy, independent digital infrastructure.

Together, these measures can restore a thriving, diverse media landscape, protect our democratic values, and promote our digital sovereignty. The health of Europe's public square and the strength of our democracies depend on decisive action - in the adtech case, and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

Esko **Aho**, Prime Minister of Finland (1991-1995)

Jan Peter **Balkenende**, Prime Minister of the Netherlands (2002-2010)

Valdis **Birkavs**, Prime Minister of Latvia (1993-1994)

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Petre **Roman**, Prime Minister of Romania (1989-1991)

Wolfgang **Schüssel**, Chancellor of Austria (2000-2007)

Danilo **Türk**, President of Slovenia (2007-2012) & President of Club de Madrid

Vaira **Vike-Freiberga**, President of Latvia (1999-2007)