

US WhatsApp improves its consumer information practices under European pressure

6 March 2023, Budapest –The Consumer Protection Cooperation Network (CPC), which brings together the consumer authorities of the European Union, including the Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH), has pushed for WhatsApp to be more transparent in informing its users about contract amendments and respecting their decisions.

WhatsApp is making a number of improvements to its commercial practices based on commitments made to the Consumer Protection Cooperation Network (CPC), which brings together the European Commission and Member State authorities. The US operator of the popular free messaging and VoIP service decided on the commitments after several rounds of dialogue with the authorities and the European Commission.

Under the agreement, Meta, which also owns Facebook, will in future provide users with more transparent information about, what changes they want to make to their contracts and how these may affect their rights and use of the service. The option to reject and accept the updated terms and conditions will be displayed in the same prominent place, and for notifications of these, it will remember and respect users' choices - rather than displaying them repeatedly and unresponsively each time they are opened.

During the consultations, the authorities reiterated their expectation that WhatsApp should clearly inform consumers about its commercial model – in particular whether the undertaking is profiting from its business practices regarding users' personal data. Following the discussions, the US company confirmed that it does not share users' personal data with third parties or with other companies in its parent company Meta, including Facebook, which is part of the group, for advertising purposes.

The Consumer Protection Cooperation Network will monitor the implementation of the commitments and, if necessary, enforce compliance with legal requirements, including the possibility of imposing fines.

More than a third of traders manipulate consumers online in undetected ‘dark patterns’, [according to a recent fast-track investigation by European consumer authorities covering 25 countries](#), thus, e.g., making it more difficult for users to unsubscribe compared to subscribing. The Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH), which was involved in the European sweep, has also taken up the fight against hidden bias in consumer decisions in Hungary.

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