Freedom of choice for Internet users

Internet gives access to lots of contents and services, and that is why we love it

❑ Facilitate choices: comparative shopping, recommendations of other customers…

But to which extent can we still choose

Examples of limitations

❑ Internet provider throttling VoIP competing to its voice service (issue in net neutrality)

❑ Recommendations (i.e., search engines) biased in favor of some services (platform neutrality)

❑ Smartphone prohibiting certain applications or making it difficult to use others (device neutrality)

❑ Connected speakers give a single answer and choose services for you (device neutrality)

Not having to bother choosing is sometimes comfortable

But this form of infantilization may be very frustrating

Also, unfair business competition – but the focus is here on users' freedom of choice

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Arcep's work on device neutrality

Different sources of biases

- Devices with specific goals, e.g., e-reader

- Technical limitations, e.g., apps not ready in time for the new version of an OS or security reasons

- Editorial choices: e.g., blocking pornographic material. Sometimes arbitrary, e.g. Wehe refused on the Apple store

- Biases introduced for increased business profit: example of pre-installed apps on smartphones

Arcep is considering different approaches for the detection of violations and for reacting to it to increase the freedom of choices of Internet users

Means of increasing Internet users' freedom of choice

Different directions

❑ Clarify the freedom of choice we want to establish

❑ Net neutrality, platform neutrality, device neutrality

Means for increasing that freedom

❑ Require more transparency

❑ Leverage data to regulate

- Gather and publish information and data on practices

- Name and shame

❑ Strengthen market fluidity (interoperability and portability)

- Users should be able to replace preinstalled apps by an app of their choice

- Users should be able to move their data when changing to a new provider of some service

Data: statistical analysis to detect limitations of user's freedom of choice

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