EU ANTITRUST REGULATORS LAUNCHED PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS TO VERIFY HOW GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK PROCESS, USE AND MONETIZE DATA FOR ADVERTISING PURPOSES

MARIA CRISTINA GAETA

Avv. Ph.D., Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa di Napoli.

Key-words: competition law - data protection - facebook - Google

Category: Legal Area

EU Antitrust Regulators has opened preliminary investigations on collecting and using data from Google and Facebook. The procedure started with the sending of a survey that aimed to verify how data is processed, used and monetized, including marketing for advertising purposes. The EU Commissioner for competition Margrethe Vestager had already announced three years ago that she would closely monitor the big tech companies that use personal data and collect them in their huge data stores. Last September, Margrethe Vestager expanded her portfolio becoming the regulator of Big Tech on the planet and has already launched an investigation on how Amazon uses data from independent sellers.

The survey was also sent to the partners and competitors of the two web giants, precisely to allow the EU Antitrust regulators to understand the economic implications of using the enormous amount of data that Google and Facebook can have. The survey will try to understand if Google and Facebook behaviour can translate into concrete obstacles to competitors to access to the online markets on equal terms. Two similar investigations were announced in September in the United States against these the two giants of the web for violation of competition rules. A sort of "network of prosecutors" with the stated objective of understanding whether Google and Facebook's commercial policies put user data at risk, limit consumer choices or increase the price of advertising.

At the moment there are no official comments on the start of the investigation by Google and Facebook. However, in a meeting Nick Clegg, former British deputy premier and currently one of the spokesman for Facebook, observed that Facebook is the object of inquiries all over the world and that the data is infinitely divisible and shareable. While a Google spokesman told that they use the data to make their services more useful and to be able to send advertising notices that may be of users'

interest, allowing people to manage, cancel or transfer their data but he ensures full availability to the EU Antitrust Regulators.

Source: CNN Business.

Link: https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/02/tech/google-facebook-data-europe/index.html