

Dear madam/sir,

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June

Surveillance-based advertising permeates the internet today, creating a number of highly problematic issues for both consumers and for businesses. We are writing to you in order to ask for action on this issue on both sides of the Atlantic. In the EU, we urge you to consider a ban on surveillance-based advertising as a part of the Digital Services Act. In the US, we urge legislators to enact comprehensive privacy legislation.

We are a broad coalition of consumer rights organizations, civil rights groups, NGOs, and academics who share a number of concerns regarding the surveillance-based business model fuelling the majority of online advertising. In order to individualize and personalize digital advertising, we have seen the rise of a surveillance economy where everything consumers do is being tracked both online and offline, aggregated and shared.

The surveillance economy is sometimes erroneously presented as a trade-off, where consumers allow companies to track them in order to receive access to digital content. As the attached report by the Norwegian Consumer Council shows, a majority of consumers do not wish to be tracked online. However, the ubiquity of commercial surveillance means that it is practically impossible to avoid being tracked, profiled and targeted.

In addition to the clear privacy issues caused by surveillance-based advertising, systematic commercial surveillance also gives rise to and exacerbates a number of other problematic practices. As shown in the attached report, the surveillance-based advertising model facilitates systemic manipulation and discrimination, poses serious national security risks, funds disinformation and fraud, while also undermining competition and taking revenue away from content creators. This harms consumers and businesses, and can undermine the cornerstones of democracy.

Although we recognize that advertising is an important source of revenue for content creators and publishers online, this does not justify the massive commercial surveillance systems set up in attempts to “show the right ad to the right people”. Other forms of advertising technologies exist, which do not depend on spying on consumers, and cases have shown that such alternative models can be implemented without significantly affecting revenue.

There is no fair trade-off in the current surveillance-based advertising system. We encourage you to take a stand and consider a ban of surveillance-based advertising as part of the Digital Services Act in the EU, and the for U.S. to enact a long overdue federal privacy law.



Signed

**Name of organisations in alphabetical order:**

Accountable Tech

BEUC - the European Consumer Organisation

CDD (Center for Digital Democracy)

Civil Liberties Union for Europe

CO-CREATE Youth Task Force

Consumer Action

Consumer Council Northern Ireland

Consumer Federation of America (CFA)

Consumers' Organisation of Macedonia

Consumers' Union of Finland (KKR)

Cracked Labs - Institute for Critical Digital Culture

Data Ethics

Decode Democracy

Department of Nursing and Health Promotion,  
OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan / Avdeling for  
ernæring

Deutsche Vereinigung für Datenschutz

Državljan D / Citizen D

dTest

EDRI (European Digital Rights)

EKPIZO

EPIC (Electronic Privacy Information Center)

Fairplay

Fight for the Future

Ghaqda tal-Konsumaturi / Consumers'  
Association Malta

Global Action Plan

Homo Digitalis

ICCL (Irish Council for Civil Liberties)

KEPKA - Consumers' Protection Center

LPIAA (Latvia Consumer Association)

New Economics Foundation

Neytendasamtökin

Nordic Privacy Center

Norwegian Cancer Society / Kreftforeningen

Norwegian Consumer Council /  
Forbrukerrådet

Open MIC (Open Media and Information  
Companies Initiative)

ORG (Open Rights Group)

Panoptikon

PIRG

Press Save the Children Youth Association /  
Press - Redd Barna Ungdom

Privacy International

Public Citizen

Ranking Digital Rights

Spoločnosť ochrany spotrebiteľov (S.O.S.)

Sveriges Konsumenter

The Center for Economic Justice

The National Association for Heart and Lung  
Disorders (LHL) / Landsforeningen for hjerte- og  
lungesyke

The Norwegian Council for Mental Health  
(NCMH) / Rådet for psykisk helse

The Norwegian Diabetes Association /  
Diabetesforbundet

The Parent Coalition for Student Privacy

UNICEF Norway

Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband (VZBV)

**Individual signatures:**

Aram Sinnreich, Professor, American University  
SOC, US

Bår Stenvik, Author, NO

Christian Greftegreff Falch, NO

Dag Hareide, Author, NO

Douwe Korff, Emeritus Professor of Human  
Rights and International Law, NL & UK

Dr. Amandine Garde, Professor of Law,  
University of Liverpool, UK

Dr. Elinor Carmi, Postdoc Research Associate -  
Digital Media & Society, Liverpool University, UK.

Dr. Emma Boyland, senior lecturer, Psychology,  
University of Liverpool, UK

Dr. Knut-Inge Klepp, Project Coordinator CO-  
CREATE, Norwegian Institute of Public Health,  
NO

Dr. Mimi Tatlow-Golden, Co-Director, Centre for  
Children and Young People's Wellbeing, The  
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Eivind Arvesen, Group Cyber Security Manager

Gloria González Fuster, Research Professor, Vrije  
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Hilde Wisløff Nagell, Tanquesmien Agenda, NO

Ian Brown, Expert

Jef Ausloos, University of Amsterdam (IViR) & KU  
Leuven (CiTiP), NL

Johannes Brodwall, Principal software engineer,  
Sopra Steria, NO

Joris Van Hoboken, Professor of Law at the Vrije  
Universiteit Brussels (VUB), BE

Mie Oehlenschläger, External Lecturer,  
Independent Consultant, Tech & Childhood, DK

Pat Walshe, Privacy Matters, UK

Pierre Dewitte, Researcher, KU Leuven Centre  
for IT & IP Law – imec, BE

Rie Aleksandra Walle, General Manager Bedre  
Bedrift AS, NO

Simen Sommerfelt, Author of book "GDPR i  
praksis", NO

Trond Arve Wasskog, CTO Bekk Consulting, NO