

COVID-19 – Reply from platforms to the Commission’ call to take proactive measures to address and prevent scams and unfair practices

On 23 March 2020, Commissioner Reynders wrote to Allegro, Alibaba, Amazon, Microsoft, Cdiscount, eBay, Facebook, Google, Rakuten and Verizon Media.

These **platforms** replied positively to his call for building a closer partnership with national CPC authorities and the Commission. They rapidly put in place **dedicated communication channels** for EU consumer authorities to signal illegal practices.

They listed a **vast array of measures** they have taken including: automated, and where necessary, human monitoring of the content displayed in relation to various keywords and a categorisation of products at risks of scams. Price gouges are addressed by algorithms and general preventive measures are taken to ensure traders are properly informed of possible unfair practices. Certain platforms took firm temporary bans on the selling or advertising of specific products such as masks or alcoholic gels, they listed only the confirmed and reputable providers of certain products. In addition, many of these platforms launched consumer and seller information campaigns in line with official expertise and governmental advice about COVID-19.

Further measures are being envisaged to support government information efforts and safe procurement and shipment of vital equipment.

The number of products/offers/ads withdrawn are very **significant**, up to one million in a week, on the biggest operator, with hundreds thousands of price gouges detected. The platforms have set dedicated teams to address the crisis and evolution of practices and are proactively, including on 24/7 basis, monitoring developments on their platforms with regular sweeps.

Platforms reassured that they implemented these measures across the different online businesses, social media, marketplaces or search engines they operate. For example Facebook for its social media platform, its Marketplace and Instagram, Google for Google Ads and YouTube, Verizon Media for Yahoo, HuffPost, AOL and TechCrunch or Microsoft for Microsoft Advertising, Bing and LinkedIn.

The Commission, together with the national consumer protection (CPC) authorities, will continue **closely monitoring** the evolution of online markets.