



An EU approach to online platforms

**Consumer choice, competition and growth in the
Single Market**

Oxford, June 2016

**Maria Rehbinder,
European Commission, DG GROW**

*Internal market,
Industry,
Entrepreneurship
and SMEs*

Outline

- **The general approach to platforms**
- **Platform Communication May 2016**
- **Online platforms and B2B relations**
- **What next?**

Benefits of online platforms

Major innovation opportunities for start-ups, new business models, ability to create and shape new markets

Access to broader offer for consumers

Potential for market integration

Access to new markets and opportunities for businesses

The Commission's approach

Embrace the
platform revolution...

...including by
effectively tackling
emerging issues

- Attract, retain and grow online platforms
- DSM Strategy, Single Market Strategy, Horizon 2020

- Competition law
- Problem-driven approach to regulation



Commission's approach reflected in:

Commission Communication "Online Platforms and the Digital Single Market Opportunities and Challenges for Europe" (May 2016)

Commission Communication "A European agenda for the collaborative economy" (June 2016)

Commission Communication "Digitising European Industry" (April 2016)

Platform Communication

Platforms come in various shapes and sizes
- no simple definition of 'a platform'

Online platforms are subject to a number of regulations already

Any new regulation should be targeted & problem-driven

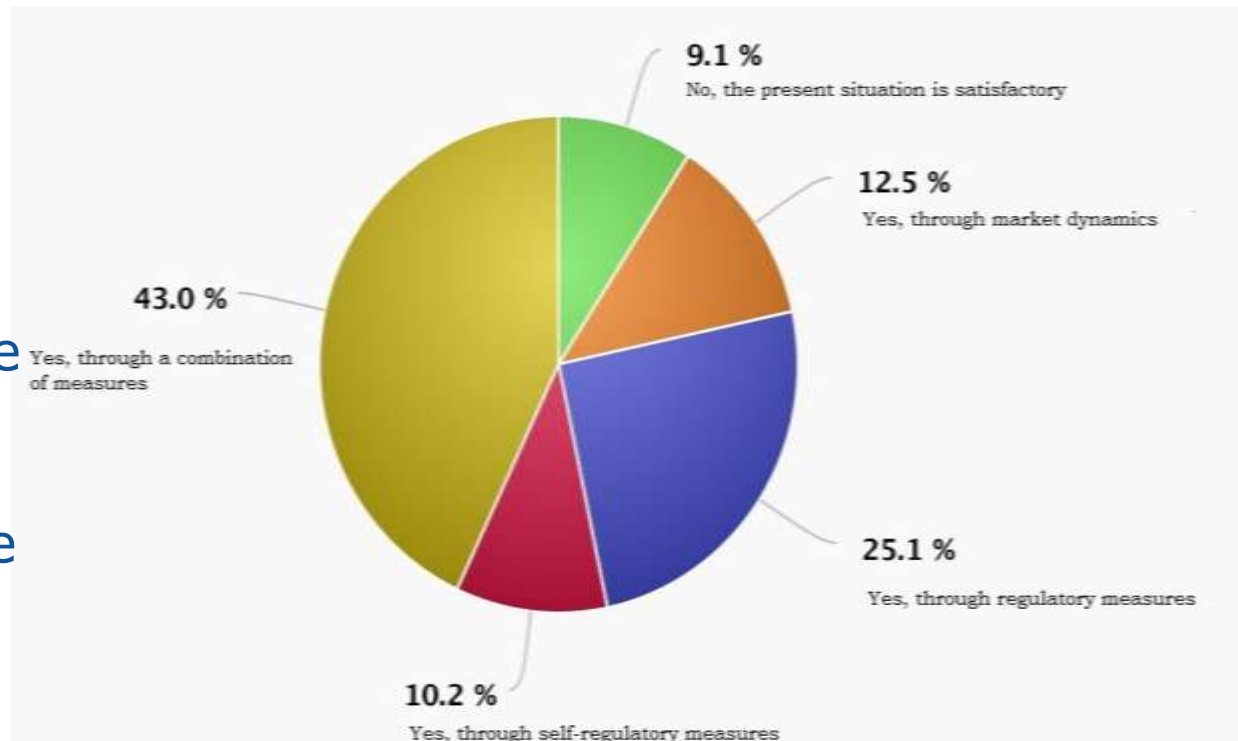
Platform Communication: Principles for platform development

- **Comparable rules for comparable digital services**
- **Obligation to behave responsibly (liability regime in e-Commerce Directive maintained)**
- **Transparency and fairness (Consumers & Businesses)**
- **Open markets for data-driven economy (free flow of data initiative later in 2016)**

Online Platforms and B2B Relations

The platform consultation

- A vast majority of respondents to B2B questions consider there is **room for improvement** in the relations
- Views diverge on the ways to improve the relations



Online Platforms and B2B Relations

Examples of potentially problematic practices (public consultation)

- 1. unfair terms and conditions (e.g. access to data);*
- 2. refusing market access or unilaterally modifying the conditions for market access;*
- 3. dual role of platforms as intermediary and competitor;*
- 4. unfair 'parity' clauses;*
- 5. lack of transparency — notably on platform tariffs, use of data and search results*

What next: key policy challenges

Diversity of platforms

- E-commerce
- App stores
- Social media
- Audio / Visual
- Price comparison

Fragmentation of
national regulation

Market dynamics

What next: Targeted fact-finding

Will **examine issues raised in the public consultation** as well as the **potential means of redress** beyond the application of competition law,

e.g. (voluntary) dispute resolution mechanisms, transparency and better information measures or guidance.

By spring 2017, the Commission will determine whether additional EU action is needed



Thank you for your attention!

Maria Rehbinder

Head of Unit, Business-to-business services