



From:

Nicolas Rieul – President of Alliance Digitale

Pierre Louette – President of APIG

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Corinne Mrejen – President of SRI

Magali Florens – CEO of UDECAM

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To: Tim Cook
CEO, Apple Inc.
One Apple Park Way
Cupertino, CA 95014

Paris, October 17, 2024

Open letter: French Publishing, Marketing and Media professionals request suspension of Apple's "Distraction Control" rollout on iOS18 and the provision of the full set of technical documentation

Dear Mr. Cook,

In May of this year, we reached out to express our concerns over reports of a potential "Web Eraser" feature within Safari. Although our letter went unanswered, the absence of any public comment or clarification from Apple gave us reason to believe that the company had abandoned the concept.

However, in early August 2024, we became aware of a new feature available in beta testing on Safari, known as "Distraction Control," which appears to have the capability of hiding any element of a webpage.

This development has revived the same concerns that prompted our initial letter, sent on behalf of the 800 companies we represent collectively across the Advertisers, Media Agencies, Publishers, Media, AdTech, and Mobile Marketing sectors.

Testing of both the beta and the publicly released iOS 18 versions has heightened the anxiety within our various industries. These tests have confirmed that the feature can at least:

- Conceal any content (text, audio, video) on all webpages including editorialized content of media outlets online, copyrighted material and protected databases hence dramatically

facilitating manipulation of information on the Internet and the loyalty of transactions without adequate information to the consumer in compliance with applicable laws in the European Union;

- Mask websites' Consent Management Platform (CMPs) and Consent Wall jeopardizing compliance with European data protection regulation and weakening publishers business models;
- Hide all forms of online advertising -whether video, native, display- and sometimes without explicit user action (i.e., automatically on a same website after previous similar choices), jeopardizing actual and reliable measurement of performance, posing an existential threat to online advertising model, which underpins a significant portion of the Internet's economy.

Our findings come at a time when Apple has provided the market with virtually almost no information about "Distraction Control", let alone any discussion or prior notice. This is all the more worrisome given that other rumors suggest that "Distraction Control" functions could be in the near future activated directly in the Safari browser settings.

Given the significant lack of information and transparency surrounding this matter, the fact that Safari has been designated as a Core Platform Service (CPS) under the Digital Markets Act (DMA), and the profound potential consequences of these developments, the associations and members we represent are actively considering all available legal recourses. These include but are not limited to, avenues related to data protection, Freedom of the Press, intellectual property rights, copyright, trademark law, and competition regulations.

Given these concerns, we urge that Apple halt the deployment of this feature pending further review. Furthermore, we request access to the complete technical documentation detailing the Distraction Control functionalities, along with any planned updates, to ensure that the feature complies with European law and respects the rights of all stakeholders, including European consumers.

Press contact

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About Alliance Digitale

Alliance Digitale is the leading professional association for digital marketing players in France. It was formed in 2022 from the merger of IAB France and the Mobile Marketing Association France.

Alliance Digitale's main mission is to structure the development of the digital marketing industry and promote innovative, responsible, and interoperable solutions by defining industry standards and best practices.

The association is also a privileged interlocutor for public authorities, the media, and other professional organizations in matters of digital regulation and the promotion of an open Internet. The association brings together the vast majority of digital marketing players in France, representing more than 250 companies (Brands, Media, Agencies, Tech).

About Alliance de la Presse d'Information Générale

Founded in 2018, the Alliance brings together 297 news publications. It is the main organization of French publishers in terms of journalist employment and print and digital circulation. The Alliance defends the interests of publishers and promotes a fair ecosystem for the press and journalism.

About Geste

GESTE is a French organization that brings together the main publishers of online content and services, comprising more than 100 members, including most French media groups. Since its establishment in 1987, GESTE has been analyzing changes in publishers' economic models, providing a better understanding of the challenges of digital transformation, and contributing to the development of favorable economic, legislative, and competitive conditions.

About SRI

The SRI (Syndicat des Régies Internet) is a French trade association regrouping 29 members, digital sales houses and sell-side adtech partners. The SRI and its members share their expertise and promote best practices for a responsible and sustainable digital advertising landscape. It also provides key information to understand the complexity of the digital advertising ecosystem, in particular through its report "l'Observatoire de l'e-pub".

About Udecam

UDECAM (Union of Media Buying and Planning agencies) is the Media Agencies Trade Body in France. L'Udecam gathers 95% of French media agencies and brings together: Anacrouse, CoSpirit Media, Dentsu (Carat, iProspect, DentsuX), Media units of Havas Group (Havas Media, Arena Media, Agence79), GroupM (EssenceMediacom, Wavemaker, Mindshare), IPG Mediabrands (Initiative, UM), Mediaplus, Oconnection, OmnicomMediaGroup (OMD, Remind-PhD, Fuse), Publicis Media (Zenith, Starcom, Spark, Blue 449, Performics & Publicis Connect), Repeat, Values.

Since 1996, this association has been a forum for dialogue and consultation with the various media and communication partners, but also amongst the Agencies' members. It promotes media and non-media expertise, defends the collective interests of its members, and acts of the media agencies' representation to deal with all market players: public authorities, professional and inter-professional bodies, media owners, advertisers, and opinion leaders.

About Union des marques

Union des marques, founded in 1916, is the French advertiser association and represents more than 250 companies and 1600 brands, from all economic sectors, all together with one ambition: Build

sustainable brands.

In copy:

- Apple France
- French Competition Authority, *Autorité de la concurrence*
- French Minister of Culture, Mrs. Rachida Dati
- French Minister of Economy, Mr. Antoine Armand
- French Minister of Digital Affairs, Mrs. Clara Chappaz
- European Commission: Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition, Teresa Ribeira Rodriguez
- European Commission: Executive Vice-President for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy, Henna Virkunnen