



C/2025/4646

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Summary of Commission Decision

of 19 March 2025

relating to a decision pursuant to Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925

(Case DMA.100203 – Article 6(7) – Apple – iOS – SP – Features for Connected Physical Devices)

(notified under document number C(2025) 3000)

(Only the English text is authentic)

(C/2025/4646)

On 19 March, 2025, the Commission adopted a decision pursuant to Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁾. In accordance with the provisions of Article 44 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, the Commission herewith publishes the names of the parties and the main content of the decision, having regard to the legitimate interest of undertakings in the protection of their business secrets.

1. INTRODUCTION

- (1) The Implementing Decision ('the Decision') concludes the specification proceedings pursuant to Article 8(2) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 ('DMA') opened on 19 September 2024. Pursuant to that Article, the Decision specifies measures that Apple Inc. (hereinafter referred to as 'Apple') must implement in relation to its operating system iOS in order to effectively comply with the obligations under Article 6(7) DMA in relation to certain iOS features, including their functionalities, for connected physical devices, within the deadlines specified in the Annex to the Decision.
- (2) This Decision pursuant to Article 8(2) DMA clarifies how an obligation – here the interoperability obligation under Article 6(7) DMA – should be implemented to ensure compliance. Under the DMA, specification proceedings and non-compliance investigations are two distinct tools at the disposal of the Commission, which have different purposes. Unlike non-compliance cases, specification proceedings define how obligations should be met rather than sanctioning breaches of the DMA. Therefore, this Decision does not assess Apple's compliance and does not provide for the imposition of fines.
- (3) This Decision follows a structured six-month process, which includes extensive technical discussions with Apple and a public consultation to gather input from relevant stakeholders. This decision clarifies Apple's obligations under Article 6(7) DMA for a specific and important set of iOS features for connected physical devices such as smartwatches, headphones and TVs. The second specification decision that was adopted in parallel under case DMA.100204 imposes on Apple more broadly measures to improve the transparency and effectiveness of the process that Apple devised for developers interested in obtaining interoperability with iOS and iPadOS features.

2. PROCEDURE

- (4) On 5 September 2023, the Commission adopted a decision designating Apple as a gatekeeper under the DMA for a number of its services, including its operating system iOS. As a result, Apple must comply with the obligations set out in the DMA. Under Article 6(7) DMA, Apple must, free of charge, provide third parties with effective interoperability with, and access for the purposes of interoperability to, hardware and software features accessed or controlled via its operating system iOS.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Digital Markets Act) (OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/1925/oj>).

- (5) On 19 September 2024, the Commission opened proceedings pursuant to Article 20(1) DMA in view of specifying the measures that Apple must put in place to effectively comply with its interoperability obligations in relation to several connectivity features, predominantly used for and by connected physical devices.
- (6) Interoperability with regard to connected physical devices is of substantial economic importance. Many interoperability requests received by Apple pursuant to Article 6(7) DMA concern connected physical devices, such as wearables (e.g. connected watches, headphones, augmented reality glasses etc.). According to publicly available forecasts, the global wearable technology market, which is only a subsegment of connected physical devices, was valued at USD 120,54 billion in 2023 and is projected to grow from USD 157,94 billion in 2024 to USD 1 415,26 billion by 2032, with an annual growth rate of 31,5 % during the forecast period between 2024 and 2032 ⁽⁷⁾. Apple estimates that most iOS devices (i.e. iPhones) do – at one point – connect to a connected physical device in the EU.
- (7) On 18 December 2024, the Commission communicated to Apple its preliminary findings in line with Articles 8(5) and 34(1) DMA ('Preliminary Findings'), providing Apple with the opportunity to comment on the findings and the proposed measures.
- (8) In parallel, on 18 December 2024, in line with Article 8(6) DMA, the Commission published a non-confidential summary of the case and the proposed measures to enable interested third parties to provide their comments on the proposed measures, including on the technical feasibility of the measures. During the public consultation, the Commission received 63 contributions from business users, end users, and other interested third parties. All submissions were shared with Apple.
- (9) On 20 January 2025, Apple provided its response to the Preliminary Findings after exercising its procedural rights pursuant to Articles 8(1), 8(2) and 8(3) of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/814 ⁽⁸⁾.
- (10) In the context of these proceedings, the Commission has actively engaged with Apple and third parties on the technicalities of the features within the scope as well as possible interoperability solutions.
- (11) The Commission, having assessed the overall body of evidence, including Apple's and third parties' input, and taking into account the engagement with Apple, takes the present Decision pursuant to Article 8(2) DMA.
- (12) In accordance with Articles 17 and 50(2) DMA, the Digital Markets Advisory Committee was consulted and issued its positive opinion on 18 March 2025.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- (13) Pursuant to Article 8(2) DMA, the Commission may, on its own initiative or at the request of a gatekeeper, issue an implementing act to specify measures that the gatekeeper should implement to effectively comply with certain obligations.
- (14) Pursuant to Article 8(5) and 8(6) DMA, before adopting such an implementing act, the Commission is required to communicate to the gatekeeper its preliminary findings within three months, and to publish a non-confidential summary of the case and the measures that it is considering taking or that it considers the gatekeeper concerned should take. The implementing act should be adopted within six months from the opening of the proceedings pursuant to Article 20 DMA.

⁽⁷⁾ See <https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/wearable-technology-market-106000>, Doc ID 21, accessed on 27 August 2024.

⁽⁸⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/814 of 14 April 2023 on detailed arrangements for the conduct of certain proceedings by the Commission pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 102, 17.4.2023, p. 6, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2023/814/oj).

- (15) Pursuant to Article 8(7) DMA, in specifying the measures that the gatekeeper concerned is to implement in order to effectively comply with its obligations, the Commission shall ensure that the measures are effective in achieving the objectives of that Regulation and the relevant obligation and that they are proportionate in the specific circumstances of the gatekeeper and the relevant service.
- (16) Article 6(7) DMA requires gatekeepers to allow effective interoperability and access for the purposes of interoperability with the same features as are available or used by the gatekeeper's services or hardware. All features controlled by, or accessed via, operating systems of gatekeepers are within the scope of the interoperability obligation. Gatekeepers may take strictly necessary and proportionate measures to ensure that interoperability does not compromise the integrity of the operating system, hardware or software features provided by the gatekeeper, provided that such measures are duly justified by the gatekeeper.
- (17) Article 6(7) DMA is an obligation that is susceptible of being further specified under Article 8(2) DMA.

4. THE COMMISSION'S ASSESSMENT

- (18) Achieving effective interoperability under Article 6(7) DMA is of paramount importance to ensure contestability of services and hardware offered to end users for which iOS acts as an important gateway. Apple's own services and hardware, including its connected physical devices, are integrated and connected with iOS. The integration creates an ecosystem that provides end users with a seamless experience across Apple devices, but also has the effect of locking end users into that ecosystem.
- (19) Access under equal conditions to iOS features allows third-party providers of connected physical devices to compete with Apple's own connected physical devices on an equal footing and to develop and to offer new innovative connected physical devices which rely on access to iOS to reach end users. Lowering barriers to entry and expansion by providing access to iOS to third-party providers of connected physical devices will increase the incentives and the ability for such third-party providers to innovate and improve their products available through and on iOS, ultimately increasing end user choice for connected physical devices.
- (20) The Decision specifies measures including the following features:

Features for interactivity

- (21) **iOS notifications:** One of the main purposes of connected physical devices such as smartwatches is to receive and interact with notifications. Currently, only on the Apple Watch, a user can receive iOS notifications that contain images, custom app icons, or other attachments; see actionable options to reply to iOS notifications; and choose the apps whose notifications should appear on the connected device. The Decision specifies that Apple will have to provide connected physical devices made by third-party manufacturers, such as smartwatches, with access to the same features and functionalities of iOS notifications as available to Apple's products, such as the Apple Watch.
- (22) **Background execution:** Third-party connected physical devices need their associated iOS apps to be able to run in the background, execute actions, and maintain a connection with the connected device in a timely manner. For example, background execution allows a smartwatch to fetch up-to-date news or weather content from the iPhone overnight, so that the updates are available to the user in the morning. Only for the Apple Watch, these processes are guaranteed to run in the background without interruption. The Decision specifies that Apple will have to grant apps that communicate with third-party connected physical devices the same background execution it grants to its own products and services.
- (23) **Automatic audio switching:** An end user's wireless headset intelligently switches to the device that currently plays the most relevant audio. For example, the headphones will switch the audio source from a computer playing music to an iPhone when a call is incoming. Only Apple headphones can exchange the relevant information with iOS to enable this intelligent audio switching. The Decision specifies that Apple will have to enable third-party headsets to exchange such information with iOS.

Features for data transfers

- (24) **High-bandwidth peer-to-peer Wi-Fi connections:** Peer-to-peer Wi-Fi connections allow high-bandwidth data transfer between two devices, without relying on local networks or a cellular connection. This is useful for instance to enable high bandwidth applications such as voice calls, gaming, XR applications, and AI services. Currently, only Apple devices can establish a peer-to-peer Wi-Fi connections with an iPhone. The Decision specifies that Apple will have to allow third-party connected physical devices to establish and use such a connection with an iPhone.
- (25) **Close-range wireless file transfers:** App developers need certain features to offer feature-rich close-range wireless file sharing solutions on iOS. This requires access to features such as the ability to discover nearby devices, the ability to transfer files via high-bandwidth protocols in the background, and the ability for received files to appear in the relevant applications (such as the photos app). On iPhone, currently only AirDrop has full access to those features. The Decision specifies that Apple will have to provide third parties with access to all features needed to offer a feature rich close-range wireless file transfer solution similar to AirDrop.
- (26) **Media casting:** App developers need certain features to offer feature-rich media casting apps on iOS. This requires access to the ability to discover compatible receivers (e.g. TVs), system access so that casting solutions installed by the user can be accessed by other media applications, and access to high-bandwidth communication protocols to cast the media. On iPhone, currently only AirPlay has full access to those features. The Decision specifies that Apple will have to provide third parties with access to all features needed to offer a feature-rich media casting service similar to AirPlay.
- (27) **NFC Controller in Reader/Writer mode:** NFC in Reader/Writer mode is used to scan and exchange data with devices that are very near, including accessories, such as wearables, or physical smart cards. Currently, Apple does not allow third parties to use NFC to transfer payment credentials (e.g. to enable contactless payments on wearables, such as rings or bracelets) or read physical payment cards (e.g. to activate or secure mobile banking). The Decision specifies that Apple will have to lift this restriction.

Features for device set-up and configuration

- (28) **Proximity-triggered pairing:** Only Apple's connected physical devices such as the Apple Watch and Apple AirPods can 'magically' pair with an iPhone through a user-friendly process that automatically starts when an unpaired connected device is brought close to an iPhone. Pairing with third-party connected physical devices requires to first download a companion app and is not automatically started when bringing the device close to an iPhone. The Decision specifies that Apple will have to allow third-party connected physical devices to make use of a pairing process that is as user-friendly and seamless as the one for Apple's devices.
- (29) **Automatic Wi-Fi connection:** Connected physical devices need access to the Wi-Fi networks (including passwords) saved on the iPhone, so that the connected device can automatically connect to the corresponding Wi-Fi networks without the user having to manually add each of them on each connected physical device. Currently, only Apple devices obtain the Wi-Fi networks saved on the iPhone. The Decision specifies that Apple will have to provide third-party connected physical devices access to these Wi-Fi networks, subject to the same user controls and permissions that Apple applies with respect to its own connected physical devices.

Measures for all features

- (30) To ensure the effectiveness in practice, the Decision also specifies a number of general measures for all the features listed above. For example, Apple will have to enable interoperability for any type of connected device, free of charge via complete, accurate and well-documented frameworks and APIs. The interoperability solutions for third parties will have to be equally effective to those available to Apple and must not require more cumbersome system settings or additional user friction. Apple will have to make available to third parties any new functionalities of the listed features once they become available to Apple. Finally, Apple will have to provide third parties with the required technical assistance and report how it implemented the measures.
- (31) The measures are further specified in the Annex to the Decision.

5. CONCLUSION

- (32) The Decision specifies measures pursuant to Article 8(2) DMA that Apple must implement in relation to its operating system iOS in order to effectively comply with the obligations under Article 6(7) DMA in relation to certain iOS features for connected physical devices, within the deadlines specified in the Annex to the Decision.
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