Executive Memo: Protecting Digital Openness in the EU

Date: August 2025
To: EU Policymakers, Regulators, and MEPs
Subject: Risks of Restricting App Deployment to Verified Developers Only

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Issue

Google plans to restrict app deployment exclusively to *registered and verified developers*. While framed as a **security measure**, this move risks **market concentration**, **erosion of user rights**, and further **dependence on non-European gatekeepers**.

Why It Matters for the EU

- **Conflict with the Digital Markets Act (DMA)**
  - Limits interoperability and stifles alternative app stores.

  - Potential breach of **Articles 6–7 DMA** obligations for gatekeepers.
- **Threat to Digital Sovereignty**
  - Shifts control of Europe's app ecosystem further into a single non-EU corporation.

  - Undermines the EU's Digital Decade goal of strategic autonomy.
- **Weakening User Rights**
  - Reduces freedom to install lawful apps, similar to undermining the **Right to Repair** extended to the digital realm.

  - Narrows digital freedom of expression and access to innovation.
- **Security Concerns Are Overstated**
  - Central gatekeeping **weakens resilience** by concentrating risk.

  - Open-source and community-led platforms (e.g., **F-Droid**) provide **auditable transparency** and decentralized security review.

Impacts

- **Developers/SMEs** → Higher barriers, exclusion of small actors.

- **Competition** → Reinforced monopolies, fewer European alternatives.

- **Users** → Loss of choice and autonomy, dependence on one provider.

- **EU Policy** → Contradicts DMA, Digital Strategy, NIS2, and sovereignty objectives.

Recommended Policy Actions

1. **Enforce the DMA**: Prevent restrictions on sideloading and alternative app ecosystems.

2. **Guarantee User Sovereignty**: Extend "Right to Repair" concepts to digital environments.

3. **Promote EU-Led Verification Standards**: Develop decentralized, transparent signing frameworks.

4. **Support Open-Source Platforms**: Recognize independent app stores as **strategic digital infrastructure** for Europe.

Conclusion

This restriction is not about improving security—it is about tightening control. For Europe, it undermines **competition, innovation, and autonomy**. The EU must respond decisively by **enforcing the DMA** and protecting **open digital ecosystems** as a matter of public interest and sovereignty.