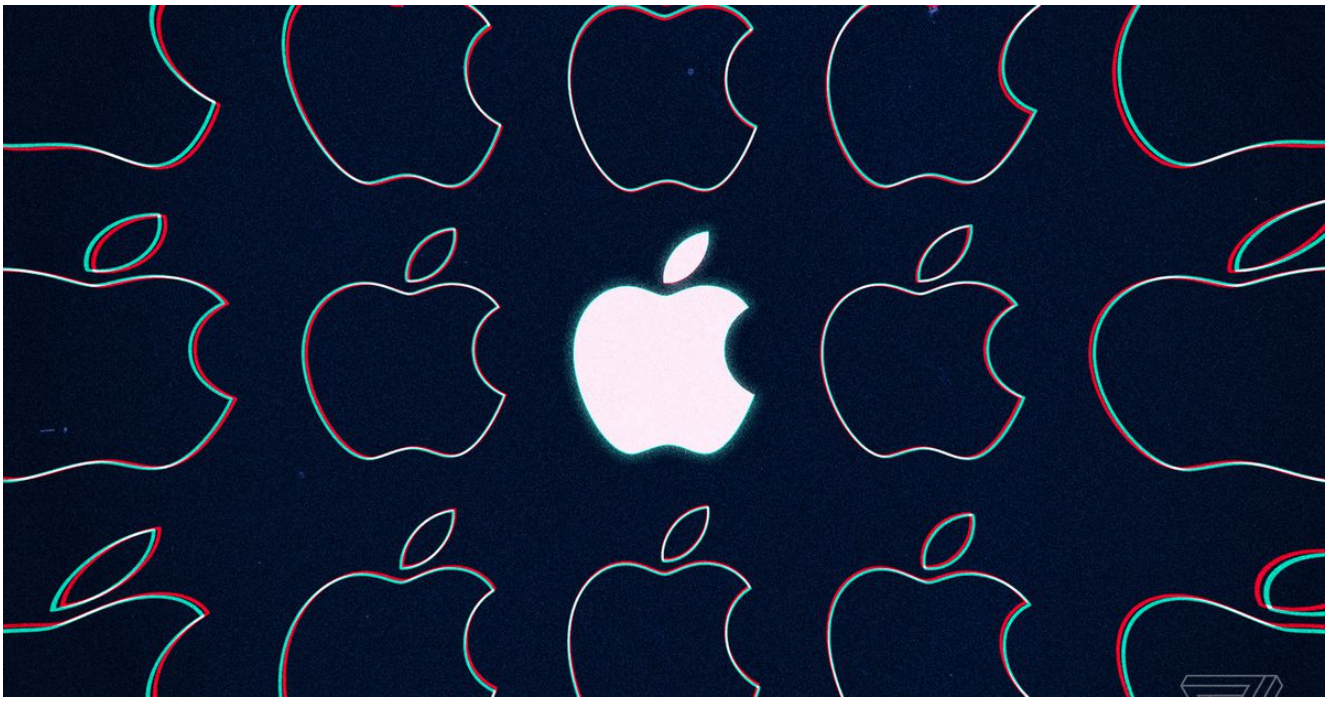
Apple must let dating apps offer alternate in-app payment options, says Dutch regulator



Apple must allow dating app developers to offer non-Apple payment systems for in-app purchases or face a hefty fine, according to a detailed ruling released today from the Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM). The regulator has been investigating the company's App Store practices since 2019, but *Reuters* reports that it decided to focus on dating apps after receiving a complaint from Match Group, owners of dating services like Tinder, Match.com, and OkCupid.

This decision doesn't apply to other app categories, like games or productivity apps, in the country.

"Some app providers are dependent on Apple's App Store, and Apple takes advantage of that dependency," writes Martijn Snoep, chairman of the board of ACM. "Apple has special

responsibilities because of its dominant position. That is why Apple needs to take seriously the interests of app providers too, and set reasonable conditions."

In addition to allowing dating app developers to offer alternate payment systems, the Dutch regulator says they should also be allowed to point users to payment options outside the app. If the company fails to do so by January 15th, it faces a 5 million Euro-per-week fine, up to a maximum of 50 million Euros.

The ACM says Apple takes advantage of its dominant position
Currently, app developers have to use Apple's in-app purchase system, which lets the company take a 15- to 30 percent cut from any purchases customers make within an app.

In a statement to *The Verge*, Apple spokesperson Marni Goldberg said the company "disagree[s] with the order issued by the ACM and [has] filed an appeal." She went on to say Apple "does not have a dominant position in the market for software distribution in the Netherlands, has invested tremendous resources helping developers of dating apps reach customers and thrive on the App Store, and has the right under EU and Dutch law to charge developers of these apps a fee for all the services and technologies Apple provides them."

Still, governments around the world are scrutinizing Apple's App Store rules. In September, the company announced an agreement with a Japanese regulator to let "reader apps," like Netflix and Kindle, point users toward external sign-up pages where customers can provide credit card info, bypassing Apple's system. South Korea passed a law in August that looks to let developers use payment systems other than the ones provided by platform owners and is reportedly deciding what Apple and Google will have to do to comply.

The US was also planning on making Apple open up to third-party payment systems as a result of its legal battle with

Epic Games, but an appeals court stayed that decision just before it was set to take effect, which could take months to resolve.

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