Conversational agents: the Autorité starts inquiries ex officio with a view to issuing an opinion

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Following on from Opinion 24-A-05 of 28 June 2024, which analysed the competitive functioning of the generative artificial intelligence (AI) sector, in particular the upstream segment of the value chain where generative AI models are designed and trained, and its study on the competition issues surrounding the energy and environmental impact of AI, the *Autorité de la concurrence* is now starting inquiries *ex officio* into the competitive functioning of the conversational agent sector, located downstream in the value chain. While the downstream segment of the value chain currently appears dynamic with the presence of several operators, recent developments suggest that conversational agents could have an impact on the competitive functioning of several key sectors of the economy.

With a more than 60% increase in the number of users in 2024, the use of conversational agents is growing rapidly in France. The sector is concentrated around the services of several key operators – ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google), Le Chat (Mistral AI), Perplexity and Copilot (Microsoft) – and recent developments raise questions about its competitive structuring, operators' business models and the opportunities for other sectors.

Accordingly, the *Autorité* intends to focus on the new issues emerging in particular from the use of conversational agents in the e-commerce sector, also called "agentic commerce". However, the relationship between conversational agents and search engines will not be part of the sector-specific inquiry.

As part of its inquiries, the *Autorité* will soon launch a public consultation and will issue its opinion in 2026.

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