

EC Opens Google Investigations

Written by Marco Attard
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The European Commission (EC) accuses Google of monopolistic practices as it opens antitrust investigations into two of the search giant's businesses-- online shopping comparisons and the Android operating system.



This makes the biggest EU case against a technology since the 10-year battle against Microsoft, which ended in 2004. In that case Microsoft was ordered to pay over \$1.7 billion in fines, the biggest since a \$1.4bn ruling against Intel.

Should Google lose the case it will face fines reaching up to 10% of its yearly earnings or as much as \$6n.

"In the case of Google I am concerned that the company has given an unfair advantage to its own comparison shopping service, in breach of EU antitrust rules," EU competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager says. "Google now has the opportunity to convince the Commission to the contrary. However, if the investigation confirmed our concerns, Google would have to face the legal consequences and change the way it does business in Europe."

Investigations into Google's online shopping comparison services kicked off back in 2010. According to the EC the company might abuse of its position as search giant by diverting traffic to own services (rather than the competition) should users search for such comparisons.

"Google should treat its own comparison shopping service and those of rivals in the same way," the EC's Statement of Objections states.

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In its turn Google responds its shopping service does not harm the likes of Amazon or eBay, who remain the biggest shopping sites around.

As for the second Google object of EU ire, the EC will separately investigate whether Google forces vendors to bundle its services (rather than rival apps) with their devices, as well as if it hinders mobile device makers from developing "potentially competing" Android versions or forks.

"Smartphones, tablets and similar devices play an increasing role in many people's daily lives and I want to make sure the markets in this area can flourish without anticompetitive constraints imposed by any company," Vestager says.

Google replies to such accusations by saying anti-fragmentation agreements ensure all apps work across all Android devices, while the number of pre-installed Google services is less than that of Apple apps on iDevices.

The EC will also investigate other areas of the Google behavior within EU countries, including favourable treatment by Google within the general search results of other specialised search services, concerns of copying rivals' web content (or "scraping"), advertising exclusivity and undue restrictions on advertisers.

Go [EC Sends Statement of Objections to Google on Comparison Shopping Service](#)

Go [EC Opens Formal Investigation Against Google in Relation to Android](#)

Go [The Search for Harm](#)

Go [Android Has Helped More Choice and Innovation on Mobile Than Ever Before](#)