

Google moves closer to resolving EU investigation

Foo Yun Chee, Reuters

(Reuters) - Google has offered to take specific steps to allay competition regulators' concerns about its business practices, in a major move towards ending a two-year investigation and avoiding billions of dollars in fines.

The European Commission said on Friday it had received detailed proposals from the world's most popular search engine, which has been under investigation following complaints from more than a dozen companies, including Microsoft, that [Google](#) [1] has used its market power to block rivals.

If the commission accepts the proposals under its settlement procedure, it would mean no fine and no finding of wrongdoing against Google.

Companies found to be in breach of EU rules can be fined as much as 10 percent of global turnover, which could mean up to \$4 billion if there is no satisfactory resolution in Google's case.

EU Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia told Reuters he had received Google's submission, but declined to give details of the proposal.

"We are analyzing it," he said.

Google spokesman Al Verney said the group continues to work cooperatively with the commission.

The company ranks first in Internet searching in Europe, with an 82 percent market share, versus 67 percent in the United States, according to research firm comScore.

Lobbying group ICOMP, whose members include complainants Microsoft, Foundem, Hot-map, Streetmap and Nextag, said any solution should include measures ensuring that rivals could compete on a level playing field with Google.

The FairSearch coalition, whose members include online travel agencies and complainants Expedia and TripAdvisor, said a third-party monitor should be appointed to ensure that Google lives up to any promises.

The commission, which acts as competition regulator in the 27-member European Union, is now expected to seek feedback from Google's rivals and other interested parties, before launching an official market test.

Last month, Google won a major victory when U.S. antitrust regulators ended their investigation, saying the company had not manipulated its web search results to

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Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

block rivals.

The commission has said Google may have favored its own search services over those of rivals, and copied travel and restaurant reviews from competing sites without permission.

The EU executive is also concerned the company may have put restrictions on advertisers and advertising to prevent them from moving their online campaigns to competing search engines.

(Reporting by Foo Yun Chee; Editing by Rex Merrifield and Hans-Juergen Peters)

Source URL (retrieved on 12/18/2014 - 9:13pm):

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