

Microsoft encourages antitrust scrutiny of Google

February 28 2010, By John Letzing

Microsoft Corp. on Friday made its case publicly for increased antitrust scrutiny of rival Google Inc., while deflecting criticism that one of its European properties helped spur a local investigation of the Internet search giant.

"Microsoft would obviously be among the first to say that leading firms should not be punished for their success," the company said in a posting on a corporate Web site. However, it added, "We are concerned about [Google](#) business practices that tend to lock in publishers and advertisers and make it harder for Microsoft to gain search volume."

Google announced earlier this week that the European Commission is looking into complaints that it's hindering competition. One of the companies complaining to the regulator is Ciao GmbH, a unit of Greenfield Online Inc., which Microsoft acquired in 2008.

The European Commission inquiry is only the latest dose of [antitrust scrutiny](#) for Google, which dominates Internet search markets in the U.S. and in many European countries.

The U.S. Justice Department has voiced concerns about a proposed legal agreement between Google and book publishers and authors. And the Justice Department also helped scuttle Google's attempt to partner with rival Yahoo Inc. in a search and advertising partnership in 2008.

Google pointedly noted in its announcement disclosing the investigation

this week that Ciao is a Microsoft property, and that another company complaining to the European Commission about its competitive behavior, Foundem, is a member of an organization partly funded by Microsoft.

"Google is telling reporters that antitrust concerns about search are not real because some of the complaints come from one of its last remaining search competitors," Microsoft said in its statement Friday. "Ultimately what's important is not who is complaining, but whether or not the challenged practices are anticompetitive," Microsoft said.

Microsoft noted that Novell Inc. under then-Chief Executive [Eric Schmidt](#) -- now CEO at Google -- "was never hesitant about complaining to regulators about Microsoft."

"Google hasn't been shy about raising antitrust concerns about Microsoft in the last few years, either," Microsoft said.

Microsoft has invested heavily in an attempt to take [Internet search](#) and search advertising market share from Google. The company released a new search engine, called Bing, in May.

More recently, the Justice Department cleared a partnership between Microsoft and Yahoo that will have [Microsoft](#) taking over the back end of Yahoo's search service in a revenue-sharing arrangement, in an attempt to better compete with Google.

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