

EU seeks comment on Google's latest anti-trust remedies (Update)

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The European Commission said on Monday it is seeking comment on revised remedies by US Internet giant Google to complaints it has abused its dominant position in the search market.

Google, under anti-trust investigation since 2010, submitted new

proposals in September which EU Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia said earlier this month showed "significant improvements".

Almunia spokesman Antoine Colombani said the Commission was now "seeking feedback from complainants and other relevant market participants on the improved commitments."

"Information is sought, in particular, from complainants in the ongoing proceedings and from all those who responded to the initial market test of Google's proposals which the Commission launched in April," Colombani said in an emailed statement.

Almunia has said that if Google's remedies are judged satisfactory, the 2010 probe could be concluded formally "next spring."

If there were objections, the anti-trust investigation would continue.

The Commission, the EU's executive arm, has four main grievances against Google.

These are that it gives unfair preference in search results to its own services, copies content without permission, ties up publishers with exclusivity deals, and discourages clients from using other advertising platforms.

Google has offered remedies on all points, such as making search results show rival websites more prominently, but initial reaction was cautious and critical.

The FairSearch alliance of companies which have pushed Brussels to act against Google said it saw very little new in its revised remedies.

"It seems that no genuinely significant changes have been made to the

initial proposal so it is difficult to see how the new package can hope to solve the competition concerns Almunia has declared must be addressed," FairSearch spokesman Thomas Vinje said.

Vinje noted that the Commission had marked its information requests as 'Confidential' and this "limits our ability publicly to describe the new proposal and to express our concerns about it."

Google for its part said it had made "significant changes to address (EU) concerns, greatly increasing the visibility of rival services and addressing other specific issues.

"Unfortunately, our competitors seem less interested in resolving things than in entangling us in a never-ending dispute," it added.

Brussels launched its investigation of Google in November 2010 following a complaint by several companies, including Microsoft. If found at fault in such a probe, and a company does not reach a settlement, it risks a fine equal to up to 10 percent of annual sales.

Google holds about 70 percent of the search engine traffic in the United States and 90 percent in Europe. In January, US authorities absolved Google of non-competitive practices in a similar case.

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