

EU aims to complete Google antitrust deal this year

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A person prepares to search the internet using the Google search engine, on May 14, 2014, in Lille, France

The European Commission said on Tuesday it still aims to wrap up an amicable anti-trust settlement with Google this year despite fresh complaints against the US Internet giant.

"In the next few days we will send letters of rejection to the 19 complainants (against Google) and I think that after the summer we should be able to complete this investigation," EU Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia said.

Google and the Commission in February agreed a deal over accusations the world's largest search engine was squeezing out competitors in Europe's search market, so avoiding [legal action](#) and potentially billions in fines.

Almunia said at the time that the accord addressed competition concerns in the Commission, the European Union's executive arm, which had sparked an investigation into Google dating back to 2010.

On Tuesday, Almunia repeated that position, although with the caveat that the Commission would still have to wait for the response from the 19 original complainants to having their cases rejected.

He also made clear that the decision would not be influenced by fresh complaints raised in recent days, one by Germany's Deutsche Telekom and another by the Open Internet Project, which groups some 400 European companies.

"You cannot take up all complaints in one investigation," Almunia said, noting that the 2010 probe the Commission had considered a broad range of issues regarding Google and the Internet search market.

A key feature of the February agreement is that Google would give equal prominence to rival services displayed on its pages, a major concern for competitors who argue the company has abused its 90 percent share of the European [search market](#).

Almunia also said he had replied to a letter from the French and German

economy ministers, Arnaud Montebourg and Sigmar Gabriel, which called for Google to "improve" its offer.

"I agree with them that Google has many important activities which must be closely looked at," he said, but added that his remit only extended to competition policy.

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