

Google faces EU competition case over image search

April 27 2016



The European Commission received a complaint from US photo agency Getty Images, accusing Google Inc.'s web search of hurting its business

US photo agency Getty Images filed a complaint Wednesday with the European Commission accusing Google Inc.'s web search of hurting its business, opening a new front in the Internet giant's anti-competition fight with Brussels.

Brussels, which is already investigating Google over [alleged anti-competitive practices linked to its free Android mobile operating system](#) and its web [search](#) business, said it would look into the unfair competition complaint from Getty Images.

"The commission has received a complaint, which it will assess," a European Commission spokeswoman told AFP.

In the latest case, Getty Images accused Google of changing its search functions in 2013 to show galleries of copyrighted photos in high-resolution, large format. Until then, a Google search would only turn up low-resolution thumbnails of the pictures.

Once people had seen the high resolution, large format Getty photo on Google, they no longer had a reason to visit Getty's own site to view the image, said a statement by the photo agency, which has been a distribution partner of AFP since 2003.

"These changes have allowed Google to reinforce its role as the Internet's dominant [search engine](#), maintaining monopoly over site traffic, engagement data and advertising spend," Getty Images general counsel Yoko Miyashita said in the statement.

' Promoted piracy'

"This has also promoted piracy, resulting in widespread copyright infringement, turning users into accidental pirates."



The European Commission is investigating Google over alleged anti-competitive practices linked to its free Android mobile operating system and its web search business

Getty said it had approached Google three years ago with its concerns.

"Google's proposed solution was no solution at all: accept its presentation of images in high-res format or opt out of image search. This would mean allowing the harm to continue, or becoming invisible on the Internet," it said.

Google Europe said it would not comment immediately on the case.

The European Union last week opened an anti-trust case against the US tech giant, saying it had abused its dominance of Android, the free operating software that runs 80 percent of the world's smartphones, by

giving unfair prominence to its own apps, especially its search engine.

It was the second attack by the EU against Google after European Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager last year formally charged the company with abusing its dominance of the search engine market in Europe.

The Silicon Valley titan's legal troubles may now be growing on the other side of the Atlantic, too.

Surging profits

The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday that the United States is looking into whether Android is giving an unfair advantage to Google offerings such as its search engine.

Federal Trade Commission staffers have met with companies in recent months about concerns that Alphabet-owned Google is abusing the dominant position of Android, according to the Journal.

Concerns at issue are similar to some targeted by European Union regulators, and the FTC is even interested in learning about evidence being used to back the case in Brussels, it reported.

Citing people familiar with the matter, the newspaper said the FTC's move extends a probe that began last year. Google and the FTC declined to comment on the report.

Google has sought to play down its anti-trust battle with the European Commission and stressed in a recent blog post that people who buy Android-powered devices can change applications such as "search" that are pre-loaded on devices.

Alphabet last week reported a 20-percent surge in net profit to \$4.2 billion (3.7 billion euros) in the first quarter of this year.

© 2016 AFP

Citation: Google faces EU competition case over image search (2016, April 27) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-04-google-eu-competition-case-image.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.