

EU hails Google's proposals in antitrust probe

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"The (executive European) Commission considers Google's proposals as a good basis for further talks and has now reached a good level of understanding with Google," said a spokesman for Joaquin Almunia, the commissioner responsible for competition.

"There will soon be discussions at technical level," the spokesman said. "We hope this process will lead to remedies addressing our concerns."

The statement came a day before Almunia was to hold a press conference in Brussels.

A Google spokesman in Brussels, Al Verney, said: "We continue to work cooperatively with the European Commission."

Google made its proposals in early July following a demand by EU [antitrust officials](#) in May to quickly respond to commission concerns.

At the time, the FairSearch coalition, which includes Microsoft and several airfare comparison websites, said it hoped the letter signals a change by Google.

"We hope the proposals reflect a greater willingness to end Google's anti-competitive behaviour than has its consistent rejection of the concerns that Mr. Almunia identified after collecting evidence for nearly two years," said Thomas Vinje, EU counsel to the FairSearch coalition.

The [European Commission](#) launched its [antitrust investigation](#) in November 2010, looking into allegations that Google had abused a dominant market position following complaints from rivals.

Almunia said in May that the probe had identified areas of significant concern in Brussels.

They were: "preferential treatment" in the hierarchical presentation of search results; doubts over Google's full respect of copyrights; and "restrictions" written into advertising contracts and the "portability" of advertising across different Internet platforms.

Microsoft-owned [Internet portal](#) Ciao was an early [complainant](#) and more than a dozen plaintiffs are now attached to the case.

If satisfied with Google's response, the Commission could close this investigation.

Otherwise it could possibly push forward the case to the next stage with a formal statement of objections.

Fines eventually imposed under this type of probe could reach up to 10 percent of a company's sales -- meaning record EU penalties.

Even if this case is closed it would not end all of Google's troubles with EU competition authorities.

It is also facing complaints from travel websites such as Expedia and concerns about [Google](#)'s Android mobile phone and tablet operating system.

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