

EU ends ebook probe after pledges from publishers

13 December 2012



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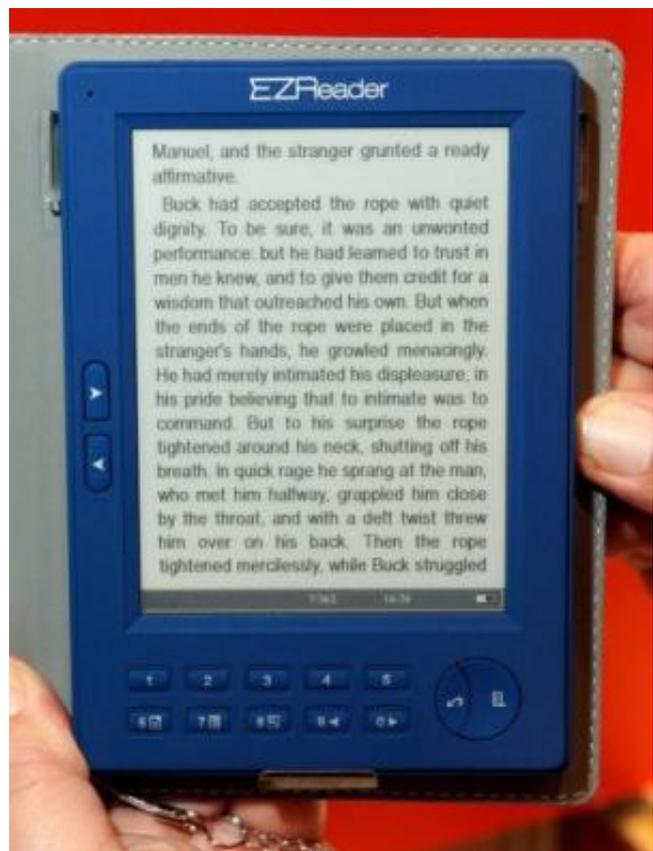
The European Commission said Thursday major ebook publishers and Apple have provided sufficient commitments for it to end a probe into price fixing in the booming electronic publishing business.

The Commission said commitments by [Apple](#), Simon & Schuster and Harper Collins of the United States, plus Hachette of France and Verlagsgruppe Georg von Holtzbrinck from Germany, had been made legally binding. That would "restore normal competitive conditions" in the market, it added.

It said it had been concerned that the companies "may have contrived to limit retail price competition for e-books". But they had now agree to terminate or amend agreements over the next five years to remedy that issue, said the Commission.

The companies would also offer retailers freedom to discount e-books during a two-year period.

"While each separate publisher and each retailer of e-books are free to choose the type of business relationship they prefer, any form of collusion to restrict or eliminate competition is simply unacceptable," EU Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia said in a statement.



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"The commitments proposed ... will restore normal competitive conditions in this new and fast-moving market, to the benefit of the buyers and readers of

e-books," Almunia said.

The Commission recalled that when it launched the probe in December last year, Penguin, owned by Britain's Pearson group, had been included.

While Thursday's decision did not cover Penguin, it said it was in talks with the publisher on the possible commitments it could make which "would allow an early closure of proceedings."

The United States has taken similar action. In August, it announced it had reached a \$69 million accord with US publishers after charging them with conspiring with Apple to hike e-book prices.

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