

EU Antitrust Laws Defeats Google

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There have been a lot of concerns lately about the power of tech companies regarding the business and social practices they engage in and the impact they have on stifling competition. Many governments world wide have opened or are considering opening investigations on big companies and potentially invoking their antitrust laws to scale down the power and influence these companies have on the industry. One such case that recently had its verdict is the European Union (EU) antitrust case against Google over its practices over the mobile operating system Android and enforcing its search engine on them.

For some context, the EU's investigation was to answer 3 main concerns: whether Google impeded access and development of competitors, whether Google blocked attempts of competitors to install different services, and whether Google unlawfully impeded competition by forcing installations in order for other services to work. What the investigation found was that Google required phone manufacturers to pre-install its own services, prevented phone manufacturers from selling devices running competing versions of Android (an open source operating system), and gave financial incentives to only pre install its own services.

The EU's decision regarding these findings was to fine Google a record breaking 4.3 billion euros in July, 2018. Google tried to appeal the decision, however, the decision was upheld with a slightly modified fine of 4.125 billion euros in september 2022. This decision can have other potential impact such as setting a precedent regarding other ongoing investigations against Amazon, Apple, and Google. It has also forced Google to offer users the choice to pick their own default search engine (The New York Times, 2022).

This case relates back to what we have been studying in class. It shows that progress can be subjective depending on who you ask. From Google's point of view the dominance of its search engine has promoted and fostered the growth of many other smaller businesses which is great progress. However, if you were to ask Google's competitors or the small businesses that were not promoted or favored by Google have suffered setbacks or gone out of business which is the opposite of progress. This also shows how technologies can have politics thanks to those who use or enforce them. Google's search engine can boost some information, promotion's, and movements while suppressing others all based on what Google finds more valuable or profitable.

References

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