# Google faces €12 billion price comparison lawsuits across EU following record antitrust fine



Alphabet Inc.’s Google is currently facing an extraordinary wave of litigation in the European Union, with damage claims totalling at least €12 billion ($13.3 billion) stemming from multiple price comparison websites. These lawsuits allege that Google has unlawfully siphoned off customers from its rivals, a situation that has arisen from a complicated interplay of antitrust regulations and the digital marketplace.

The surge of civil suits can be traced back to a pivotal decision by the European Commission in 2017, which culminated in a record €2.4 billion fine against Google for abusing its search dominance to favour its own shopping service. Following this ruling, the avenue opened for "follow-on" lawsuits, where companies could seek damages based on the established breach of antitrust laws without needing to prove the underlying violations in court. This means that plaintiffs are now able to move forward without the burden of demonstrating Google's wrongdoing, potentially accelerating the timeline for these cases.

Bloomberg has identified at least twelve active civil cases across seven EU countries, many linked to various comparison shopping sites like Kelkoo and Foundem, claiming staggering sums due to the alleged monopolistic tactics employed by Google. The stakes are high; as legal expert Christian Kersting notes, claims in these suits often dwarf the penalties imposed by regulators, underscoring the financial gravity of the situation for both the plaintiffs and Google.

As these legal battles advance, they represent a significant new front in Google’s ongoing regulatory challenges in Europe. The sheer scale of these lawsuits, if successful, could further embolden other businesses to take action against tech giants. Moreover, these developments occur concurrently with ongoing antitrust scrutiny from the US Justice Department, which is pushing for Google to divest parts of its advertising and search businesses amid a backdrop of mounting legal woes.

Many of the pending cases are approaching crucial court dates, with claims at risk of reaching tens of billions. For instance, in June, the High Court in London will deliberate on a £1 billion ($1.6 billion) claim from Kelkoo and Foundem, while a Dutch court is set to hear arguments in September related to a significant lawsuit from the Compare Group. The legal landscape is tumultuous, with companies like Idealo raising their claims from €500 million to €3.3 billion, alleging that Google's market manipulation has continued unabated, effectively disadvantaging their businesses.

Despite the legal cannonade, Google remains defiant, rejecting allegations of misconduct. A spokesperson for the company maintains that its display advertisement system for comparison shopping has yielded positive results for numerous comparison sites. They contend that over 1,550 such sites are now active users of Google's services, up significantly from just a handful in 2017. “We strongly disagree with these lawsuits,” the spokesperson stated. Critics, however, argue that Google’s adjustments have not fully alleviated the structural inequities faced by its competitors.

Adding further complexity to the situation, the European Union has been tightening its grip on Big Tech through regulations such as the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which aims to create a more level playing field. Reports indicate Google is also under investigation for potential breaches of these new regulations, following claims that it continues to favour its own vertical search products over those of its rivals. The stakes are enormous: violations of the DMA could result in fines as high as 10% of Google's global revenue, a significant threat to its financial health.

Although the European Commission's previous rulings provide plaintiffs with a robust foundation for their claims, the path to success in these civil cases is fraught with challenges. Legally, plaintiffs must demonstrate a clear causal link between Google's actions and the decline in their profits, which may prove difficult given the myriad external factors influencing the market.

As these cases unfold, they could redefine the relationship between large tech companies and smaller competitors, shaping the future of e-commerce in Europe. Legal experts suggest that, should plaintiffs win, enforcing any resulting judgments may necessitate recourse through US courts, raising the potential for diplomatic rifts, especially considering the heightened scrutiny of Silicon Valley by US regulators and politicians alike.

As Google navigates this intricate legal landscape, the outcomes of these cases could set sizeable precedents for both the tech industry and regulatory practices in Europe, signalling a shift towards stricter controls on monopolistic behaviours that have, until now, largely gone unchecked.

### Reference Map

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/international/2025/05/13/823462.htm> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/google-proposes-fresh-tweaks-search-results-europe-2024-11-26/> - In November 2024, Google proposed changes to its European search results to address concerns from smaller rivals about decreased traffic due to previous modifications. These proposals aimed to balance the demands of various sectors, including price-comparison sites, hotels, airlines, and small retailers, which reported a 30% drop in direct booking clicks. The changes included new formats for rival price comparison sites and supplier websites, expanded choices for users, and new ad units for comparison sites. Google also planned to test removing maps and recently introduced features in Germany, Belgium, and Estonia to measure user interest. These steps were intended to align with the Digital Markets Act's goals while addressing consumer and business needs. Violating the DMA can result in significant fines, up to 10% of a company's global annual revenue.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/google-faces-eu-charges-breaching-dma-rules-sources-say-2025-02-21/> - In February 2025, Google faced charges from the European Commission for breaching EU rules under the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which aims to limit the power of Big Tech. The Commission's investigation centered on allegations that Google favored its own vertical search engines, such as Google Shopping, Google Flights, and Google Hotels, over competitors, and discriminated against third-party services in its search results. Google's proposed changes to search result formats had not addressed the regulator's and rivals' concerns. The impending charges were part of the EU's efforts to regulate Big Tech, despite tensions with U.S. President Donald Trump, who opposed such regulations. The charges arrived amid broader investigations into Apple and Meta Platforms. The DMA prohibits Google from prioritizing its products on its platform and imposes fines of up to 10% of its global annual revenue for violations.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/a8a2b1d3278e72dfe2e4b0d3592bf5bb> - In January 2024, a legal adviser to the European Union's top court suggested that Google should face a €2.4 billion ($2.6 billion) fine for breaching antitrust regulations by giving its shopping service an unfair advantage in search results. This recommendation followed the European Commission's 2017 ruling against Google, which the U.S. company appealed after a lower court upheld the decision. The advocate general's opinion is not legally binding but is often followed by the court's judges, who were expected to make a final decision within months. Google stated it would review the opinion and continues to comply with the Commission's requirements by treating competitors equally through auctions for shopping search listings. The decision added to a challenging week for Google, marked by significant layoffs in its hardware and engineering divisions.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cjw3e1pn741o> - In September 2024, Europe's top court ruled that Google must pay a €2.4 billion (£2 billion) fine for abusing the market dominance of its shopping comparison service. The tech giant had appealed against the fine, which was originally levied by the European Commission in 2017. At the time, it was the largest penalty the Commission had ever imposed, though it has since been surpassed by a €4.3 billion fine, also against Google. Google said it was 'disappointed' with the ruling. It brought an end to a long-running case that was first brought by British firm Foundem in 2009, when the UK was still part of the EU. Another of the complainants, shopping comparison site Kelkoo, called the ruling 'a win for fair competition and consumer choice' in a post on X.
6. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/09/10/google-loses-24-bn-eu-antitrust-case-for-favouring-its-own-shopping-service> - In September 2024, the EU’s highest court upheld a record-breaking €2.4 billion fine imposed on Google for anti-competitive promotion of its Shopping service. The court dismissed Google's appeal, confirming that the company had abused its market dominance by favoring its own comparison shopping service over competitors. This ruling was significant for European consumers, as it ensured access to unbiased online information about the best deals. The court's decision also reinforced the relevance of EU competition law in digital markets, emphasizing the need for strict application of competition law to Big Tech's online exploitation of consumer behavior.