# Google faces €12 billion legal claims heightening EU antitrust crackdown



Google is currently embroiled in a significant legal battle, with claims reaching a staggering €12 billion from various European price comparison sites. This comes on the heels of a European court upholding a 2017 antitrust ruling against the tech giant, which had already imposed a €2.4 billion fine for favouring its shopping service over competitors in search results. As antitrust scrutiny intensifies, these developments could reshape the competitive landscape of digital markets in Europe.

The origins of the current claims trace back to the 2017 ruling by the European Commission, which deemed Google's practices as an abuse of its dominant market position. Following this ruling, seven countries, including Germany and the UK, have seen lawsuits emerge, such as the recent €2.97 billion claim from Italy's Moltiply Group. This lawsuit specifically alleges that Google stifled the growth of its subsidiary, 7Pixel, by prioritising its own service, Google Shopping, over rival platforms like Trovaprezzi.it. Moltiply claims that this preference restricted competition and limited consumer choice in Italy.

Google has adamantly maintained its innocence, asserting that it has made substantial changes in compliance with regulatory guidance since the initial ruling, thus boosting the number of shopping sites in Europe from just seven to over 1,550. The company contends that the recent lawsuits are primarily driven by the financial motives of the claimants rather than genuine competitive grievances. This defence reflects a broader strategy by Google to frame its position not merely as a leader in the market but as a beneficial force for digital competition.

The evolving landscape of antitrust regulation is not isolated to Google. Margrethe Vestager, the EU's antitrust chief, has been pivotal in challenging the market dominance of major tech firms. Her actions have not only resulted in significant penalties for Google but also for Apple, which recently faced a €13 billion tax ruling in a separate case involving unlawful state aid from Ireland. These instances highlight an ongoing trend where both European and American authorities are intensifying their scrutiny of Big Tech. The European Union has introduced initiatives like the Digital Markets Act, aiming to curb anti-competitive practices and foster fairness in digital markets.

This growth in regulatory enforcement underscores the potential for lasting changes in the operational strategies of tech giants. As the EU continues to apply pressure through legal avenues, investors should remain vigilant given that outcomes from these litigations may affect market sentiment and, consequently, stock values. Significant settlements or further penalties could reshape how these companies operate not only in Europe but across the global digital economy.

Moreover, as Google navigates these turbulent waters, additional legal challenges loom. The company is currently facing scrutiny over its advertising practices, with a formal antitrust complaint alleging that it has manipulated its dominance to favour its advertising technology. The persistent nature of these legal challenges signals an evolving regulatory environment that demands adaptability from tech companies.

In summary, as Google confronts these substantial claims, the broader implications extend beyond individual lawsuits. The robust response from European regulators illustrates a commitment to fostering competition in technology markets, setting precedents that may influence how other jurisdictions approach regulation in the digital age. The ongoing antitrust battles signify an essential movement towards accountability, where the actions of tech giants are being closely monitored and scrutinised, reflecting a global shift in how market dominance is interpreted and enforced.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6
2. Paragraph 2
3. Paragraph 1, 6
4. Paragraph 5
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 1, 4
7. Paragraph 5

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## Bibliography

1. <https://finimize.com/content/google-hit-with-massive-claims-from-eu-price-sites> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/boards-policy-regulation/italys-moltiply-sues-google-3-billion-euro-lawsuit-over-market-dominance-2025-05-09/> - Italy's Moltiply Group has filed a €2.97 billion lawsuit against Google, alleging abuse of market dominance. The lawsuit focuses on the period between 2010 and 2017, claiming that Google's practices hindered the growth of its subsidiary, 7Pixel, which operates the Italian price comparison platform Trovaprezzi.it. Moltiply argues that Google unfairly favored its own product, Google Shopping, over rival comparison services. This legal action follows a 2017 ruling by the European Commission that fined Google €2.42 billion for anti-competitive behavior, a decision upheld in a final appeal last September. At the time of the report, Google's Italian spokesperson declined to comment on the matter.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/a8a2b1d3278e72dfe2e4b0d3592bf5bb> - A legal adviser to the European Union's top court has 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 follows 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 are expected to make a final decision within months. Google stated it will review the opinion and continues to comply with the Commission's requirements by treating competitors equally through auctions for shopping search listings. The decision adds to a challenging week for Google, marked by significant layoffs in its hardware and engineering divisions.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/apple-loses-fight-against-13-billion-euro-eu-tax-order-ireland-2024-09-10/> - Margrethe Vestager, the EU antitrust chief, achieved significant victories as the European court upheld her actions against Apple's tax deal with Ireland and Google's anti-competitive practices. Vestager, known for targeting Big Tech's tax strategies and market behavior, successfully defended the European Commission's 2016 decision requiring Apple to repay €13 billion in back taxes. The court agreed that Apple's preferential tax treatment in Ireland was unlawful state aid. Additionally, Google's appeal against a substantial fine for promoting its own comparison shopping service over smaller rivals was also rejected by the court. These rulings reinforce EU efforts to ensure tax equity and market fairness, setting precedents for future regulatory actions against major technology firms. Both judgments are final, and further appeals are not allowed. This could inspire Vestager's successor to continue rigorous scrutiny of large tech companies.
5. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/09/13/the-eu-s-and-the-us-fight-against-the-digital-giants-is-a-long-march_6725850_23.html> - The document outlines ongoing antitrust actions against tech giants Google and Apple by US and European authorities. Google is facing a US trial over its online ad management tools and was recently fined by the European Court for favoring its Google Shopping service. Apple has been ordered to repay €13 billion to Dublin for undue tax advantages. These actions reflect a broader crackdown on digital monopolies, influenced by past policies and high-profile cases like the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Despite some progress, the battle is prolonged with continued resistance from tech companies. The EU's Digital Markets Act aims to curb anti-competitive practices faster, though challenges persist. Future regulations might also target AI and cloud services to enhance competitiveness and sovereignty.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/eu-court-upholds-googles-27-bln-eu-antitrust-fine-2024-09-10/> - On September 10, 2024, Google lost its appeal against a €2.42 billion ($2.7 billion) fine imposed by EU antitrust regulators in 2017. The fine was for using Google's price comparison shopping service to unfairly advantage itself over smaller competitors in Europe. A lower court supported the EU's decision in 2021, leading Google to appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The CJEU judges confirmed the fine, emphasizing that EU law prohibits the abusive exploitation of a dominant market position. In the past decade, Google has accrued €8.25 billion in EU antitrust fines and is contesting other rulings related to its Android operating system and AdSense service. Google also faces new charges that could compel it to divest part of its adtech business.
7. <https://www.axios.com/2023/06/14/google-antitrust-charges-european-union> - The European Union has issued a formal antitrust complaint against Google, alleging the company abused its market dominance to favor its own advertising technology. This move, two years after the initial investigation, increases the likelihood that Google may be required to divest parts of its ad business. EU lawmakers indicated they found evidence of illegal anticompetitive behavior. Margrethe Vestager, the EU's competition regulator, expressed preliminary concerns about Google's potential misuse of its market position. In response, Dan Taylor, Google's vice president of Global Ads, defended the company, highlighting the importance of their advertising technology for funding content and helping businesses reach customers. With advertising constituting 80% of Alphabet's $280 billion annual revenue, divesting parts of its ad tech could significantly impact the company. The EU has previously fined Alphabet billions of dollars over antitrust issues.