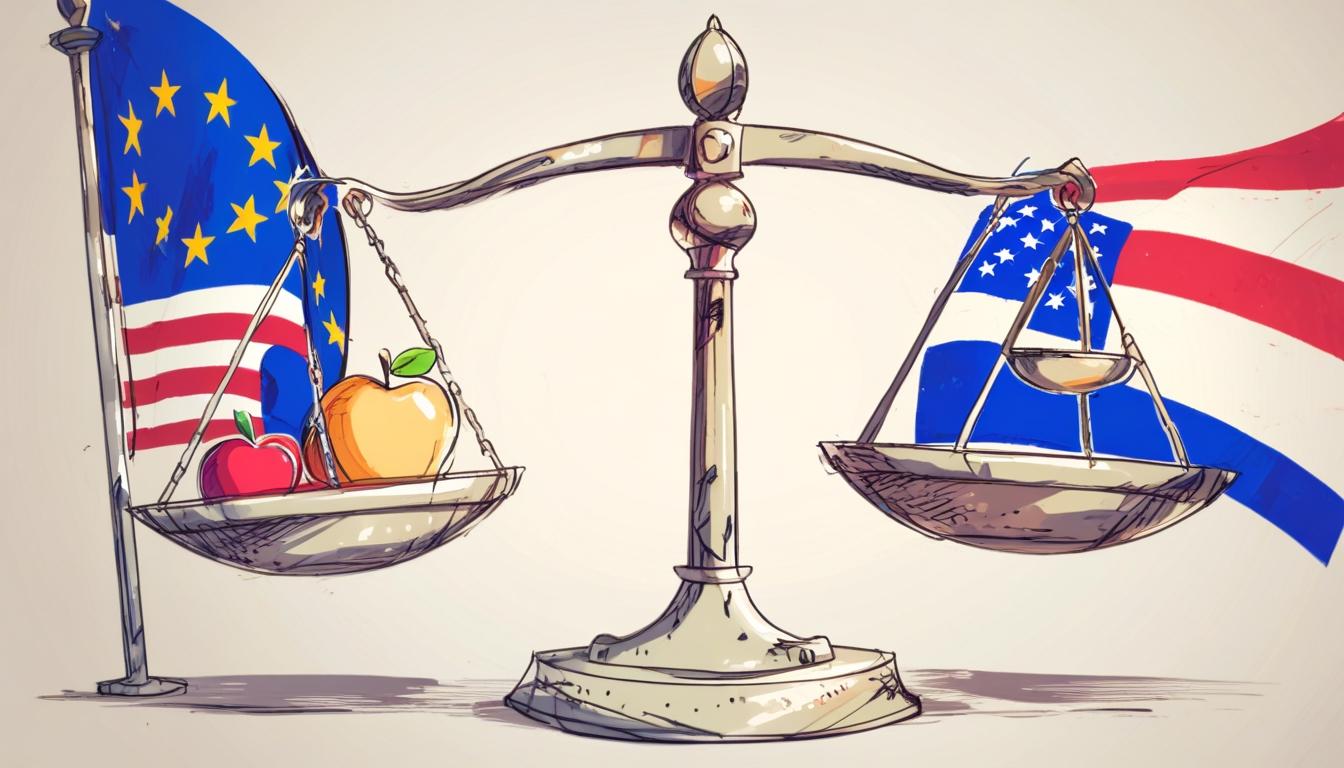
# European Commission fines Meta and Apple nearly €700 million under Digital Markets Act amid US-EU tech tensions



The European Commission has imposed fines totalling nearly €700 million on Meta and Apple as part of enforcement under the bloc’s Digital Markets Act, marking a significant escalation in regulatory action against major tech companies. Meta was fined €200 million, while Apple received a €500 million penalty. Alongside the financial sanctions, the Commission issued orders requiring both companies to alter their business practices within 60 days, with the threat of daily fines up to 5% of their global revenue for non-compliance.

The crackdown targets Meta’s advertising business model and Apple’s App Store policies. Specifically, Meta must cease requiring users to either pay subscription fees or surrender their personal data, while Apple is being compelled to permit app developers to provide links to alternative purchasing options beyond the App Store. These measures are part of the European Union’s wider strategy to reduce the power of “gatekeeper” platforms and foster a more competitive digital market environment, particularly aiming to support smaller competitors.

However, this regulatory action comes against a backdrop of escalating geopolitical tensions between the EU and the United States. Meta and Apple, both Silicon Valley giants with valuations running into the trillions, publicly criticised the Commission’s decision. Joel Kaplan, Meta’s global affairs chief, described the fines as “a multibillion-dollar tariff disguised as a regulation” in comments made to The Drum. Apple also voiced concerns, warning that the rulings would harm users and force the company to “give away our technology for free.”

Reports indicate that Meta has actively lobbied the Trump administration to respond firmly to the EU’s enforcement measures. Earlier this year, former President Donald Trump signed an executive order titled “Defending American Companies and Innovators From Overseas Extortion and Unfair Fines and Penalties.” This move explicitly accused the European Union of utilising regulations as non-tariff trade barriers and threatened retaliatory tariffs not only against the EU but also the UK if their digital legislation was not amended accordingly.

The involvement of the Trump administration reflects deeper frustrations within American technology firms, which have long contended that European regulations are motivated more by market rivalry than fairness. Mark Zuckerberg’s recent alignment with Trump, including scrapping certain diversity initiatives and engaging with figures such as UFC’s Dana White, suggests a strategic pivot to exert greater political influence in Washington regarding these disputes.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, though no longer part of the EU, finds itself entangled in this emerging tech trade conflict. Washington has also expressed discontent with the UK’s Online Safety Act and Digital Markets Bill, viewing them as damaging to American technology companies. A leaked White House memo outlined that the UK could face its own tariff threats if it did not reconsider these laws. British government officials have been vocal about the perceived interference by a foreign government in the country's domestic policymaking. Interestingly, some UK commentators have acknowledged that such pressure from Washington might mitigate the effects of what they consider overly restrictive digital regulations, which critics say may hamper innovation and reinforce the dominance of established market leaders.

The European Commission maintains that its actions are apolitical, with a spokesperson stating that the enforcement decisions were made independently of trade negotiations and “when they were ready.” Nonetheless, scepticism remains, particularly given the timing of the announcement and the absence of a press conference or key commissioners to address the media, fuelling speculation that Brussels is carefully balancing its regulatory enforcement against potential diplomatic fallout.

As it stands, Apple and Meta have indicated plans to appeal the fines and orders. The Trump administration is also preparing to implement new tariffs in response to the EU’s regulatory measures. Caught in the middle, the UK faces a challenging choice between upholding its regulatory framework or yielding to US pressure to maintain cordial trade relations.

This unfolding scenario highlights an emerging phase in international trade relations where digital regulation functions as a strategic tool. The contest over how data flows are governed and who controls the architecture of the internet’s future underlines the increasingly political nature of technology regulation on the global stage.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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