

Brussels vs. Google, Again

What the EU's first Digital Markets Act fine actually changes — and why it's about more than €890 million



*Source: European Commission,
Digital Markets Act decision of 23 July 2026*

Two fines, one law

€460M

Search —
self-preferencing

€430M

Google Play —
anti-steering

€890M

Total —
first DMA fine

Announced 23 July 2026. Google's fifth and sixth EU antitrust fines overall, taking cumulative penalties to roughly €10.4 billion since 2017.

Beyond the fine, Google must bring both practices into compliance within 60 days — or face penalties of up to 5% of its daily worldwide turnover on top of it.

What the Commission found

Search results

Google Shopping / Flights / Hotels

Rival price-comparison site

Google's own shopping, hotel, transport and sports results got the enhanced, top-of-page format; rivals got a plain link lower down.

Under the DMA, gatekeepers must treat competing services fairly and let developers point users to better deals outside their store.

What the Commission found

Google Play



App developers were restricted from telling users about cheaper prices or payment options available outside the Play Store.

Users were less likely to learn about cheaper offers outside Google Play because developers could not freely communicate them

Under the DMA, gatekeepers must treat competing services fairly and let developers point users to better deals outside their store.

Why it matters beyond the fine

- It's the first fine under the EU's Digital Markets Act — a newer rulebook built to act faster than traditional antitrust cases, which can take years (the EU's last big Google search case took many years to conclude).
- How the Commission reads these rules here will likely apply the same way to Apple, Meta, Amazon, ByteDance and Booking, also designated as “gatekeepers” under the DMA.

Why it matters beyond the fine

- On search, the question is whether Google's dominance in general search can spill into markets — like shopping comparison, hotels and flights — where it also competes with other companies.
- On Google Play, the question is whether blocking cheaper alternatives let Google avoid competitive pressure on the fees it charges app developers.

Two views

Google's position

- Says complying forces the removal of real-time search features users like, such as instant pricing for hotels and flights
- Frames the outcome as product degradation, and says European consumers and businesses bear the cost

The Commission's rationale

- Says Google gave its own services more prominent placement than rivals in equivalent slots
- Says the remedy aims to restore fair competition in search and app distribution

Presented here without endorsing either position — both are summarized from public statements.

What's next

The 60-day compliance deadline (around 21 September 2026), a possible Google appeal, and how other designated gatekeepers respond under the same rules.

Source: European Commission, Digital Markets Act decision (23 July 2026); Bloomberg, Reuters, Politico Europe and Euronews (23 July 2026).

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