

Google lost an appeal over \$2.8 billion EU fine as Big Tech antitrust waves rise

Article

The news: Google lost an appeal with the EU General Court to overturn a **\$2.8 billion** antitrust fine first issued in 2017 for promoting its own shopping service in search results over

those of competitors, per Insider.

- The fine is just one that the online search giant has faced from EU regulators in the last several years—including a **\$5 billion** fine in 2018 for anti-competitive bundling of Google apps on Android devices and a **\$1.7 billion** fine in 2019 over display ad practices.

The bigger picture: Google's streak of heavy EU penalties is part of a wave of Big Tech antitrust rulings and regulations sweeping across the continent that has begun spilling over into the US.

- The major fines Google has faced in recent years have created a precedent, warning Big Tech companies against promoting their own products in widely used searches.
- In the US, **Amazon** has faced recent regulator scrutiny for similar practices involving **promoting its own products** in searches above those of competitors. A report from **The Markup** found that knowing whether a product is owned or sponsored by Amazon could predict whether it will top search results **seven out of 10 times**.
- An additional report from Reuters along with public criticism from regulators prompted Amazon to launch a **tool** that it said will help third-party merchants see what users are searching for on the platform.

More regulations loom: Google's and Amazon's woes may not end at fines and olive-branch tools for smaller players, as two major antitrust bills regulating digital markets are being floated around the EU and US.

- In the EU, Big Tech faces the possible disruption from the **Digital Markets Act**, which if passed would restrict or ban self-promotion by major digital gatekeepers and disallow the sharing of user data between services owned by the same company, among other practices.
- In the US, a bipartisan bill called the **American Innovation and Choice Online Act** accuses Big Tech of “unfairly limiting consumer choices and thwarting free-market competition,” per co-author **Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA)**.
- If passed, that bill would prohibit platforms from “biasing search results” in favor of themselves or dominant players, require a business to pay for preferential treatment in searches, and more.

Looking forward: Both the power of and scrutiny toward Big Tech were accelerated by the pandemic and growing bipartisan distrust. Regulators pursuing antitrust matters now find

themselves facing the challenge of breaking apart firms whose services are deeply baked into the way the internet works.

- Though Big Tech companies have swatted away antitrust concerns over acquisitions in previous years, they have now reached a critical mass of market influence that voters and regulators can't ignore.
- Public perception also looks to be shifting in favor of regulation. A September survey commissioned by the **Progressive Policy Institute** found that **57%** of people in the US see large tech companies as monopolies with too little competition, and **72%** said they are worried about smaller companies' ability to compete with larger counterparts.