

# Amazon fined heavily for violating GDPR by using unconsented data for ad targeting

## Article

**The news:** Amazon has been **fined €746 million** (\$850.6 million) for violating the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (**GDPR**) rules on using personal data to target ads, according to a

disclosure statement from an Amazon **SEC filing**.

- The fine was levied by Luxembourg's National Commission for Data Protection (**CNPD**). In addition to a fine, the ruling would **force Amazon to change some practices around processing personal data**.
- Amazon, however, says it will “defend [itself] vigorously,” and **intends to appeal the decision**, according to the filing.

**How we got here:** The ruling stems from a 2018 **class-action complaint** by a French advocacy group called La Quadrature du Net (**LQDN**), which **alleged** that Amazon doesn't have consent under GDPR to use shopping data for ad targeting.

- Importantly, **LQDN's complaint against Amazon centers around “the system of targeted advertising itself,”** rather than “occasional security breaches” or other instances where customer data is exposed to third parties, per a **blog post** by the group.
- Amazon is not the only company targeted by LQDN: The group also filed **complaints** against **Apple, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft**.
- Google is the only other company so far to be **fined** as a result of these complaints, with a **€50 million** (\$57.0 million) sanction in 2019. That's the second-largest fine levied for GDPR violations, behind Amazon's.

**More on this:** It's also not the first time that Amazon's ecommerce data practices have come under scrutiny in the EU.

- In November 2020, the European Commission **announced** two antitrust investigations into Amazon: one into the platform's use of “**nonpublic data**” on **third-party seller activity** on its platform, and another into **practices surrounding Amazon's “Buy Box”** on its website, which spotlights potentially attractive deals for buyers.

### What's next?

- The CNPD's decision bodes poorly for other Big Tech players and, by extension, for **European advertisers that benefit from their ad targeting practices**. It remains to be seen whether any EU agencies will take similar action against Apple, Facebook, and Microsoft as a result of LQDN's complaints—but it took three years for the Amazon ruling, so they're not out of the woods just yet.

- Meanwhile, antitrust cases against Amazon are also brewing in other countries, like the **US** and **Australia**. Still, **privacy protections in those countries are far weaker** than in the EU, so it's unlikely that similar complaints to the LQDN's would hold water.