

Google Target Of Microsoft-Led Antitrust Complaint

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BRUSSELS (AP) — A group of companies led by Microsoft have called on European authorities to launch an antitrust investigation into Google and its hold over mobile internet usage on smartphones.

The "FairSearch" initiative of 17 companies — which includes Microsoft, Nokia, and Oracle — claims Google is acting unfairly by giving away its Android operating system to mobile device companies on the condition that the U.S. online giant's own software applications like YouTube and Google Maps are installed and prominently displayed.

"Google is using its Android mobile operating system as a Trojan horse to deceive partners, monopolize the mobile marketplace, and control consumer data," said Thomas Vinje, the group's Brussels-based lawyer.

Android operating systems have the largest share of the smartphone market worldwide, followed by Apple's iOS platform with systems from Blackberry, Microsoft and others far behind.

"Google's predatory distribution of Android at below-cost makes it difficult for other providers of operating systems to recoup investments in competing with Google's dominant mobile platform," FairSearch said in a statement.

The European Commission, the 27-nation bloc's executive arm and antitrust authority, is not obliged to take any action other than reply to the group's complaint.

Google Inc. did not address the complaint's charges in detail. "We continue to work cooperatively with the European Commission," said Google spokesman Al Verney.

The U.S. company is already under [investigation](#) [1] by Brussels for practices related to its dominance of online search and advertising markets.

That complaint, launched in 2010, alleges Google unfairly favors its own services in its Internet search results, which enjoy a near-monopoly in Europe. Google has proposed a list of remedies to address the Commission's concerns to achieve a settlement. The Commission is currently examining the proposed changes.

In China, Google has already come under official scrutiny because of Android's dominance of the mobile smartphone market there.

Several European data privacy regulators have also launched an investigation into

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Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

Google's practices, alleging the company is creating a data goldmine at the expense of unwitting users.

Last year, the company merged 60 separate privacy policies from around the world into one universal procedure. The European authorities complain that the new policy doesn't allow users to figure out which information is kept, how it is combined by Google services or how long the company retains it.

The policy allows Google to combine data collected from one person as they use Google's services, from Gmail to YouTube, giving it a powerful tool for targeting users with advertising based on their interests and search history. Advertising is the main way the company makes its money.

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