

Dominance, data, disinformation: Europe's fight with Big Tech

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Tech giants have been targeted by the EU for a number of allegedly unfair practices.

Irish regulators on Friday handed out a 345-million-euro (\$369-million) [fine to TikTok](#) over data breaches, part of a battle between the European

Union and big tech firms on issues from tax avoidance and hate speech to data privacy and monopolistic practices.

Here is a summary of the tussles between the tech giants and Brussels.

Privacy

Ireland issues the most stringent fines on this front as Dublin hosts the European offices of several big tech firms and data privacy is enforced by local regulators.

Friday's massive fine against TikTok for mishandling children's data came just four months after Ireland hit Meta with a record penalty of 1.2 billion euros for illegally transferring personal data between Europe and the United States.

Luxembourg had previously held the record for data fines after it slapped Amazon with a 746-million-euro penalty in 2021.

Stifling competition

Brussels has doled out over eight billion euros in fines to Google alone for abusing its dominant market position.

In 2018, the company was fined 4.3 billion euros—the EU's biggest ever antitrust penalty even after it was reduced to 4.1 billion euros—for using its Android mobile operating system to promote its search engine.

The firm has also incurred billion-plus fines for abusing its power in the online shopping and advertising sectors.

The European Commission, the EU's executive, recommended in June

that Google should sell parts of its business and could face a fine of up to 10 percent of its global revenue if it fails to comply.

Apple has also been in the EU's sights, with Brussels investigating its dominance among music streaming apps.

Taxation

The EU has had little success in getting tech companies to pay more taxes in Europe, where they are accused of funneling profits into low-tax economies like Ireland and Luxembourg.

In one of the most notorious cases, the European Commission in 2016 ordered Apple to pay 13 billion euros in back taxes in Ireland after ruling a sweetheart tax deal with the government was illegal.

But EU judges overturned the decision saying there was no evidence the company had broken the rules, a decision the commission has been trying to reverse ever since.

The commission also lost a case involving Amazon, which it had ordered to repay 250 million euros in back taxes to Luxembourg.

Disinformation, hate speech

Web platforms have long faced accusations of failing to combat hate speech, disinformation and piracy.

The EU's Digital Services Act is designed to force companies to tackle these issues or face fines of up to six percent of their global turnover.

The law came into force in August for 19 major platforms, including

TikTok, Facebook and YouTube, before its wider rollout next year.

Paying for news

Google and other online platforms have also been accused of making billions from news without sharing the revenue with those who gather it.

To tackle this, the EU created a form of copyright called "neighboring rights" that allows print media to demand compensation for using their content.

France has been a test case for the rules and after initial resistance Google and Facebook both agreed to pay some French media for articles shown in web searches.

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