

Apple's iMessage, Microsoft's Bing escape EU rules

February 13 2024



The European Commission decided not to hit Apple's iMessage with stricter rules.

Apple's iMessage and Microsoft's Bing search engine got a reprieve from tougher EU rules curbing how tech titans do business, the

European Commission said on Tuesday.

From next month, the world's biggest digital firms, identified as "gatekeepers" by the EU, must comply with strict do's and don'ts under a landmark law.

The commission announced in September that 22 "core" services provided by the designated gatekeepers—Google's Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, TikTok parent ByteDance, Facebook owner Meta and Microsoft—met the thresholds for mandatory compliance.

The European Commission at the same time launched probes to consider whether Apple's messaging service iMessage, Microsoft's Bing, and Microsoft's browser Edge and advertising service should also be included.

"Yesterday (Monday), the Commission has adopted decisions closing four market investigations... finding that Apple and Microsoft should not be designated as gatekeepers" for the four services, the EU's executive arm said in a statement.

The commission in September also said it would investigate Apple's iPad system. That probe is to be completed within 12 months from the announcement.

Apple and Microsoft hailed this week's decision.

"We thank the Commission for agreeing with us that iMessage should not be designated under the DMA (Digital Markets Act)," an Apple spokesperson said in a statement.

"Consumers today have access to a wide variety of messaging apps, and often use many at once, which reflects how easy it is to switch between

them."

A Microsoft spokesperson said, "We welcome the Commission's decision to exempt Bing, Edge, and Microsoft Advertising, which operate as challengers in the market.

"We will continue to engage with the Commission and industry at large to ensure Microsoft's other designated platforms comply fully with the DMA."

The DMA seeks to encourage competition in the digital world. For example, the law demands interoperability between apps, meaning users should in theory be able to message each other from different platforms.

The EU has built a powerful legal arsenal to take on the internet giants, including the DMA and its sister milestone law, the Digital Services Act (DSA).

The DSA demands the most popular social networks and websites police content online more aggressively and protect consumers while they shop.

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Citation: Apple's iMessage, Microsoft's Bing escape EU rules (2024, February 13) retrieved 14 July 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2024-02-apple-imessage-microsoft-bing-eu.html>

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