



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

***CASE DMA. 100231 – Alphabet – Google
Search – Site reputation abuse policy***

(Only the English text is authentic)

**Digital Markets Act
Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament
and of the Council**

Article 20(1) Regulation (EU) 2022/1925

Date: 12/11/2025

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Public version

Alphabet Inc.
251 Little Falls Drive,
Wilmington, DE, 19808
United States of America

**Subject: Case 100231 – Alphabet – Google Search – Site reputation abuse policy
Commission decision opening a proceeding pursuant to Article 20(1) of
Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 ⁽¹⁾ of the European Parliament and of the
Council on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector
Only the English text is authentic**

Dear Sir or Madam,

- (1) On 5 September 2023, the Commission adopted a decision designating Alphabet Inc. together with all legal entities directly or indirectly controlled by Alphabet Inc. (hereinafter referred to as “Alphabet”) as a gatekeeper pursuant to Article 3 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 (the “Designation Decision”).⁽²⁾ The Designation Decision lists the following core platform services (“CPSs”) that are provided by Alphabet and which individually constitute an important gateway for business users to reach end users: (i) its online intermediation service (“OIS”) Google Shopping; (ii) its OIS Google Play; (iii) its OIS Google Maps; (iv) Alphabet’s online search engine (“OSE”) Google Search; (v) its video-sharing platform service YouTube; (vi) its operating system Google Android; (vii) its web browser Google Chrome; (viii) its online advertising services.
- (2) Pursuant to Article 20(1) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, where the Commission intends to open proceedings with a view to the possible adoption of decisions

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Digital Markets Act) (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p. 1–66.

⁽²⁾ Decision C(2023) 6101 final.

pursuant to Articles 8, 29 and 30 of that Regulation, it shall adopt a decision opening proceedings.

- (3) Pursuant to Article 29 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, the Commission shall adopt an implementing act setting out its finding of non-compliance where it finds that a gatekeeper does not comply with, *inter alia*, any of the obligations laid down in Article 5, 6 or 7 of that Regulation. In such an implementing act, the Commission may also impose a fine pursuant to Article 30 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925.
- (4) Pursuant to Article 3(10) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, within six months after a CPS has been listed in its designation decision, the gatekeeper shall comply with the obligations laid down in Articles 5, 6 and 7 of that Regulation. Consequently, within six months from the Designation Decision, Alphabet shall comply, *inter alia*, with the obligations laid down in Article 6(5) and Article 6(12) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 in relation to its OSE CPS Google Search.
- (5) According to Article 6(12) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, gatekeepers shall apply fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory general conditions of access for business users to their OSEs and publish general conditions of access, including an alternative dispute settlement mechanism.
- (6) Recital 62 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 further explains that “*pricing or other general access conditions should be considered unfair if they lead to an imbalance of rights and obligations imposed on business users or confer an advantage on the gatekeeper which is disproportionate to the service provided by the gatekeeper to business users or lead to a disadvantage for business users in providing the same or similar services as the gatekeeper*”. As regards the alternative dispute settlement mechanism required under Article 6(12) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, recital 62 adds that it should be “*easily accessible, impartial, independent and free of charge for the business user*” and “*without prejudice to the right of business users to seek redress before judicial authorities.*”
- (7) According to Article 6(5) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 gatekeepers are required to apply transparent, fair and non-discriminatory conditions to their ranking.
- (8) According to Article 13(4) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, the gatekeeper shall not engage in any behaviour that undermines effective compliance with the obligations of Articles 5, 6, and 7 regardless of whether that behaviour is of a contractual, commercial or technical nature, or of any other nature, or consists in the use of behavioural techniques or interface design.
- (9) According to Article 13(6) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, the gatekeeper shall not degrade the conditions or quality of any of the core platform services provided to business users or end users who avail themselves of the rights or choices laid down in Articles 5, 6, and 7, or make the exercise of those rights or choices unduly difficult, including by offering choices to the end user in a non-neutral manner, or by subverting end users’ or business users’ autonomy, decision-making, or free choice via the structure, design, function or manner of operation of a user interface or a part thereof.

- (10) On 7 March 2024, Alphabet submitted to the Commission its first annual compliance report pursuant to Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 (the “2024 Compliance Report”).⁽³⁾
- (11) In the 2024 Compliance Report, Alphabet stated that as of 6 March 2024, it had ensured compliance of its CPS Google Search with the obligations laid down in Article 6(12)⁽⁴⁾ and Article 6(5)⁽⁵⁾ of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925.
- (12) As regards Article 6(12) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, the report explained that “*Google Search already complied with Art. 6(12) prior to the DMA because access to Google Search is free and open for business users.*” There were no general access conditions to present since “*Google Search does not require websites to enter into any terms or conditions of access to be part of its search index. Nor does it have any contractual terms (written or unwritten) that govern the provision of services by Google Search to the websites that are in Google’s index. Rather, Google Search renders a service to end users and as part of that service unilaterally includes websites in its index to generate search results that it shows to end users.*”⁽⁶⁾
- (13) As regards Article 6(5) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, the 2024 Compliance Report stated that “*Google Search applied fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory criteria to its search results prior to the DMA’s adoption.*”⁽⁷⁾ It also contained a short explanation on the functioning of the ranking algorithm⁽⁸⁾ and stated that “*Google Search ranks different result types and result blocks based on the same, consistent, non-discriminatory ranking framework.*”⁽⁹⁾
- (14) On 7 March 2025, Alphabet submitted to the Commission its second annual compliance report pursuant to Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 (the “2025 Compliance Report”).⁽¹⁰⁾
- (15) In the 2025 Compliance Report, Alphabet maintained that it ensured compliance of its CPS Google Search with the obligations laid down in Article 6(12)⁽¹¹⁾ and Article 6(5)⁽¹²⁾ of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925.

⁽³⁾ Not publicly available anymore.

⁽⁴⁾ 2024 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraphs 42-43.

⁽⁵⁾ 2024 Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraphs 9-28.

⁽⁶⁾ 2024 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraph 160.

⁽⁷⁾ 2024 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraph 26.

⁽⁸⁾ 2024 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraphs 52-55.

⁽⁹⁾ 2024 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraph 52.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Publicly available here: https://storage.googleapis.com/transparencyreport/report-downloads/pdf-report-bb_2024-3-7_2025-3-6_en_v1.pdf.

⁽¹¹⁾ 2025 Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraphs 42-48.

⁽¹²⁾ 2025 Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraphs 9-28.

- (16) As regards Article 6(12) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, the 2025 Compliance Report reiterated that compliance was ensured since before 6 March 2024. The report nevertheless added a reference to the general conditions of access for business users of Google Search on Google Search Central (“Google Search’s DMA general conditions of access”) that Alphabet had published on 1 November 2024. “Google Search’s DMA general conditions of access” refer to policies against spam as one of the reasons for which Google Search may temporarily or permanently remove websites from its index and search results. One of those spam policies is the site reputation abuse policy (“SRAP”).
- (17) The 2025 Compliance Report stated that Google Search’s DMA general conditions of access were “*fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory because they ensure the Google Search index is open to and free of charge to all websites, and the conditions of access apply equally and non-discriminately to all users with websites in the EEA.*”⁽¹³⁾ “
- (18) The 2025 Compliance Report also explained that Alphabet was “*in the process of incorporating into the EEA general conditions of access an EU based ADSM [alternative dispute settlement mechanism] in the form of a voluntary, non-binding, mediation mechanism offered by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution*”, in compliance with the requirements set out in Recital 62 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925.⁽¹⁴⁾ Alphabet rolled out the alternative dispute settlement mechanism on 2 April 2025.
- (19) As regards Article 6(5) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, the 2025 Compliance Report contained similar explanations on ranking to the 2024 Compliance Report.⁽¹⁵⁾ Alphabet stated that they made “*no further changes beyond those described in [the] first Compliance Report of 6 March 2024.*”⁽¹⁶⁾
- (20) Following an examination of Alphabet’s 2024 and 2025 Compliance Reports, and of the available information, the Commission has decided to examine whether Alphabet’s Google Search CPS’s general conditions of access and ranking comply with Articles 6(12) and Article 6(5) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925.
- (21) The Commission’s investigation will focus, *inter alia*, on the following matters. First, whether SRAP complies with the obligations on Alphabet to publish and apply fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory general conditions of access for business users of the Google Search CPS. Second, whether the SRAP and its application comply with the obligation on Alphabet to apply transparent, fair and non-discriminatory conditions to its ranking. Third, whether Alphabet is complying with its obligation to put in place an alternative dispute resolution mechanism. Fourth, whether the measures implemented by Alphabet can undermine effective compliance with the obligations of Article 6(5) and 6(12) of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 within the meaning of Article 13(4) or Article 13(6) of that Regulation.

⁽¹³⁾ 2025 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraph 156.

⁽¹⁴⁾ 2025 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraphs 157-158.

⁽¹⁵⁾ 2025 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraphs 48-51.

⁽¹⁶⁾ 2025 DMA Compliance Report, ‘Google Search’ chapter, paragraph 54.

- (22) In light of the above, the Commission has decided to open proceedings vis-à-vis Alphabet with a view to the possible adoption of a decision pursuant to Article 29 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 relating to potential non-compliance by Alphabet with Articles 6(12) and Article 6(5) of that Regulation, alone or in conjunction with Article 13(4) or Article 13(6) of that Regulation.
- (23) The initiation of proceedings does not prejudice the outcome of the Commission's assessment regarding compliance. It merely indicates that the Commission will further pursue the case.
- (24) The present decision is without prejudice to the possibility for the Commission to open proceedings on any other element of the general conditions of access or ranking applied by Alphabet's Google Search CPS.
- (25) Pursuant to Article 38(7), second subparagraph, of Regulation (EU) 2022/1925, this opening of proceedings relieves the national competent authorities of the Member States enforcing the rules referred to in Article 1(6) of that Regulation of the possibility to conduct an investigation in their respective territories into the possible non-compliance of Alphabet's SRAP with Article 6(5) and Article 6(12) of that Regulation, or ends it where it is already ongoing.
- (26) In accordance with Article 5(2) of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/814⁽¹⁷⁾ the Commission will make public this opening of proceedings.

For the Commission

(Signed)

Henna VIRKKUNEN
Executive Vice-President

⁽¹⁷⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/814 of 14 April 2023 on detailed arrangements for the conduct of certain proceedings by the Commission pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council, OJ L 102, 17.4.2023, p. 6.