

Google vows global ad policy shift after France fine for abusing dominance

Google has vowed to make changes to its global advertising business following a settlement with the French competition watchdog, which found it had abused its market dominance.

The tech company, which makes most of its revenues through adverts on its search engine and YouTube video platform, was fined €220m (£189m) under the deal.

But it included, for the first time in Google's history, a legal commitment to reform the way it conducts its advertising business.

Experts said the move could help rebalance power over advertising in favour of publishers for the first time in the internet era.



Image:
Google CEO Sundar Pichai. Pic: AP

The watchdog found that Google's ad management platform for large publishers, Google Ad Manager, favoured the company's own online ad marketplace, Google AdX, where publishers sell space to advertisers in real-time.

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It added that Ad Manager provided AdX with strategic data such as the winning bidding prices, while AdX also exchanged data more smoothly with Ad Manager than it did with other advertising management platforms.

The French regulator launched its investigation in 2019 following a complaint from several major publishing groups including News Corp, Le Figaro and Rossel.

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Its head, Isabelle de Silva, said: "The decision to sanction Google is of particular significance because it's the first decision in the world focusing on the complex algorithmic auction processes on which the online ad business relies."

The watchdog added that the first of Google's changes would be implemented from early in 2022 but it did not specify the timeline for progress.

Google said it would include making it easier for publishers to use its data and tools.

"We will be testing and developing these changes over the coming months before rolling them out more broadly, including some globally." the company added.