Question for written answer P-010479/2013 to the Commission
Rule 117
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Subject: Commission settlement with Google

In November 2010 the Commission launched proceedings against Google for allegedly abusing its dominant position on the search engine market. In April 2013 Google proposed a settlement that does not go far enough, as it only addresses some of the charges identified in the Commission’s initial assessment – which does not look as if it will be sufficient to prevent the abuse of a dominant position.

1. Does the Commission intend to accept the settlement, which does not provide for equal treatment of specialist Google services and ‘natural’ search results, and under which the former will merely be labelled?

Labelling Google’s services might well help consumers differentiate them from ‘natural’ search results, but in no way does it mean that all businesses will be treated equally by the search engine.

2. In the light of this case does the Commission not think it should look at the online search engine market more broadly and consider proposing a uniform set of rules to apply to all businesses operating in the market?

It should always be clear to all firms which tools and methods for ranking search results are legal, and which are not; consumers need to be aware of the search criteria; and the range of penalties imposed by search engines needs to be defined.

3. With this case in mind, did the Commission not ought firstly to look into the way in which Google penalises or declassifies web pages; secondly to check whether small internet businesses in Europe, in particular, can afford to appeal in the event of a dispute; and thirdly to consider whether the market is well served by a situation in which a company with a 90% market share not only establishes the rules according to which web pages are ranked in a search, but also the ‘penalties’ imposed against companies (the exclusion of search results) which do not go along with the rules proposed by Google?