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Press Release and FAQ

European Publishers Council files formal antitrust complaint against Google over AI Overviews and AI Mode

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The European Publishers Council (EPC) has filed a formal complaint with the European Commission alleging that Google LLC and Alphabet Inc. are abusing their dominant position in general search services, in breach of Article 102 TFEU, through the deployment of AI Overviews and AI Mode within Google Search. This complaint directly complements the Commission's own enforcement action announced on 9 December 2025. It then confirmed that it had "opened a formal antitrust investigation to assess whether Google has breached EU competition rules by using the content of web publishers, as well as content uploaded on the online video-sharing platform YouTube, for artificial intelligence (AI) purposes," a timely investigation which the EPC strongly welcomes.

The complaint argues that Google is using publishers' journalistic content without authorisation, without effective opt-out mechanisms, and without fair remuneration, while at the same time displacing traffic, audiences, and revenues that are essential to the sustainability of professional journalism. By embedding AI-generated summaries and chatbot-style responses directly into its dominant search interface, Google has transformed Search from a referral service into an answer engine that substitutes original publisher content and retains users within Google's own ecosystem. Google relies on publishers' high-quality journalistic content as a critical input for AI training, retrieval augmented generation, and output generation. Professionally produced news and editorial content is particularly valuable to AI systems because it is accurate, current, well-structured, and requires minimal cleaning.

Christian Van Thillo, Chairman of the European Publishers Council, said: *"This complaint is not about resisting innovation or artificial intelligence. It is about stopping a dominant gatekeeper from using its market power to take publishers' content without consent, without fair compensation, and without giving publishers any realistic way to protect their journalism. AI Overviews and AI Mode fundamentally undermine the economic compact that has sustained the open web."*

EPC

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He added: *"If these practices continue, the damage will be structural and irreversible. No amount of money can restore lost audiences, weakened brand relationships, or eroded reader trust once publishers are disintermediated. Effective competition, media pluralism, and democratic discourse, all objectives rightly at the heart of the European Democracy Shield, depend on timely and decisive enforcement."*

The EPC warns that, in the absence of intervention, smaller, regional, and specialist publishers will be the first to exit the market, leading to a less diverse and less resilient information ecosystem. This outcome would sit uneasily with the European Commission's flagship European Democracy Shield, which recognises the central role of independent, professional journalism in safeguarding democratic resilience. Over time, the erosion of the economic base of journalism would also degrade the quality and reliability of AI-generated information services, which depend on a continuous supply of professionally produced journalism.

While other AI providers have entered into licensing agreements with some publishers for the use of journalistic content, Google has largely avoided doing so. Instead, it relies on its control of search to secure ongoing access to content without payment, thereby distorting competition and undermining the emergence of a functioning licensing market for AI uses of copyrighted works.

As explained in the complaint, publishers are confronted with an untenable choice. To remain visible on Google Search, they must accept that their content is crawled, reproduced, and repurposed for Google's AI features. The technical controls cited by Google do not offer meaningful protection. In practice, opting out of AI use entails a loss of search visibility that most publishers cannot afford.

The complaint further explains that this conduct imposes unfair trading conditions on publishers as unavoidable trading partners and prevents the development of a functioning licensing market for the use of journalistic content in AI training, grounding, and output generation.

The complaint also submits that Google's practices involve systematic breaches of EU copyright law, including publishers' neighbouring right under the DSM Copyright Directive, and that such regulatory non-compliance constitutes a relevant indicator of exploitative abuse under EU competition law.

The complaint calls on the European Commission to adopt remedies capable of restoring competitive conditions, including meaningful publisher control over the use of their content for AI purposes, transparency regarding content usage and impact, and a fair licensing and remuneration framework that reflects the scale and value of publishers' content.