Brussels Info Flash

24 July 2026

H/ADVISORS' ANALYSIS

Commission steps up enforcement against major digital platforms with fines on Google and AliExpress

Brussels is signalling a tougher phase in EU digital regulation, using both the Digital Markets Act and the Digital Services Act to target unfair practices and online consumer risks;

The **European Commission** has intensified its enforcement of EU digital rules by fining **Google €890 million** under the **Digital Markets Act** and **AliExpress €550 million** under the **Digital Services Act**. The two decisions, adopted in the same week, mark a politically significant moment in Brussels' approach to large digital platforms, showing that the EU is moving from the adoption of landmark digital legislation to its concrete application. The cases cover two central priorities of the EU's digital agenda: ensuring fair competition in online markets and protecting consumers from illegal, unsafe or counterfeit products.

In Google's case, the Commission found that the company breached the **DMA** by favouring its own services in **Google Search**, including shopping, hotels, transport and sports results, while giving less visibility to competing third-party services. It also concluded that Google restricted app developers from directing users towards alternative, often cheaper, purchase channels outside **Google Play**. In parallel, the Commission fined AliExpress for failing to properly assess and mitigate systemic risks linked to the spread of **illegal, unsafe and counterfeit products** on its platform, including unsafe toys, dangerous cosmetics and counterfeit goods.

Both cases underline the Commission's intention to hold large platforms accountable not only for market behaviour, but also for the risks created by the design and scale of their services. Google has **60 days** to comply with the Commission's decisions or face periodic penalty payments, while AliExpress must submit an action plan by **20 October 2026** to address the breaches identified under the DSA. Together, the decisions send a clear message that the EU's digital rulebook is entering a more assertive enforcement phase, with Brussels seeking to protect **fair competition**, **consumer safety** and **business opportunities** in the digital economy.

MAIN ISSUES IN THE EU

THE COUNCIL

24 July 2026

- **Informal Environment and Climate Ministers meeting.**

23 July 2026

- **Informal Environment and Climate Ministers meeting.** Environment and climate ministers met in Dublin to discuss decarbonisation, competitiveness, circularity and climate resilience.

- **Russia sanctions.** The Council adopted the 21st sanctions package against Russia, targeting energy, finance, crypto, trade and the military-industrial complex, with 218 new listings and further shadow fleet restrictions.

- **Child sexual abuse online.** The Council gave its final green light to the renewed interim regulation allowing providers to resume voluntary detection and removal of child sexual abuse material until 3 April 2028.

22 July 2026

- **Ukraine support loan.** EU countries approved the UK's participation in the €90 billion Ukraine support loan, allowing Ukraine to use EU-backed financing to procure defence products from UK suppliers.

21 July 2026

- **Informal Research and Innovation Ministers meeting.**

20 July 2026

- **Informal Research and Innovation Ministers meeting.** Research and innovation ministers met in Dublin to discuss competitiveness, security and prosperity ahead of the formal COMPET Research meetings.

THE COMMISSION

24 July 2026

- **Digital Services Act.** The Commission sent TikTok preliminary findings under the DSA, considering that its account settings for minors may fail to meet required standards on privacy, safety and security.

- **Displaced workers.** The Commission proposed €410,310 from the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund to support 235 workers dismissed by Valmet Automotive in Finland.

- **State aid guidelines.** The Commission launched a public consultation on draft new Rescue and Restructuring State aid Guidelines, including changes linked to the steel sector, start-ups and hybrid financial instruments.

- **Luxembourgish State aid.** The Commission approved a €54 million Luxembourgish scheme to support road and rail freight companies facing increased fuel prices due to the Middle East crisis.

- **PostNord State aid investigation.** The Commission opened an in-depth State aid investigation into capital injections granted to PostNord Strålfors by its parent company.

- **Merger control.** The Commission approved Derichebourg's acquisition of Scholz Group and SAICA's acquisition of THIMM under the simplified merger review procedure.

23 July 2026

- **Digital Markets Act.** The Commission fined Google €890 million for breaching the Digital Markets Act through self-preferencing in Google Search and restrictions on steering in Google Play.

- **SAFE defence instrument.** Greece received its first €118.2 million payment under the SAFE defence instrument to support priority defence investments and military modernisation.

- **EU Solidarity Fund.** The Commission approved €103.6 million in advance payments to Malta, Portugal and Spain to support recovery from storms in early 2026.

- **Readmission cooperation.** The Commission adopted its annual assessment report on third countries' cooperation on readmission under the Visa Code, without proposing new restrictive visa measures.

- **Cuba humanitarian aid.** The EU released an additional €10 million in humanitarian aid for vulnerable populations in Cuba, focusing on healthcare, food, water and logistics support.

- **Dutch State aid.** The Commission approved a €715 million Dutch scheme to reduce ammonia emissions from livestock farms affecting Natura 2000 areas.

22 July 2026

- **European Citizens' Initiatives.** The Commission registered an initiative opposing digital ID and age verification, while rejecting the "Save Europe Act" initiative for failing to meet the formal conditions under EU rules.

- **Digital Product Passport.** The Commission launched the Digital Product Passport Registry, creating a central hub for product metadata ahead of the first passport requirements for certain batteries in February 2027.

- **Foreign Subsidies Regulation.** The Commission sent JD.com a Statement of Grounds in its investigation into the proposed acquisition of Ceconomy, citing concerns over possible foreign subsidies from China.

- **Security College.** The Commission created a Security College Secretariat within its Secretariat-General to support strategic analysis and decision-making on security challenges.

- **European Pillar of Social Rights.** The Commission adopted a Communication renewing its commitment to the European Pillar of Social

Rights, presenting it as the EU's social compass to protect and empower citizens amid economic, digital and green transitions.

- **Saipem-Subsea7 merger.** The Commission opened an in-depth investigation into the proposed merger between Saipem and Subsea7 over concerns about competition in offshore engineering and construction services.

20 July 2026

- **Digital Services Act.** The Commission fined AliExpress €550 million for breaching DSA obligations on assessing and mitigating risks linked to illegal, unsafe or counterfeit products on its platform.

- **Artificial Intelligence Act.** The Commission published guidelines on AI Act transparency obligations, covering user information on AI interactions, AI-generated content, deepfakes and biometric systems.

- **Quality Jobs Act.** The Commission launched the second-phase consultation of social partners on the upcoming Quality Jobs Act, covering AI at work, health and safety, subcontracting and enforcement.

- **Social Climate Fund.** The Commission endorsed Latvia's €617 million Social Climate Plan to support vulnerable households and transport users during the clean transition.

- **Construction chemicals cartel.** The Commission sent Statements of Objections over suspected price coordination in construction chemicals.

- **Methane emissions.** The Commission published guidance on EU methane rules to reduce leaks and improve monitoring in the energy sector.

- **ETS compensation.** The Commission approved amendments to Italy's State aid scheme for energy-intensive companies under the EU ETS.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

23 July 2026

- Delegation for relations with the Andean Community to Bolivia.
- AFET delegation to China.
- AFCO delegation to the United States.
- Housing delegation to Latvia and Finland.

22 July 2026

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- AFET delegation to China.
- DROI delegation to Egypt.
- ECON delegation to the United States.
- AGRI delegation to the Azores.
- AFCO delegation to the United States.
- Housing delegation to Latvia and Finland.

21 July 2026

- **Delegation to Bolivia.** MEPs from the Delegation for Relations with the Andean Community travelled to La Paz and Uyuni to meet government, parliamentary and civil society representatives and visit an EU-funded project.
- **AFET delegation to China.** MEPs from the Foreign Affairs Committee travelled to Beijing and Shanghai to discuss Ukraine, human rights, Indo-Pacific security and China's role in strategic supply chains.

20 July 2026

- **DROI delegation to Egypt.** MEPs from the Human Rights Subcommittee travelled to Cairo to discuss civil and political rights, fundamental freedoms, socio-economic rights, women's rights and refugee protection.

- **ECON delegation to the United States.** MEPs from the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee travelled to Washington D.C. for a three-day delegation visit.

- **AGRI delegation to the Azores.** MEPs from the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee travelled to the Azores, Portugal.

- **AFCO delegation to the United States.** Constitutional Affairs Committee MEPs travelled to Washington D.C. and New York to examine US Supreme Court jurisprudence, EU law supremacy, institutional transparency and global AI governance.

- **Housing delegation to Latvia and Finland.** MEPs from the Special Committee on the Housing Crisis travelled to Riga and Helsinki to examine housing challenges and possible innovative solutions.

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