

Germany seeks to reduce Facebook, Google power

Germany outlined measures designed to curb the increasing dominance of internet giants, including Google and Facebook, by boosting the powers of its competition regulator.

Reuters reported the initiative could see more restrictions placed on the bigger players from acquiring smaller rivals, following concerns in Germany that US internet companies are becoming too powerful.

The effort follows a study, commissioned by Germany's economy minister Peter Altmaier, calling for antitrust regulators to have more power to stop companies from achieving a monopoly status.

The study said that companies can become monopolies on the internet because of the way the network functions, and this could be prevented, for example, by cracking down on companies sealing exclusive deals with business partners.

Altmaier also argued that antitrust regulators should be able to block mergers between big and small players, as it can sideline competitors.

"My goal is to make our competition law more effective," he said. "In doing so we must find the right balance between the growth chances of German and European platforms and preventing the abuse of market power."

Facebook deals

Reuters added that the planned measures could be implemented following a widely held view in Germany that European regulators should have blocked Facebook's acquisitions of Instagram and instant messaging platform WhatsApp in 2012 and 2014 respectively.

Altmaier's study noted that Facebook, through its various social networking platforms, has 2.5 billion users in total, while European powerhouse Germany has yet to produce a company of such a scale.

The study also outlined proposals requiring dominant internet companies to share

data that it uses, allowing competitors to develop software to a similar standard to the market leader.

Based on the report's recommendations, Altmaier will set up a commission to draft reforms to Germany's competition law, added *Reuters*.

Germany's Federal Cartel Office is currently probing Facebook, and could take action against the company this year regarding its data gathering practices.

Source: <https://www.mobileworldlive.com/featured-content/top-three/germany-seeks-to-reduce-facebook-google-power/>

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