

Competitors slam Google proposals as 'self-advertising'

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: Google's competitors on Tuesday warned the European Commission that a set of proposals put forward by the US Internet giant to meet EU antitrust rules constituted "self-advertising" and would do nothing to create a level playing field for searches.



"It would be better for the Commission to do nothing than to accept these proposals," said Thomas Vinje, a spokesman for the FairSearch coalition, which includes travel website Tripadvisor and price comparison sites Twenga and Foundem.

The Commission earlier this year launched a consultation process, which is due to wrap up on Thursday over accusations that Google is unfairly favouring its own services over specialist search engines by giving them greater prominence.

Google has proposed that its own services could be highlighted in a different way so that users could distinguish them from competitors in full knowledge of the choice before them.

However, several companies at a press conference organised by FairSearch said that the proposal would be counter-productive.

"At the end of the day, Google is offering a big ad banner. This is self advertising they are proposing, nothing more, nothing less," said Moritz Von Merveldt from the German audiovisual media company ProSiebenSat1.

Michael Weber, director of Hot Maps, a company that offers online interactive maps, said: "A normal user goes to the biggest and boldest thing on the page".

The European Commission has said it wants to resolve the issue after the summer but EU's Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia has already said he would likely ask Google to "further improve its proposals".

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge