

## **What the EU wants to investigate in Google probe**

By Nikki Tait

**Details of the claims which the commission intends to probe.**

**Allegation 1: Google has abused its dominant market position in online search by giving preferential placement to its own vertical search or price comparison services at the expense of rivals.**

**Google says it has never taken action to intentionally hurt competing services, and that its aim is “to provide the best results for users”. It says there were “compelling reasons” why e-justice and Foundem services were ranked lowly by its algorithms.**

**Allegation 2: Google has lowered the “quality score” for sponsored links of competing vertical search services. The quality score influences the likelihood for an ad being displayed by Google and its ranking – and can affect the price paid to Google by advertisers.**

**Google says all search engines use quality scores to assess the relevance of ads to particular queries and whether sites provide useful information. It says it tells advertisers about their quality scores and it is “easy” to get tips on how to improve these.**

**Allegation 3: Google imposes exclusivity obligations on advertisers, preventing them from placing certain types of competing ads on their websites.**

**Google says online contracts for Adsense, its ad serving application, have never been exclusive. As far as those directly negotiated are concerned, it stopped using exclusive contracts nearly two years ago.**

**Allegation 4. Google has placed restrictions on the portability of online advertising campaign data to competing online advertising platforms.**

**Google says it “absolutely does provide advertisers with the ability to export ad campaigns from Google to other platforms”. It acknowledges that there are some restrictions, for example for agencies, but not for advertisers.**

**In addition, and more fundamentally, Google denies that it holds a dominant position in online search, in spite of its high market shares.**