

UPTODOWN'S RESPONSE TO THE CHANGES PROPOSED BY GOOGLE TO THE DMA

Having learned of Google's [official statement](#) regarding the DMA yesterday, we find it wholly insufficient and ineffective for the purpose of the DMA.

Google Play is the Android ecosystem's primary gateway and most critical control mechanism. Any other measure of this law is invalidated if this problem is not addressed.

Uptodown is one of the largest independent app stores, yet it has less than **one percent market share** compared to Google Play.

In its official statement, Google responds to this anomaly: "app stores can be preinstalled on Android devices through agreements with Android manufacturers".

- **Third-party apps and app stores:** The DMA requires gatekeeper operating systems to allow users to use third-party apps and app stores. Through Android, we already do this. Android users have always been free to download third-party apps and app stores to their devices, and third-party apps and app stores can be preinstalled on Android devices through agreements with Android manufacturers. Apps can also be sideloaded by users via the internet onto an Android device. Last year we implemented features in [Android 14](#) that make third-party app stores work even better for users and let third-party app stores update apps more easily.

For over a decade, as demonstrated in various [legal proceedings](#), Google has abused its relationship with manufacturers, making it impossible to adopt any alternative.

Antitrust: Commission fines Google €4.34 billion for illegal practices regarding Android mobile devices

Google offers its mobile apps and services to device manufacturers as a bundle, which includes the Google Play Store, the Google Search app and the Google Chrome browser. Google's licensing conditions make it impossible for manufacturers to pre-install some apps but not others

In our opinion, it is not possible to correct this imbalance caused by 12 years of market abuse by leaving it in the hands of the judgment of manufacturers and Google's partners. And by rendering ineffective the decision-making ability of end users exposed to these practices and agreements of the stakeholders.

Google Play cannot be preinstalled on any device sold in Europe without the explicit consent and transparent presentation of alternatives to the end users themselves.

Google Play's position of dominance is such that, even if these changes in the app store selection were implemented today, we would need months, if not years, to restore competition. Alternative stores have so little market space that we do not have that time.

This is why additional changes not addressed by Google in its response to the DMA are required. Not allowing third-party stores on Google Play, the main gateway to the Android ecosystem, prevents the actual adoption of any other alternative.

To what extent is it fair, reasonable, and proportional for Uptodown, an app store that has been operating longer than Google Play itself, safer ([Google Play malware clocks up more than 600 million downloads in 2023](#)), and a 100% legal European company, to not be allowed on Google Play.

Yes, Uptodown is not allowed on Google Play as of today.

Google Play cannot block legal third-party app stores as a mechanism to prevent access to the Android ecosystem.

Until both previous conditions are practical, **interoperability is the only tool to mitigate the damage Google is causing to competition.**

The **web** plays a crucial role in making such interoperability effective and is being attacked by Google with the proposed changes to app distribution.

Google abandoned standards such as APK formats on Google Play in favor of others that depend on their platforms as intermediaries. Technologies like Dynamic Delivery or "Bundles" file formats do not allow the delivery of complete applications. They obscure what's happening behind the Gatekeeper's platform, thus making archiving and distribution by third-party stores and users more difficult.

These types of file manipulation from Gatekeeper's stores and "on the fly" packaging also affect the use of signatures by developers, which may now be controlled by Gatekeepers and cause significant fragmentation.

Bundles limit the user's ability to back up their apps and distribute them internally on their devices without the intervention of the Play Store.

Gatekeepers must always provide standard formats and transparent delivery (direct download of complete apps) in their stores as an alternative to end users in their platforms.

Finally, none of the changes proposed by Google address the unnecessary frictions involved in using sideloading, whose **sole purpose is to hinder the adoption of any other source of applications**.

This includes:

Overly exaggerated **warning messages** that are not used in Google's own services.

The **ease of authorizing** and accessing the necessary permissions in the operating system for sideloading applications.

Access to **operating system operations allowed for Google Play but not other stores**, such as automatically updating applications from other sources.

Google must ensure the same treatment and access to operating system functionalities for third-party stores.