AI ubiquitous in global antitrust enforcement, report finds

Written by:

Francesca McClimont

19 June, 2025

GLOBAL COMPETITION REVIEW

The use of artificial intelligence and data tools by global antitrust authorities has become the norm rather than the exception, but some enforcers have flagged security and staffing concerns related to the emerging technology, a new report has revealed.

In a report by Stanford University's Codex Center presented yesterday at an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development event, all of the surveyed 25 competition authorities, including France, Brazil, Italy and Pakistan, submitted that they have incorporated artificial intelligence into their enforcement work in some capacity.

Agencies are now utilising large language models, a type of machine learning model that is trained on vast amounts of data to understand and generate human-like text, to enhance data analysis capabilities, while also leveraging AI to web-scrape for anticompetitive conduct.

However, the report revealed agencies are split on whether to develop their own tools or use

third-party technology from providers such as OpenAI and Microsoft.

Enforcers also flagged concerns in obtaining secure cloud computing, ensuring the procedural legality of using AI in antitrust investigations, and the importance of improving human–machine interaction.

"Agencies are becoming more proactive than they were in the past," Thibault Schrepel told GCR, who co-authored the study entitled "The Computational Antitrust Worldwide: Fourth Cross-Agency Report".

Schrepel, an associate professor of law at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, said agencies have previously voiced uncertainty about how to use AI, but now it's the "exact opposite". In just 12 months, there has been a complete change, with agencies sharing data among themselves in new ways, he said. "I was not at all expecting that."

LLMs and cloud storage

Despite the widespread use of AI, competition authorities have different approaches in using the technology, with some insisting on developing their capabilities in-house, whilst others use third-party providers.

Agencies in Canada, Austria, Italy and Luxembourg have created their own LLM models, whereas the Singaporean and Polish enforcers are using OpenAI's technology.

Singapore's Competition and Consumer Commission in March launched its "Merger Decision Bot", an AI assistant that uses OpenAI's GPT-4o mini AI model.

Enforcers are also working to ensure that their LLMs do not hallucinate to provide inaccurate answers.

Singapore's Merger Decision Bot leverages a technique to enhance the model's accuracy by utilising information sourced from specific and relevant data sources. It provides case handlers with "context-aware" responses with proper citations to merger-related queries by accessing an extensive database of the Singaporean agency's merger guidelines and past merger decisions.

Poland's Office of Competition and Consumer Protection said that comparative testing between human analysts and the AI model showed "high consistency", with GPT-4 correctly identifying patterns found in the manual review, and occasionally detecting additional instances overlooked by humans.

"Its ability to assess every website component with unbiased precision, free from fatigue or cognitive bias, highlighted its potential as a regulatory support tool," the Polish agency said.

Canada's Competition Bureau, on the other hand, cited "limitations and security risks" associated with third-party LLMs.

Agencies also diverge in their approaches to cloud storage, with Italy's Competition Authority utilising its own national public administration cloud system, which it claims is "secure" and "able to warrant confidentiality and data protection." In contrast, Colombia's Superintendence of Industry and Commerce and Pakistan's Competition Commission use Microsoft Azure.

"Significant institutional challenges"

South American enforcers are also becoming more tech-savvy.

Chile's National Economic Prosecutor's Office said its

automated, web-based data collector, which focuses on gathering news from digital media platforms, has scraped around 360,000 news items in search of anticompetitive conduct.

Colombia's antitrust watchdog also has similar data scraping capabilities and has created an additional version of its price-monitoring tool, known as Sabueso.

Initially created to monitor the pricing of products in the country's major supermarket chains, such as Éxito, Carulla, and Metro, the new Sabueso can now track airline ticket prices offered by carriers and search aggregators, including Despegar, Viajala, and eDestinos.

This tool also employs Selenium, PostgreSQL, Google's ChromeDriver and Microsoft Azure. However, the agency stated that it has faced operational challenges, including security authentication barriers, IP restrictions, and currency changes imposed by the search aggregator providers.

Brazil's Administrative Council for Economic Defence (CADE) has developed a data-driven tool to detect bid-rigging and support investigations, known as Cerebro, but the agency said its progress in leveraging the country's public procurement data to combat cartels is "hampered by significant institutional challenges that limit its scalability and operational effectiveness".

It noted that a major hurdle is the need to simplify complex economic evidence for "non-technical audiences", such as judges, to prevent misinterpretation.

CADE's recruitment efforts also suffer due to a lack of a dedicated technologists

workforce, so it relies instead on seconded staff from other agencies who "frequently depart for better opportunities", it said.

The enforcer said that attracting professionals with advanced technical skills and a nuanced understanding of its antitrust objectives is a "persistent challenge", as Cerebro project's dependence on specialised data analysts strains available resources and underscores the need for "stable" and skilled staff.

Meanwhile, Spain's National Commission of Markets and Competition said that a "major lesson" it has learnt is that even the most sophisticated algorithms are "only as effective as the workflows and human oversight surrounding them", adding that early detection systems "must prioritise interpretability and ease of use for practitioners who may not have a technical background.

The Catalan Competition Authority said that its AI bid-rigging tool is trained on international datasets from competition agencies in Switzerland, Italy, and Japan, which has substantially enhanced the accuracy of identifying collusive patterns.