

Google issues 'ultimatum' putting F-Droid at risk of being shut down

Google is requiring all Android developers to register centrally, even outside the Play Store. The new rules could shut down F-Droid, the popular open-source app store, and raise concerns that Google wants to monopolize the Android ecosystem.

Google recently introduced a controversial new rule: all Android developers, even those who don't publish apps on the Google Play Store, must register centrally with Google. This requires developers to pay a fee, accept non-negotiable terms, and provide government-issued identification.

F-Droid, one of the largest alternative app stores known for its focus on security, privacy, and open-source apps, has announced that it cannot comply with Google's regulations. The reason is that F-Droid cannot require developers to register with Google, nor accept that Google will control the application identifier (App ID). If this becomes a reality, Google will have exclusive distribution rights, meaning that F-Droid may have to shut down, leaving users without thousands of verified apps and unable to install or update existing software.

Google cites 'security' as the reason, but is it convincing?

Google claims that the new regulations will help improve security and prevent malware. However, F-Droid calls this just an excuse. The proof is that the Google Play Store itself has been full of malicious apps for many years, showing that a centralized 'censorship portal' is not necessarily enough to protect users. In addition, Google already has Play Protect - a service that scans and neutralizes malware, regardless of its origin.

Meanwhile, F-Droid claims to have a strong security system:

1. Just browse open source applications, anyone can check.
2. Public compile log, reproducible build process.
3. All builds are done directly from the F-Droid servers, ensuring no malware is injected.

F-Droid accuses Google of not taking a security stance, but rather tightening control over an open ecosystem. Tying app IDs to identity documents and subscription fees is like creating a 'choke point' that limits competition and stifles user freedom.

F-Droid has called on competition and antitrust regulators, particularly the European Commission under the Digital Markets Act (DMA), to prevent Google from monopolizing the Android ecosystem.

In short, if Google's new rules are enforced, not only F-Droid but also global Android users could be affected, losing one of the most transparent and secure alternatives outside the Play Store.

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