Android 18 and the EU DMA: What Changes for AI Apps

The EU's July 2026 DMA decision requires Google to give third-party AI apps the same Android access as Gemini by Android 18. What changes for apps like Hedy.

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A smartphone seen from the back, with a glowing cyan and violet audio waveform behind it and a ring of gold stars on a dark blue background

Quick answer In July 2026 the European Commission ordered Google, under the Digital Markets Act, to give third-party AI apps the same Android access that Gemini and Google's own apps get: background execution, the microphone and system audio, the phone's AI chips, and on-device models. Most of it is due with Android 18, and by 1 August 2027 at the latest. Until then, Android users can keep Hedy running with the settings in our background operation guide .

We got an unusual request this year. The European Commission wanted to interview us.

They were investigating how Google treats third-party AI apps on Android under the Digital Markets Act (DMA), and they wanted to hear from a team that builds one. So we told them what it's like to run Hedy, a real-time AI meeting coach, on a platform where Google's own apps play by different rules.

On 16 July 2026 the Commission adopted its decision (case DMA.100220). Companies that gave input aren't named, so Hedy doesn't appear in it. But when the decision explains why apps need fair access to background processing, one of its examples is "an AI-powered meeting coach" that may need to "instantly transcribe conversations as they happen, while generating summaries and action points in real time." That one felt familiar.

The full decision runs to 365 pages. This post covers the parts that matter if you use Hedy, or any AI app that has to keep working while your screen is off.

Why do Android apps get stopped in the background?

If you've had a Hedy session end on its own on an Android phone, the decision explains why.

Android has its own power rules, Doze and App Standby. On top of those, Google lets phone makers add their own restrictions. The Commission calls these by the name developers use, "app killers," and finds they "can be very aggressive towards certain apps." It also finds that phone makers may exempt popular apps from rules that apply to everyone else, a practice it calls allowlisting. And there's no reliable way for an app to ask you for an exemption from a phone maker's own restrictions.

For Hedy, that means a session can run fine on a Pixel and stop after a few minutes on another phone, with the same app and the same settings. Some of our users have reported sessions ending after roughly 10 minutes on certain Galaxy phones. A meeting coach that stops halfway through the meeting isn't much use.

What the DMA decision requires Google to change

The decision covers a long list of features, from long-press invocation to screen automation. As app developers, we're watching the ones below most closely.

Background execution

Google has to publish "transparent, objective, precise and non-discriminatory" rules for which apps can keep running, and those rules apply to Google's own apps too. The rules can't single out a specific app for restriction or exemption unless you've agreed to it. If phone makers customize the rules, the customized versions have to meet the same standard. Apps also get a way to ask you for the same background access Google's services have, and you can grant it "with a single low-friction option," without digging through several settings screens.

Microphone and system audio

Third-party AI apps get access to the microphone and to speaker output (system audio) on the same terms as Google's AI services. That includes how often consent prompts appear and whether access continues in the background.

Phone calls are the part we care about most here. On Android today, an app like Hedy can't hear the other side of a phone call at all. The decision finds that "speaker audio for voice calls" is "wholly unavailable to third-party user-downloaded apps," because capturing it needs a permission only system apps can hold. Google's own system-level AI components don't face that limit, and Google's Phone app can record calls on recent Pixel phones.

On-device AI

Apps that run their own on-device models get fair access to the phone's NPU, GPU, CPU and memory, under the same resource rules that apply to Gemini Nano. Third parties can also use the built-in system models, including Gemini Nano, for any use case.

The same rules on every phone

The measures apply to certified Android devices from any manufacturer that still get Android or Google Play system updates. Google has to make the new access work through the same APIs across Android versions and devices. An app should behave the same way on a Samsung as on a Pixel.

When do the Android 18 changes take effect?

Each measure carries the same deadline: "the next major Android release, i.e. Android 18, and by 1 August 2027 at the latest." Nothing changes on your phone today. The first place to see any of this will be the Android 18 developer previews.

What the decision doesn't do

Third-party apps get what Google's own services get, and no more. The background rules can still account for battery and heat, so a phone running hot can still slow an app down. The difference is that the same rules apply to Gemini.

The DMA is also European law. Whether Google brings these changes to Android worldwide or only in Europe hasn't been announced. And the dates could move: Alphabet argued throughout the proceedings that the measures are unlawful. If the timeline shifts, we'll update this post.

What this means for Hedy on Android

Hedy on Android captures your conversation and transcribes it on the device while the session runs. That's exactly the kind of work that needs reliable background execution and microphone access. If the rules land as written, sessions should be less likely to end early depending on which phone you own, and asking you for background access should take one tap.

Call capture is one of the features Hedy users ask for most. We can't offer it on Android today, and our Recording Phone Calls (/help/recording-phone-calls/) guide covers the workarounds. The decision requires access to system audio on the same terms Google's AI services get, and we hope Google's implementation lets Hedy capture a call with your permission. That depends on how Google builds it, so it's the first thing we'll check in the Android 18 previews. Recording a call can also require the other person's consent, depending on where you live.

The on-device part matters to us too. Today Hedy's Local AI Processing (/help/local-ai-processing/) runs the whole meeting pipeline on capable Macs, Windows PCs, iPhones and iPads. Fair access to an Android phone's NPU and memory is what running that pipeline on Android would need.

For a small team, the bigger change is that these rules will be written down and will apply to every app, Google's included. We'll test Hedy against the Android 18 previews when they're out and report what we find.

Until then: keep Hedy running on Android

You don't have to wait for Android 18 to fix most early stops. Set Hedy's battery usage to Unrestricted , then check your phone maker's own battery settings. Our Background Operation Optimization Guide (/help/hedy-background-operation-optimization-guide/) walks through Samsung, Xiaomi, OnePlus, Oppo, Huawei, Vivo and Pixel phones step by step. If a session still stops, Transcription Stopped Mid-Session (/help/transcription-stopped-mid-session/) covers the other common causes.

Frequently asked questions

What did the European Commission decide about Android and AI apps?

On 16 July 2026 the Commission adopted a decision under Article 6(7) of the Digital Markets Act (case DMA.100220) that requires Google to give third-party AI services the same access to Android features that Gemini and Google's own services have. That covers background execution, the microphone and system audio, the phone's AI chips and memory, and the on-device Gemini Nano models, under rules that also apply to Google's own apps.

When do the Android DMA changes take effect?

The decision requires most measures in the next major Android release, Android 18, and by 1 August 2027 at the latest. Alphabet argued during the proceedings that the measures are unlawful, so the timeline could still change.

Does the Android DMA decision apply outside the EU?

The Digital Markets Act is EU law, so the obligation is owed in the EU. Whether Google ships the same changes to Android worldwide or limits them to Europe has not been announced.

Will Android 18 stop my phone from closing Hedy in the background?

Not automatically. The decision requires Google to publish fair background rules that apply to its own apps too, to make phone makers' battery rules follow them, and to give users a single option to let an app keep running. Battery and heat limits can still apply. We'll test Hedy against the Android 18 previews when they're available.

Will Hedy be able to capture phone calls on Android 18?

That isn't settled yet. The decision finds that third-party apps can't access call audio on Android today, and it requires Google to give third-party AI apps access to system audio on the same terms as its own AI services. We hope that lets Hedy capture calls with your permission, but it depends on how Google implements the rules. We'll test it in the Android 18 previews.

What can I do now if Hedy stops during a session on Android?

Set Hedy's battery usage to Unrestricted and check your phone maker's own battery rules. Samsung, Xiaomi, OnePlus, Oppo and Huawei all add extra restrictions. The Hedy Background Operation Optimization Guide (/help/hedy-background-operation-optimization-guide/) lists the settings phone by phone.

Source: European Commission, case DMA.100220 (https://competition-cases.ec.europa.eu/cases/DMA.100220) , Commission Implementing Decision C(2026) 5094 of 16 July 2026.

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