

French media launch copyright case against Google

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A legal fight is brewing between Google and French media organisations

French media organisations lodged a complaint against Google to the country's competition authority Wednesday over the US internet giant's refusal to pay for displaying their content.

The move sets up a [legal fight](#) with Google over a new EU copyright law that could have huge repercussions for the future of the press.

Earlier this year France became the first country to ratify the law, which aims to ensure publishers are compensated when their work is displayed online.

The APIG press alliance, which groups dozens of national and regional newspapers, the union of magazine editors as well as AFP, which has brought a separate complaint, argued that Google is flouting the law.

The new EU rules create so-called neighbouring rights that give a form of copyright protection to media firms when their content is used on websites, search engines and [social media platforms](#).

But Google—which holds a virtual monopoly on [internet searches](#)—said articles, pictures and videos will be shown in [search results](#) only if media groups consent to let the tech giant use them for free.

Google 'abusing' position

If they refuse, only a headline and a bare link to the content will appear, Google said, almost certainly resulting in a loss of visibility and potential ad revenue for the publisher.

Google was effectively offering the press a choice about how it would like to die—"either from cholera or the plague", said Jean-Michel Baylet, the APIG president.

In their complaints to the French competition authority, which has already launched an investigation into Google, the media organisations said the giant is abusing its dominant position in the market.

Google has dismissed their claims but promised to co-operate with the authority.

"Google helps internet users find news content from many sources and the results are always based on relevance, not trade agreements," it said in a statement to AFP last month.

The company insisted that "publishers have never had so many choices about how their content is displayed on Google.

"The law does not impose a fee for posting links, and European news publishers already derive significant value from the eight billion visits they receive each month from internet users who do searches on Google," it said.

But French President Emmanuel Macron has already voiced his support for the press, saying that no company can "break free" of the law in France.

More than 1,000 journalists, photographers, filmmakers and media CEOs across Europe signed an open letter last month urging governments to ensure that Google and other internet and social [media](#) firms comply with the new EU rule.

Their letter described Google's move as an insult to national and European sovereignty.

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