

Google appeals \$591M French fine in copyright payment spat

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In this file photo dated Monday, Dec. 17, 2018, a man using a mobile phone walks past Google offices in New York. Google is appealing a 500 million euro (\$591 million) fine, Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021, issued by French regulators over its handling of negotiations with publishers in a dispute over copyright. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Lennihan, File

Google is appealing a 500 million euro (\$591 million) fine issued by French regulators over its handling of negotiations with publishers in a dispute over copyright.

The dispute is part of a larger battle by authorities in Europe and elsewhere to force Google and other tech companies to compensate publishers for content.

"We disagree with a number of legal elements, and believe that the fine is disproportionate to our efforts to reach an agreement and comply with the new law," Google France Vice President Sebastien Missoffe said in a press statement.

France's antitrust watchdog levied the fine in mid-July after it found Google hadn't negotiated in good faith with publishers over payments for their news stories. The watchdog had issued temporary orders to Google in April 2020 to hold talks within three months with news publishers, and had fined the company for breaching those orders.

"We continue to work hard to resolve this case and put deals in place. This includes expanding offers to 1200 publishers, clarifying aspects of our contracts, and we are sharing more data as requested by the French Competition Authority in their July Decision," Missoffe said.

The antitrust watchdog also threatened fines of another 900,000 euros (around \$1 million) per day if Google didn't come up with proposals within two months on how it will pay publishers and news agencies for their content.

France was the first of the European Union's 27 nations to adopt the bloc's 2019 copyright directive, which lays out a way for publishers and news companies to strike licensing deals with online platforms.

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