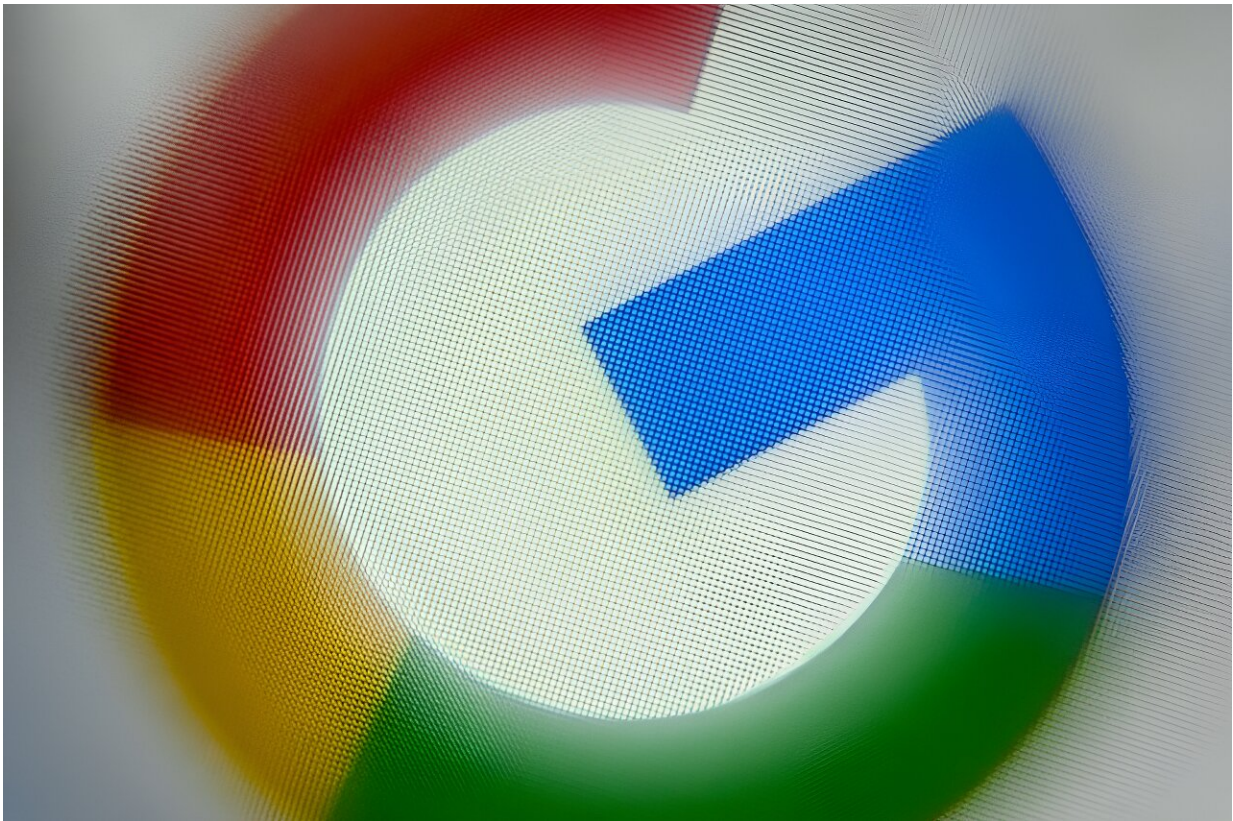


Google hit with 250-mn-euro French fine in news copyright fight

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Google and other online platforms have been accused of making billions from news without sharing the revenue with those who gather it.

French regulators said Wednesday they were fining Google 250 million euros (\$272 million) for breaching commitments on paying media

companies for reproducing their content online and for using their material for its AI chatbot without telling them.

Google had made commitments in 2022 to negotiate fairly with French news organizations, a year after the Competition Authority hit the US tech giant with a 500-million-euro fine over the long-running dispute.

Organizations representing French magazines and newspapers—as well as Agence France-Presse (AFP)—had lodged a case with the regulator in 2019.

Under its commitments, the US tech giant has to provide news groups with a transparent offer of payment within three months of receiving a copyright complaint.

But the regulator said Wednesday it was imposing the new fine on Google for "failing to respect commitments made in 2022" and not negotiating in "good faith" with news publishers.

The US tech giant also used content from press agencies to train its artificial intelligence platform—Bard (now known as Gemini)—without notifying them or the authority, the regulator said.

Google failed to provide publishers and news agencies a technical solution allowing them to object to the use of their content, "hindering" their ability to negotiate remuneration, it added.

The watchdog said Google had agreed to "not dispute the facts" as part of the settlement process and proposed "a series of corrective measures" in response to the failings identified by the authority.

In a statement, Google said the fine was disproportionate and did not "sufficiently take into account the efforts we have made to answer and

resolve the concerns raised—in an environment where it's very hard to set a course because we can't predict which way the wind will blow next."

"We've settled because it's time to move on," the company said.

'Neighboring rights'

The EU created in 2019 a form of copyright called "neighboring rights" that allows print media to demand compensation for using their content.

France has been a test case for the rules and after initial resistance Google and Facebook both agreed to pay some French media for articles shown in web searches.

Other European Union countries have also challenged Google over news content.

Spain's competition watchdog launched an investigation into Google last year for alleged anti-competitive practices affecting news agencies and press publications.

In 2022, Germany's antitrust regulator shelved an investigation into Google's News Showcase service, after the tech giant made "important adjustments" to ease competition concerns.

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