

# Antitrust watchdog probes Google Italy

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(AP) -- Italy's antitrust watchdog is investigating allegations that Google Italy is discriminating against newspapers that don't want their content linked on Google's news site by dropping them from its search engine.

The Italian authority monitoring markets and competitions said in a statement that it was looking into whether Google might have an unfair advantage in reaping online advertising.

Italy's financial police conducted an inspection Thursday of Google Italy's offices, the antitrust authority said.

The Italian Federation of [Newspaper](#) Publishers has complained that Google is "allegedly hindering publishers in freely choosing ways of allowing use of news published on their own Internet sites," it said.

The publishers contend that the "editorial sites that don't want to appear on [Google News](#) (Italia), would be automatically excluded from Google's search engine," the antitrust authority said.

A Google Italy spokeswoman, Simona Panseri, declined to comment on the specifics of the allegations while the antitrust investigation is being conducted.

But, speaking in general, Panseri contended that a "request to be excluded from Google News doesn't imply being excluded" from Google's search engine.

The publishers contend that having some of their newspapers' content appear on Google News Italia would hurt the online newspapers in attracting users and advertising on their own home pages, the antitrust statement said.

But Google contended in a statement that Google News "drives significant traffic and new readers" to newspaper web sites.

Readers who click on headlines posted on Google News Italia site are linked directly to the newspapers' site, where they can read the full story.

The Italian newspaper publishers' complaint reflects a common claim elsewhere that Google News is diverting readers away from newspaper home pages, while Google says it ends up increasing the traffic to newspaper Web sites.

As its power has grown, Google has come under increasing scrutiny of antitrust regulators around the world, in particular in the United States.

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On the Net:

[Google News Italia: http://news.google.it/](http://news.google.it/)

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