

French group Free lifts block on online ads

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The Freebox Revolution terminal of French Internet service provider Free is displayed in a shop in Rouen, in November 2011. Free has ceased blocking online advertising following a ministerial request, in a case that tests the relative strengths of telecommunications providers and Internet giants such as Google that use the net to generate huge revenue streams.

French Internet access provider Free has ceased blocking online advertising following a ministerial request, in a case that tests the relative strengths of telecommunications providers and Internet giants such as Google that use the net to generate huge revenue streams.

A system that blocked online advertising via the Freebox Revolution terminal was deactivated on Monday, Free said, and ads were again visible on Tuesday.

Fleur Pellerin, French minister for the digital economy, had told Free that it must provide full access to advertising, arguing that Free did not have the right to edit Web contents for its subscribers.

Free's move was part of a movement by European telecoms companies to recuperate a share of ad revenues to cover investments in network development, and they object in particular to heavy use by sites such as Google's [YouTube](#) which streams videos that consume large amounts of bandwidth.

But Pellerin said on Monday that she felt that Free's "procedural methods were not acceptable," and told the access provider "to put an immediate end to advertising obstacles."

She also noted that "the business model of advertising financing was an important one for a certain number of sites," and said she was working on a "win-win" solution for all of the parties involved, which include online newspapers and other media which that depend on advertising.

In the third quarter of 2012, [Google](#) reported a 19-percent rise in advertising and other revenue to \$11.53 billion, making the group the leading beneficiary of online advertising.

The US group does not pay Internet access providers which provide the link between consumers and the advertiser however, raising what has become a core question regarding so-called [net neutrality](#).

France is keen to restore a balance of power because "the Internet is subject to domination by net giants which are all non-European," the

daily Le Figaro noted.

Pellerin emphasized that Internet users "must be the ones who decide what they can see on the Internet and it is up to them to decide whether to block certain content."

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