

# German news sites opt for Google exposure for now (Update)

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Major German publishers gave Google permission to keep using their content on its news page as tighter online copyright rules came into force Thursday. However, they insisted that their dispute with the search giant over payment for content wasn't over.

Earlier this year Google said it would only display material from German publishers who "opt in" to have free snippets appear on Google News. The move came after German lawmakers passed a publisher-backed copyright law covering how news aggregators such as Google show other companies' content.

Internet firms have warned that the law amounts to a tax on search engines that could backfire against publishers hoping to attract readers at a time when the circulation of printed papers is falling.

Axel Springer AG—publisher of the mass-circulation tabloid Bild and national daily Die Welt—said the decision to opt into Google News was a temporary measure while the company lays the legal and technical groundwork to charge aggregators for their use of its material.

The publisher's approval to display snippets from its sites could be revoked at any time and occurred "without accepting Google's one-sided conditions," spokesman Hendrik Lange said.

Google argues that its news page is the equivalent of a digital newspaper kiosk where readers can browse before they click on a link that takes

them to the original publisher's site. The Palo Alto, California-based company has said it won't pay for showing the snippets and believes the law is on its side.

"Google News is an important platform for publishers and users alike to inform and be informed through a broad variety of sources," said Kay Oberbeck, a spokesman for Google in Germany.

"We will keep working together with publishers to support them in making the most out of their digital content," he added, noting that hundreds of publishers had given Google their consent.

Other major German news sites such as Spiegel Online and Zeit Online were also still available Thursday.

But one of Germany's oldest online news sites said it was breaking with Google. Rhein-Zeitung, based in the western city of Koblenz, declined to opt in to Google News as the new law came into effect, saying it had decided to stop "giving away" its own material online for free.

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