

Spain watchdog fines Google for privacy 'violations' (Update)

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The Google website for Spain on a laptop in a cafe in Granada on June 11, 2008

Spain's data protection watchdog ordered US Internet giant Google on Thursday to pay a 900,000-euro fine for "serious violations" of users' privacy.

The Spanish Data Protection Agency accused the popular search provider of "illegal processing of personal data" obtained from users of

various services such as Google email accounts.

"Google unlawfully collects and processes personal information" of users, the agency said in a statement.

"The agency considers that Google seriously violates the right to the protection of personal data."

It ordered Google to pay 300,000 euros (\$410,000) for each of three counts of breaching Spain's data protection law and ordered it to bring its privacy policy in line with legal norms.

It said Google's privacy policy did not clearly inform users of how it uses data collected, for example information from emails that is gathered to generate targeted advertising.

It also accused Google of keeping the data for longer than is legally justified and of making it difficult for users to query the use of their data.

Google has repeatedly stated that its privacy policy respects European law, despite investigations in several countries.

The Spanish authority launched proceedings against Google in June. In September, France too said it would take action against the company, accusing it of breaching privacy norms.

Authorities in Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Britain have also opened parallel procedures against Google.

Like other technology giants, Google has come under scrutiny following revelations by US whistleblower Edward Snowden of online eavesdropping by US and other intelligence agencies.

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