

# Google appeals French fine as data privacy row continues

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Google's logo at the Google cultural hub in Paris on December 10, 2013

Google said Wednesday it had appealed a decision by France's data protection watchdog to fine the US giant 150,000 euros (\$204,000)—the maximum possible—for failing to comply with its privacy guidelines.

The fine last week, though tiny for a group that made \$15 billion in one quarter last year, is the regulator's biggest ever and follows in the wake

of other European nations cracking down on Google's increasingly controversial privacy policies.

"We were fully involved throughout discussions with the CNIL (France's data protection watchdog) to explain our policy of confidentiality and the way in which it allows us to create more simple and more efficient services," a spokesman for Google told AFP.

"We are appealing its decision."

The CNIL on January 8 had also ordered the US Internet giant to publish a statement relating to its decision on its French homepage for at least 48 hours over the following eight days.

But according to the Le Figaro daily, Google appealed the decision to France's Council of State—its top administrative court—in an emergency legal procedure that temporarily suspends the order until the court makes a final ruling.

The issue of data protection has gathered steam worldwide following revelations by Edward Snowden, a former contractor with the National Security Agency, that the US had a vast, secret programme called PRISM to monitor Internet users.



An employee of the Google company sets up a camera on the Eiffel Tower on July 6, 2013 to capture panoramic images for the Google street view software

France's fine follows Google's introduction in 2012 of a new privacy policy which enables it to track user activity across its services including the search engine, Gmail and YouTube.

The changes make it easier for Google to collect and process data that could be used by advertisers to target individuals, thereby increasing the company's revenue potential.

The CNIL had asked Google to inform web users in France how it processes their personal data and to define exactly how long they can store the information.

It had also requested that the US giant obtain user permission before storing cookies on their computers, referring to files that track web

surfing unbeknownst to the user.

Google has always maintained that its treatment of data gathered from users is in line with European law and has defended the changes it made on the grounds that they simplify and standardise its approach across its various services.

But critics argue that the policy, which offers no ability to opt out aside from refraining from signing into Google services, gives it unprecedented ability to monitor its users' tastes and purchasing patterns.

Last month, Spain's data protection watchdog ordered Google to pay a 900,000-euro fine for "serious violations" of [users'](#) privacy.

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