

Google seeks help defining 'Right to be Forgotten'

September 9 2014, by Alan Clendenning



Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt gestures during a meeting about the "right to be forgotten" in Madrid, Sept. 9, 2014. Google Chairman Eric Schmidt and privacy and freedom of information experts are holding the first of seven public sessions to help the company define a new "Right to be Forgotten" established by the European Union's top court and when it should take down search result links about citizens claiming information about them is irrelevant or obsolete. (AP Photo/Daniel Ochoa de Olza)

Google Chairman Eric Schmidt and a panel of experts held the first of

seven public sessions Tuesday to help the company define how it should enforce a new "Right to be Forgotten" rule under which Europeans can seek the removal of embarrassing search results.

The company has received more than 120,000 requests to take down 457,000 links since a May court ruling enabled Europeans to ask for the removal of embarrassing personal information that pops up in a search of their names.

"We need to balance the right to information against the rights of privacy," Schmidt said before he and other panel members heard testimony from Spanish privacy and right-to-know experts.

While Google says some decisions to remove or deny the removal of search results are relatively easy, the meetings across Europe are being held to help Google determine how to address European cases that fall into gray areas.

They include removal requests by former politicians criticized for their policies, criminals who don't want their convictions known, bad reviews for architects or teachers and comments people wrote about themselves that they now regret.

Google said Tuesday it could not immediately provide information on how many requests for takedowns have been approved and how many have been denied but said it would release the information soon.

European regulators expect to release guidelines next week on applying the EU court decision, said Isabelle Falque-Pierrotin, president of the French privacy regulator CNIL.



Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt gestures while talking with David Carl Drummond, Google's Senior Vice President of Corporate Development and Chief Legal Officer, during a meeting about the "right to be forgotten" in Madrid, Sept. 9, 2014. Google Chairman Eric Schmidt and privacy and freedom of information experts are holding the first of seven public sessions to help the company define a new "Right to be Forgotten" established by the European Union's top court and when it should take down search result links about citizens claiming information about them is irrelevant or obsolete.(AP Photo/Daniel Ochoa de Olza)

Falque-Pierrotin said coherent guidelines are needed but privacy regulators declined an invitation to join Google's panels.

"Google asked us to join as experts. We are not experts—we are regulators," she said from Paris. "We also want to hear other points of view and we will have our own consultation process."



Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt smiles during a meeting about the "right to be forgotten" in Madrid, Sept. 9, 2014. Google Chairman Eric Schmidt and privacy and freedom of information experts are holding the first of seven public sessions to help the company define a new "Right to be Forgotten" established by the European Union's top court and when it should take down search result links about citizens claiming information about them is irrelevant or obsolete.(AP Photo/Daniel Ochoa de Olza)



Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt, center left, talks with David Carl Drummond, Google's Senior Vice President of Corporate Development and Chief Legal Officer, during a meeting about the "right to be forgotten" in Madrid, Sept. 9, 2014. Google Chairman Eric Schmidt and privacy and freedom of information experts are holding the first of seven public sessions to help the company define a new "Right to be Forgotten" established by the European Union's top court and when it should take down search result links about citizens claiming information about them is irrelevant or obsolete. (AP Photo/Daniel Ochoa de Olza)

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