

Spain annoys Google by approving online news fees (Update)

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Google is battling publishers in various European countries that accuse it of abusing its dominant position and are demanding it pay for using their content

Spanish lawmakers annoyed Google on Thursday by passing a law that allows media organisations to charge the Internet giant for the right to reproduce their news content.

The US search engine had threatened to shut down its Google News page

in Spain if the measures were passed, but the Spanish parliament approved them in a vote on Thursday.

The government hailed the move, saying the measures, part of a new intellectual property law, "recognise the right of publishing companies and news producers to be paid for the use of their content".

Google responded in a statement: "We are disappointed with the new law because we think services like Google News help publishers to draw traffic to their websites."

"We will continue working with Spanish publishers to help them increase their revenues while examining our options under the new regulations."

The law has been dubbed the "Google tax" in Spain but it would also apply to other big web companies with pages that reproduce and link to news content, such as Yahoo.

The government said in its statement Thursday however that social networks such as Facebook and Twitter "are not subject" to the law.

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