

Apple raises iPhone prices in Germany over new content levy

January 3 2016, by Frank Jordans

Apple raised the prices for hand-held devices in Germany at the start of the year, following a deal between the tech industry and content producers that will benefit a range of creative professionals including musicians, actors and pornographic filmmakers.

The Cupertino, California-based company confirmed in a statement Sunday to The Associated Press that the price increase affecting iPhones and iPads is linked to the new copyright levy.

Apple Inc., Samsung and others agreed last month to pay about 5-7 euros (\$5.50-\$7.70) for each smartphone or tablet imported to Germany. A basic version of iPhone 6s now retails for 744.95 euros (\$811.03), compared with 739 euros last year.

The agreement matches similar arrangements already in place for other consumer electronics and consumables such as blank CDs. It is based on a 1965 German law that allows consumers to make private copies of sound, images or texts in return for a small surcharge when they buy the device.

Markus Scheufele, a copyright expert at the tech industry lobby group Bitkom, said the deal includes back payments for phones sold after 2008, and tablets sold after 2012.

In the long term, the industry wants to move away from adding a fixed surcharge on devices to subscription services and pay-per-use models,

where consumers only pay for what they actually download, he said.

But Juergen Becker, a spokesman for the umbrella organization ZPUe that negotiated the deal on behalf of content producers, said past experience had shown that consumers would always find ways to copy material for free, without paying for it, making the up-front surcharge on devices fairer.

All forms of content are covered by the deal, meaning that proceeds from the new levy will also be shared with a group representing "creators, producers and acting artists of erotic and pornographic films."

"Since it's assumed that these are copied too, they get a share," Becker said.

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