

Google pays EU fine for Street View breaches



Google paid a \$1.37 million fine in Italy after the local regulator found its Street View cars drove incognito across the country, violating the privacy of citizens caught on camera without their knowledge.

It's Google's largest penalty yet after a series of clashes with data privacy regulators across the 28-nation European Union. Street View cars have also triggered fines for collecting data from unrestricted wireless connections to gather people's personal communications.

The owner of the world's biggest Internet search engine, which had about \$60 billion in cash at the end of last year, already took steps to make its Street View cars more easily identifiable and to alert people that the mapping service's cars plan to pass through their neighbourhood, the Italian regulator said Friday.

Google cars *"roamed the streets of Italy without being perfectly recognizable,"* so people didn't have the opportunity to *"decide whether or not they want to be omitted from these captured images,"* Italy's data privacy regulator said. The *"illegally collected data was destined for a large database of particular importance."*

The Italian penalty *"relates to an old case that dates back to 2010,"* said Al Verney, a Brussels-based spokesman for Google. *"We complied with everything"* the authority *"required of us at the time."*

The Italian fine surpasses a December penalty by Spanish regulators over Google's collection of personal information on

its users without in many cases explaining what data it collected and what it used it for.

France's data watchdog made Google pay 100,000 euros in 2011 for Street View privacy lapses. The Hamburg privacy regulator last year fined Google 145,000 euros for collecting wireless-network data from 2008 to 2010.

The EU is seeking to empower national agencies to go beyond current penalties that are more symbolic than punitive for global companies such as Google.

Lawmakers are weighing proposals paving the way for fines of as much as 100 million euros or 5 percent of yearly global sales for privacy violations.

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