

[About AP](#) [Contact Us](#) [Get AP Mobile](#) [Help](#)

News Archive

BETA

[Tweet](#) [G+1](#) [0](#) [More](#) [Text](#)

A LOOK AT THE EUROPEAN COURT RULING ON GOOGLE

By [TOBY STERLING](#), Associated Press

May. 13, 2014 1:10 PM ET

AMSTERDAM (AP) — A European court ruled Tuesday that Google must respond when users complain that searches on their names are turning up personal information they don't want to see available to anyone and everyone.

Here are a few questions and answers about the decision and its potential impact.

— What was the court's ruling?

The European Court of Justice, the closest thing the European Union has to the Supreme Court in the United States, ruled that Google and other search engines must respond to user requests to remove links to personal information that turn up in searches of their name. It did not say Google must remove all such links, just that people can make a complaint which Google and its peers in the world of Internet search have to answer. The Luxembourg-based court said an individual's right to privacy has to be weighed against the public's interest in accessing information.

— How did this case come about?

The case began with a Spaniard seeking to have outdated information about himself removed from the Internet. His quest became a key test of the so-called "right to be forgotten" — to have negative information erased after a period of time. Specifically, in 2010 Mario Costeja asked for the removal of links to a 1998 newspaper notice that his property was due to be auctioned because of an unpaid welfare debt. A Spanish privacy agency agreed to his request, but Google protested, saying it should not have to censor links to information that was legal and publicly available. A top Spanish court asked the European court for an interpretation of how European privacy law applies to search engine results, and got a broader ruling than it had asked for.

— What is the impact in Europe?

The immediate impact will be on 200 cases that are pending in the Spanish courts, which will now be decided in light of the European court ruling. It is very likely that there are similar cases in other European countries, which may be impacted by Tuesday's ruling, too. There is also now a real potential that many more European citizens will exercise the right to challenge search engine results for their name. That is a potential logistical headache for Google and its counterparts, including Yahoo and Microsoft's Bing. The 28-country EU, after all, has a population of a little more than 500 million.

— Who does the ruling apply to?

The court's ruling applies to European Union citizens, so it should not have any immediate impact elsewhere. It is also not clear how Google will implement the ruling even in Europe, since its search engine is geared to weigh links, not examine the content of what's being linked. It doesn't have a large system ready for handling such complaints. Google said it was disappointed by the ruling and will need time to analyze the implications.

© 2016 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed. Learn more about our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Use](#).

[GOOGLEANALYTICS]

About Us [The Associated Press](#)

Products [AP Images](#)

© 2016 Associated Press. All Rights Reserved. [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Use](#)