



Google to extend 'right to be forgotten' to all its domains accessed in EU

Search results removals will now be applied to domains beyond Europe, including google.com, if the browser is located within the European Union

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Google will begin blocking search results across all of its domains when a search takes place within Europe, in an extension of how it implements the “right to be forgotten” ruling.

The “right to be forgotten” ruling allows EU residents to request the removal of search results that they feel link to outdated or irrelevant information about themselves on a country-by-country basis.

These edited results will now be shown to anyone conducting name-based searches from the same European country as the original request, regardless of which domain of the search engine the browser is using.

Previously, searches using Google’s other domains, including the US domain google.com, remained unaltered. The search giant actively encouraged browsers to use google.com instead of google.co.uk, google.fr or google.de at one stage. Searches outside Europe using the US domain will not be altered.

Google has been at loggerheads with several EU data protection authorities since the May 2014 ruling by the European court of justice.

In September 2015, the French data protection authority threatened to fine Google if it did not scrub search results globally across all versions of its website, not just European domains. The company claimed doing so would have a chilling effect on the free flow of information, but has now relented.

If a German resident successfully requests Google remove a search result under queries for their name, the link will not be visible on any version of Google’s website, including Google.com, when the search engine is accessed from Germany. Google will use the browser’s IP address to determine their location.

Google said it has received 386,038 “right to be forgotten” removal requests since the ruling, and has accepted approximately 42% of them.

A spokesperson for Britain’s data protection watchdog, the Information Commissioner’s

Office, said the change proposed by Google appeared to address concerns it had previously expressed “on the scope of the requirement to de-list”.

A spokesperson for the French Commission Nationale de l’Informatique et des Libertés (CNIL) - which chairs a working group of EU privacy regulators - said authorities had been informed of Google’s plans, which showed that the “issue of territorial scope requires careful thought”.

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