

### MEDIA

# European Publishers Seek to Protect Content Online

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PARIS  
**L**eading European newspaper and magazine publishers on Thursday called on the European Commission to strengthen copyright protection as a way to lay the groundwork for new ways to generate revenue online.

The publishers said widespread use of their work by online news aggregators and other Web sites was undermining their efforts to develop online business models at a time when readers and advertisers are defecting from newspapers and magazines.

"Numerous providers are using the work of authors, publishers and broadcasters without paying for it," the publishers said in a letter to Viviane Reding, the European media and telecommunications commissioner. "Over the long term, this threatens the production of high-quality content and the existence of independent journalism."

The petition echoes other recent calls from publishers for greater copyright protection as they try to move beyond business models based largely on advertising and try to generate more revenue from users. Only a handful of newspapers or magazines, including The Wall Street Journal and The Financial Times, have had success charging readers to use their sites.

The initiative grew out of a campaign in Germany, led by Axel Springer, which publishes the tabloid Bild, to strengthen

copyright law in that country. German publishers want to create a so-called neighboring right for publishers, similar to protections that already exist for music publishers and other content owners.

The right would give publishers greater control over secondary use of their work that generates revenue.

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*Looking for a path to profits that is built on user fees as well as advertising.*

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Publishers have not said publicly what they would do with such a right, but executives say one possibility would be to try to get business users to pay for access to online content. Under such a practice, businesses would have to pay for special licenses; fees would be collected by a new organization modeled on the "societies" that gather royalties on behalf of musical copyright owners. Private individuals would be allowed access to news sites without such a license.

The letter presented Thursday to Ms. Reding also stopped short of specific proposals. Instead, publishers want stricter

enforcement of existing legislation, said Heidi Lambert, a spokeswoman for the European Publishers Council, a trade group that has endorsed the petition.

European publishers have been leading an effort to get Google and other Internet companies to adopt a new technology that manages the relationship between online publishers and search engines. The system, called the Automated Content Access Protocol, would allow publishers to set the terms of search engines' and aggregators' use of their content.

Publishers say the system, championed by the publishers' council and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers, would make it easier to create profitable Web sites. Critics say, however, that it would create unnecessary new hurdles for users.

Google did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

Martin Selmayr, a spokesman for Ms. Reding, said she had not yet reviewed the document and could not comment on it. But he referred to a speech she gave Thursday in Brussels, in which she said that a top priority for developing the digital economy in Europe was the creation of "a simple, consumer-friendly legal framework for accessing digital content in Europe's single market, while ensuring at the same time fair remuneration of creators."

The petition has been signed by executives of News Corp., Axel Springer, Gruner + Jahr, Lagardère, Independent News & Media, the Daily Mail & General Trust, Burda Media and the Espresso Group, among others.