Italy fines Meta over Android photo access

LEVEL B2


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I. WARM-UP

1. How do you protect your privacy on your phone?
2. When did you last change an app's permissions? Why?
3. What information should apps ask for before you use them?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

regulator
an official authority that makes and enforces rules in a sector

consent
permission you give for something to happen

metadata
information about a file, such as time, location or device details

appeal
to ask a higher authority to change a decision or penalty

feature
a specific function or tool inside an app or device

authorisation
official permission to access or do something

disable
to turn off a function so it cannot operate

turnover
a company's total sales or revenue in a period

III. READING

In November 2026, Italy's data protection regulator fined Meta €805m ($887m). It said the Facebook Android app accessed Italian users' photos, videos and metadata without specific consent or clear information.

The case centres on the gallery suggestions feature, launched in 2023, which suggests photos and videos from a phone gallery as ideas for posts. According to the regulator, Facebook sought one broad authorisation for the whole app and showed only a generic notice.

Users could not see that they were also allowing gallery suggestions. The regulator ordered Meta to seek separate, specific consent for this feature, explain that it accesses the photo gallery, and show how to disable it. The authority said about 20 million Android users in Italy were affected.

It called the infringement ongoing for people who have not updated the app or have already granted consent. Meta plans to appeal, calling the fine disproportionate. The regulator also cited Meta's lack of cooperation and said the penalty is about 0.4% of the group's 2025 turnover of $201bn. The penalty was compared with a 2021 Amazon fine later cut on appeal.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Italy fines Meta $887m for accessing...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much did Italy fine Meta?
2. Which app and platform were involved in the case?
3. What did the regulator say was wrong with Facebook's permission request?
4. What did the regulator order Meta to do?
5. How many Android users in Italy were affected, according to the authority?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should one broad permission ever cover multiple app features? Why?
2. What app permissions do you usually refuse, and why?
3. Is a 0.4% revenue penalty enough to change big tech behaviour?
4. How clearly should apps explain metadata collection to users?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Wish / if only

Use wish/if only + past simple for a change you want now; wish/if only + had + past participle for a past regret; wish + would + base verb for something you want to happen or stop.

"Officials **wish they had explained** *the feature clearly."*
"Users **wish Meta would show** *how to disable it."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence: use the correct wish/if only form of the verb.

1. Users wish the app (request) ___ separate consent next time. _____
2. If only some people (update) ___ the app before 2024. _____
3. Regulators wish companies (cooperate) ___ more in future checks. _____
4. Users wish fines (be) ___ higher for privacy breaches. _____
5. I wish I (not/allow) ___ gallery access in the first place. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 10 minutes discussion. Combine grammar timing with reading if needed.
- Pre-teach or board: regulator, consent, metadata, authorisation. Highlight the difference between enabling a feature and granting consent.
- Reading and discussion: do a first skim for key figures (fine, users affected). Then scan for reasons and remedies. Privacy can feel personal, so let students answer in general terms about apps rather than their own devices if they prefer.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise the regulator's orders in one sentence; others underline app actions vs user actions before paraphrasing.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Start with a quick show of hands, then pair students with different views to compare reasons.
2. Elicit examples (camera, contacts, location). Push for a short reason with each example.
3. If most say no, ask what level might work; if yes, ask how to set it fairly and clearly.
4. Write 'what is collected, why, where stored, how to turn off' on the board as prompts.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, prepare and deliver a 2-minute argument for or against broad app permissions.

Writing: Write a 90-word notice that clearly explains the gallery suggestions feature and consent.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Wish / if only

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much did Italy fine Meta?
   €805m ($887m).
2. Which app and platform were involved in the case?
   The Facebook app on Android devices.
3. What did the regulator say was wrong with Facebook's permission request?
   It used one broad authorisation and a generic notice, without specific consent.
4. What did the regulator order Meta to do?
   Seek separate, specific consent, explain access to the gallery, and show how to disable it.
5. How many Android users in Italy were affected, according to the authority?
   About 20 million users.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use wish/if only + past simple for a change you want now; wish/if only + had + past participle for a past regret; wish + would + base verb for something you want to happen or stop. (Examples constructed.)

"Officials **wish they had explained** *the feature clearly."*

"Users **wish Meta would show** *how to disable it."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence: use the correct wish/if only form of the verb.

1. Users wish the app ___ separate consent next time. **would request**
2. If only some people ___ the app before 2024. **had updated**
3. Regulators wish companies ___ more in future checks. **would cooperate**
4. Users wish fines ___ higher for privacy breaches. **were / would be**
5. I wish I ___ gallery access in the first place. **hadn't allowed / had not allowed**