STOCKHOLM, Sweden - Apple Computer Inc. met a Tuesday deadline to respond to Scandinavian regulatory claims that Apple is violating their laws by making its market-leading iPod the only compatible portable player for iTunes downloads.

Apple's response, however, was not immediately made public as regulators considered the company's request to keep parts of it confidential. Authorities would not comment on the content of the 50-page response letter.

Consumer agencies in Norway, Denmark and Sweden have threatened to take the Cupertino, Calif., company to court on charges of violating contract and copyright laws.

The action could lead to a ban on iTunes from Scandinavian markets if Apple does not allow songs purchased through its iTunes Music Store to be heard on other portable music players and not just the iPod.

The Scandinavian troubles for iTunes come as the French Parliament in June passed a hotly debated law on Internet copyright that could force Apple to make its iPod player and iTunes online store compatible with rival offerings.

A French court last week threw out some measures of the law, though appearing to leave the thrust of it intact.

It is now up to French President Jacques Chirac whether to sign it with the court's changes or send it back to parliament.

In Sweden, Bjorn Smith of the consumer agency said Apple's response arrived by mail on Tuesday.

He said Apple had "requested that specific parts of the letter be treated as confidential."
The agency would review whether the request was in line with Swedish law, which says confidentiality clauses can be placed on parts of commercial correspondence dealing with business secrets or court matters.

If the agency decided that Apple's demands were unjustified, the letter may be made public as early as Friday, Smith said.

"It is good Apple responded in time. It was their obligation to answer," Smith said, adding that the reply is not necessarily an indication that Apple would meet Scandinavian demands.

Smith said the Scandinavian agencies would need several days to decide their next move.

In Oslo, Arne Odden, Apple's manager for Norway, declined to comment on why the company asked for confidentiality.

In California, Apple spokeswoman Natalie Kerris confirmed it filed a response to the Scandinavian agencies, saying only that Apple was "looking forward to resolving this matter."

Intellectual property experts have said that Apple may be able to claim that its licensing contracts with music publishers dictate the restrictions on how and where it can sell songs on iTunes.

Associated Press writer Jaime Espantaleon in Oslo, Norway, contributed to this report.
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