

10 nations tell Google of privacy concern on Buzz

April 20 2010, By BARBARA ORTUTAY , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Officials from Germany, Canada, France and seven other countries are raising privacy concerns to Google over the online search leader's fumbled foray into social networking along with other matters.

Google launched [Google Buzz](#) as part of its Gmail service in February. It quickly came under fire for automatically creating public circles of friends for users, based on their most frequent Gmail contacts. After complaints, the company apologized and made changes to the service.

But in the letter sent Monday to Google CEO [Eric Schmidt](#), the officials said they are still "extremely concerned about how a product with such significant [privacy](#) issues was launched in the first place."

Google [Street View](#) is another area of concern, with officials saying the company launched the mapping service - which includes street-level photos taken by cameras mounted on cars sweeping through neighborhoods - without "due consideration of privacy and data protection laws and cultural norms."

"In that instance, you addressed privacy concerns related to such matters as the retention of unblurred facial images only after the fact, and there is continued concern about the adequacy of the information you provide before the images are captured," says the letter, which is posted on the Web site of Canada's privacy commissioner.

Google representatives could not immediately be reached early Tuesday

morning.

The other countries that signed the letter are Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom.

The officials called on Google to create default settings that protect users' privacy and to ensure that privacy control settings are prominent and easy to use.

"We recognize that Google is not the only online company with a history of introducing services without due regard for the privacy of its users," the letter says. "As a leader in the online world, we hope that your company will set an example for others to follow."

More information: Link to the letter: <http://bit.ly/dtUeUh>

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