

Google to launch disputed 'Street View' in Germany this year

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Internet giant Google will from next week allow Germans to opt-out of its disputed Street View navigation service ahead of its launch in the country this year, the company said Tuesday.

The move is part of an effort to placate German authorities, who have serious privacy concerns about the service that allows users to view online panoramic still photos at street level taken using specially equipped vehicles.

"[Google](#) will roll out [Street View](#) for the 20 biggest German cities by the end of the year," the company said in a statement, meaning [Germany](#) will join the list of 23 countries featured on Street View.

The service allows users to view panoramic street scenes on [Google Maps](#) and "walk" through cities such as New York, Paris or Hong Kong.

Uniquely for Germany, however, Google will launch a campaign Wednesday informing citizens in the featured cities including Berlin, Munich and Hamburg who are concerned about safety or privacy how they can have pictures of their homes or businesses blurred out.

"Renters or owners can apply to have their building made unrecognisable before the pictures are published online," the company said.

Google already blocks out people's faces and car number plates in the other countries featured on Street View and will do so in Germany.

In April, Consumer Affairs Minister Ilse Aigner and Google reached an agreement after a lengthy dispute under which the company would only provide Street View images from Germany after it had addressed privacy concerns.

Aigner, a fierce defender of privacy rights online, has said she will delete her Facebook profile over data protection issues.

Germany is especially sensitive to privacy issues due to grievous abuses by the Nazis and East German communists in the past.

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