

# EU takes Britain to court over Internet privacy

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Young men play online games at an internet cafe in February 2010. The European Commission said Friday it was taking the British government to court for failing to protect Internet user privacy.

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In the latest chapter of a lingering row, the commission said it was referring Britain to the EU Court of Justice for "not fully implementing" [European Union](#) rules on the [confidentiality](#) of [email](#) and Internet browsing.

"UK law does not comply with EU rules on consent to interception and on enforcement by supervisory authorities," the union's executive said in

a statement.

The commission launched legal action against London in April 2009 after receiving complaints about behavioural advertising technology known as Phorm -- after the US company that pioneered it -- which tracks Web surfers to target them with ads.

Communications company BT tested Phorm without letting customers know.

Under EU law, a person's personal information cannot be used without their consent.

The commission said Thursday that Britain had "no independent national authority to supervise the interception of communications".

It added that British law authorises interception not only when people consent but when the person intercepting has "reasonable grounds" for believing consent has been given.

"These UK provisions do not comply with EU rules defining consent as 'freely given, specific and informed,'" the statement said.

Sanctions, it added, were limited to "intentional" interceptions, whereas EU laws call for sanctions against all unlawful interception, whether intentional or not.

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