

German firm develops Internet eraser for photos

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The software should prevent the increasingly frequent occurrence of someone being refused a job or running into other embarrassing difficulties after posting a photo that maybe should have been kept private.

Before the user posts the photo, he or she drags it into the programme which assigns it an electronic key that is valid for a limited time period,

said Michael Backes, founder of X-Pire.

If someone wishes to view that photo later, the server checks whether the photo has "expired" and blocks it from being displayed if its time is up.

Internet surfers already have the power to delete photos from [social networking websites](#) like [Facebook](#), but "experience shows that they don't get round to it," Backes said.

"Most Facebook users, for example, are passive users. They go on, they put on a lot of private information and almost never come back on or they forget their password," he said.

"The software is not designed for people who understand how to protect their data but rather for the huge mass of people who want to solve the problem at its core and not to have to think about it any more," added Backes.

The software will be available "in the next few days" and will cost two euros (2.61 dollars) per month, he added.

However, it will not protect cautious users against third parties downloading their pictures and saving them.

"When people put [photos](#) on line, it's so they can be seen... our [software](#) is not a panacea, not absolute protection," he said.

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