

German privacy watchdog dislikes Facebook's 'Like'

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In this Aug. 14, 2011 file photo head of the German Christian Democrats of Schleswig-Holstein Christian von Boetticher wipes tears after announcing he would step down after having an affair with a 16-year-old he met over the social networking site facebook, in Kiel northern Germany. A German data protection authority is "unliking" Facebook's "Like" button. Schleswig Holstein's data protection commissioner, Thilo Weichert, on Friday ordered state institutions to shut down fan pages on the social networking site and remove the button from their websites, saying it leads to illegal profiling. (AP Photo/dapd, Tim Riediger)

(AP) -- A German data protection authority is "unliking" Facebook's "Like" button.

The state of Schleswig-Holstein's [data protection commissioner](#), Thilo Weichert, on Friday ordered state institutions to shut down the [fan pages](#) on the social networking site and remove the "Like" button from their websites, saying it leads to profiling that violates German and European law.

Facebook insisted Friday that is in full compliance with European data protection laws.

On Friday, Weichert issued a statement saying technical analysis by his office shows Facebook violated German and European data protection laws by passing content data to the social network's servers in the U.S.

"Whoever visits facebook.com or uses a plug-in must expect that he or she will be tracked by the company for two years," Weichert said.

"Facebook builds a broad individual and for members even a personalized profile."

A Facebook spokesman conceded that the company can see "information such as the IP address" of users who visit a site with a "Like" button.

"We delete this technical data within 90 days," said the spokesman, who did not give his name in keeping with company policy. "That is in keeping with normal industry standards."

Weichert's office ordered website owners in Schleswig-Holstein to "immediately stop the passing on of user data to Facebook in the USA by deactivating the respective services" and threatened to take legal action if they fail to comply.

He also urged Internet users in general to "keep their fingers from clicking on social plug-ins" and "not set up a Facebook account" to avoid

being profiled.

The keepers of Germany's strict [privacy laws](#) have repeatedly clashed on issues of privacy with international Internet giants, such as Facebook and Google - often with success.

Last year [Google](#) allowed Germans who opposed its [Street View mapping system](#) to blur images of their homes, while Facebook in January granted members more control over their email address books, after a dispute over its "Friend Finder" service.

Germany's latest spat with the Palo Alto, California-based Facebook also comes a week after a leading member of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative party in Schleswig-Holstein stepped down after admitting to having an affair with a 16-year-old he met over the social networking site.

Christian von Boetticher's resignation sparked a debate about the role of social media in politicians' lives, with German newspapers carrying reports from party members, angry that the state legislator spent more time posting personal information to Facebook than focusing on his job. He has since deleted his [Facebook](#) profile.

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