

Europe to move against Google over privacy rules

February 18 2013



A picture taken on September 24, 2009 in Paris shows a computer on the home page of Internet giant Google's website. European data protection agencies intend to take action against the US Internet giant Google after it failed to follow their orders to comply with EU privacy laws, the French data protection authority said on Monday.

European data protection agencies intend to take action against the US Internet giant Google after it failed to follow their orders to comply with EU privacy laws, a French agency said on Monday.

In October the data protection agencies of the 27 EU states warned Google that its new confidentiality policy did not comply with European law and gave it four months to make changes or face legal action.

"At the end of a four-month delay accorded to Google to comply with the European data protection directive and to implement effectively (our) recommendations, no answer has been given," said France's CNIL [data protection agency](#).

National authorities which responsible for enforcing data protection laws in the EU said they plan to set up a working group to "coordinate their coercive actions which should be implemented before the summer."

A meeting will be held next week to approve their joint action plan, said CNIL, which said it is leading the effort.

Google rolled out the new privacy policy in March 2012, allowing it to track users across various services to develop targeted advertising, despite sharp criticism from US and European consumer advocacy groups.

It contends the move simplifies and unifies its policies across its various services such as Gmail, [YouTube](#), Android [mobile systems](#), social networks and Internet search.

But critics argue that the policy, which offers no ability to opt out aside from refraining from signing into Google services, gives the operator of the world's largest search engine unprecedented ability to monitor its users.

Google reiterated on Monday that its confidentiality policy is in line with European law.

"Our privacy policy respects European law and allows us to create simpler, more effective services," Google said in a statement following CNIL's announcement.

The California-based firm said previously that the changes are designed to improve the user experience across the various Google products, and give the firm a more integrated view of its users, an advantage enjoyed by Apple and Facebook.

"We have engaged fully with the CNIL throughout this process, and we'll continue to do so going forward," it added.

European data protection agencies had recommended to Google that it improve information provided to users, particularly on the categories of data being processed, and for what purposes and services.

CNIL said they had also asked Google to specify precise periods it would hold onto personal data.

CNIL said that by Monday that Google had not provided "any precise and effective answers to their recommendations."

Given Google's failure to act, "EU data protection authorities are committed to act and continue their investigations," said CNIL, adding they would meet on February 26 to approve a working plan on their actions against Google.

European states' data agencies differ widely in their investigative and enforcement powers.

The European Commission stood firmly behind the national agencies, "applauding" their intention to pursue the case and ensure data protection rules are followed.

"Companies that offer services to consumers in the EU must follow European data protection rules," said Mina Andreeva, the spokeswoman for EU Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding.

"It is essential that consumers know exactly how their data is processed" in order for them be able to make informed decisions about using Internet-based services, she added.

EU competition authorities are separately looking at whether the US firm used its search engine to boost its own services and disadvantage competitors by preferential rankings.

[Google](#) has responded to that probe, submitting last month proposals aimed at ending the EU probe into its dominance of online search advertising platforms.

(c) 2013 AFP

Citation: Europe to move against Google over privacy rules (2013, February 18) retrieved 11 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-02-europe-google-privacy.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--