

Facebook abuses 'quasi-monopoly' on user data, EU lawmaker says

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Facebook Inc. is putting profit before its users' privacy with its latest terms and conditions, according to a European Parliament lawmaker who's overseeing amendments to EU data-protection laws.

The social network [company](#) is "abusing" its "quasi- monopoly" to "process the personal data of its [users](#) to develop constantly new business models - without their consent," Jan Philipp Albrecht, a member of the German Green group, said in a statement on Thursday.

Facebook's latest policy update is already being probed by the Dutch [privacy](#) watchdog, which criticizes Facebook for effectively forcing users to accept the changes without asking their permission. Hamburg's privacy regulator said this week he's also seeking answers from the company over concerns the changes could violate German law.

Sally Aldous, a Facebook spokeswoman in London, rebuffed Albrecht's criticism, saying the company updated its policies "to make them more clear and concise, to reflect new product features and to highlight how we're expanding people's control over advertising."

Facebook alerted its users in November that it would revamp its policies, including its data policy, from Jan. 1, a date that was then delayed to Jan. 30.

The world's largest social network for years has been the subject of lawsuits and confusion over how the company controls and displays the

data that members provide.

European regulators also have been sparring with Facebook over how it applies European data-protection rules. The Menlo Park, Calif.-based company, which has its European headquarters in Dublin, has argued that the Irish regulator has jurisdiction over its compliance with privacy law.

"We routinely review product and policy updates - including this one - with our regulator, the Irish Data Protection Commissioner, who oversees our compliance with the EU Data Protection Directive as implemented under Irish law," Aldous said.

EU justice and interior ministers, who are meeting this week in Riga, "have to make a big step" toward harmonized EU data protection rules so that legislation can be passed this year, Albrecht said.

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