

German cartel office says Facebook abusing data collection

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A new AI tool created to help identify certain kinds of substance abuse based on a homeless youth's Facebook posts could provide homeless shelters with vital information to incorporate into each individual's case management plan. Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Germany's cartel office said Tuesday that Facebook is acting in an

abusive fashion by collecting data on the way people use third-party websites.

The Federal Cartel Office said its investigation of Facebook reached the preliminary conclusion that the company has a [dominant position](#) in the market for [social networking sites](#) in Germany.

Further, it said that Facebook is "acting abusively" by only allowing people to use its social network if they consent to the collection of all types of user data from third party sites and subsidiaries such as WhatsApp or Instagram.

Creating custom profiles of users and selling them to advertising clients is a central pillar of Facebook's business model.

Facebook rejected the cartel office's preliminary report.

"Although Facebook is popular in Germany, we are not dominant," said Yvonne Cunnane, the head of data protection for Facebook Ireland, which oversees the company's operations in Europe. "A dominant company can safely ignore unsatisfied customers. But we constantly have to account for what people want and adapt our features."

Cunnane said Facebook takes [data protection](#) seriously, noting that the company will be introducing additional controls and educating users on how best to protect their data in the coming months.

The cartel office said it will make a final decision likely after the middle of next year.

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