

Germany's Continental bans WhatsApp from work phones

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German car parts maker Continental says that social media apps have 'deficiencies' that make it difficult to comply with new EU data protection rules

German car parts supplier Continental on Tuesday said it was banning the use of WhatsApp and Snapchat on work-issued mobile phones "with immediate effect" because of data protection concerns.

The company said such social media apps had "deficiencies" that made it difficult to comply with tough new EU data protection legislation, especially their insistence on having access to a user's contact list.

"Continental is prohibiting its employees from using social media apps like WhatsApp and Snapchat in its global company network, effective immediately," the firm said in a statement.

Some 36,000 employees would be affected by the move, a Continental spokesman told AFP.

The company, one of the world's leading makers of car parts, has over 240,000 staff globally.

A key principle of the European Union's new general data [protection](#) regulation (GDPR), which came into force on May 25, is that individuals must explicitly grant permission for their data to be used.

But Continental said that by demanding full access to address books, WhatsApp for example had shifted the burden onto the user, essentially expecting them to contact everyone in their phone to let them know their data was being shared.

"We think it is unacceptable to transfer to users the responsibility of complying with [data protection laws](#)," said Continental's CEO Elmar Degenhart.

The Hanover-based firm said it stood ready to reverse its decision once the service providers "change the basic settings to ensure that their apps comply with [data-protection](#) regulations by default".

The issue of how personal information is used and shared online was given fresh urgency after Facebook earlier this year admitted to a

massive privacy breach that allowed a political consultancy linked to US President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign to harvest the data of up to 87 million users.

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