

German court rules against Google's terms

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Google logo

(AP) -- A German court has ruled that Google Inc. must change terms of service that could be interpreted to compromise a user's rights, a decision the consumer advocacy group that brought the suit welcomed Monday as a victory for online transparency.

The suit filed by the Federation of German Consumer Organizations charged that the terms of service for opening an account through Google Mail, Google Documents and other programs could be interpreted as giving the [Internet search](#) giant the right to review and even delete a user's information.

"(Google's terms) included, in our view, several rules that could disadvantage the consumer," said Heike Heidemann-Peuser, a spokeswoman for the consumer federation.

The district court in Hamburg agreed, ruling that Google must eliminate

ten clauses that could be interpreted to compromise users' rights to their own data from the terms of service as presented by the federation.

Google said in a statement that it removed the clauses, which it described "unfortunately framed," more than a year ago.

Google spokesman Stefan Keuchel said the terms had already been changed when the court released its decision to clarify that users agree to allow data they upload to be viewed and manipulated only by other users they have explicitly authorized - for instance, through a shared Google document.

"At no point were we allowed to look at private documents, edit them, delete them," Keuchel said. "The data users give to us belongs to the user."

Keuchel said Google is reviewing its terms for German customers to see if further changes are necessary to comply with the ruling.

In June, Google complied with a request from German data protection officials that it erase some photos for its panoramic [mapping service](#) after they have been processed.

Google agreed to delete raw footage of faces, house numbers, license plates and individuals in Germany who have told authorities they do not want their information used in [Google](#) Street View.

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