

Swiss watchdog threatens to sue Google over Street View

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A woman walks past a Google logo at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2007. Switzerland's data protection watchdog on Monday threatened to sue Google over its "Street View" facility, saying that measures taken by the American Internet giant to address privacy concerns were inadequate.

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"If it rejects the recommendation or fails to respect it, the Federal data protection and information commissioner can bring the affair to the Federal Administrative Tribunal for a decision," commissioner Hanspeter Thuer said in a statement.

The [Street View](#) facility allows users to take a ground level panoramic view of some locations on [Google Maps](#), based on still photographs taken by specially-equipped vehicles.

But for the Swiss data protection commissioner, "many images are problematic and insufficiently anonymous."

On August 18, Switzerland had asked [Google](#) to withdraw the service.

A week later, Google said it would work with the authorities to improve the service.

However, the commissioner said Monday that "despite the complementary measures proposed by Google, the protection of the private sphere is not completely guaranteed."

"This concerns notably images taken in private streets, as well as images of gardens which, while invisible to passers-by, are captured by the cameras mounted on the vehicles used by Google," he added.

He also stressed that "a complete anonymity of faces and vehicle registration plates is necessary to guarantee the respect of the private sphere."

Peter Fleischer, Google's privacy counsel, said that the Internet giant was "very disappointed" by the commissioner's move.

"We will vigorously defend our product before the tribunal," he said, adding that Google is "absolutely convinced that Swiss View is legal in Switzerland."

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