

EU court rules sites must warn about Facebook 'like' button

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It is not clear to users that clicking on the 'like' button sends data to Facebook, said the court

Europe's top court ruled Monday that online retailers must warn web users that they send personal data to Facebook through the "like" button.

According to the European Court of Justice ruling, a site that embeds the Facebook "like" icon and link on its pages also sends [user data](#) to the US web giant.

"It seems that that transmission occurs without that visitor being aware of it and regardless of whether or not he or she is a member of the social network Facebook or has clicked on the 'Like' button," it said.

Under EU data protection law, therefore, a European retailer and the US platform are jointly responsible for gathering the data and sending it to Facebook's Irish subsidiary.

Users should therefore be warned and asked to consent to their data being gathered, although the retailer is not responsible for what Facebook does with it later.

"As a result of this case, companies that embed this 'like' button on their website cannot hide behind Facebook any longer," said Monique Goyens, of the European Consumer Organisation.

"The decision therefore underlines the right for [internet users](#) to always get information on what data are collected and how they are used by websites," she said.

The case was brought by a German consumer protection agency against online clothes site Fashion ID, which embeds a Facebook button to encourage shoppers to publicise its wares.

Bitkom, a German trade federation for online businesses criticised the ruling, saying it would heap costly bureaucracy on firms without enhancing [consumer protection](#).

"With its decision, the ECJ places enormous responsibility on thousands

of website operators—from small travel blogs to online megastores and the portals of large publishers," Bitkom CEA Bernard Rohleder said.

He warned that the decision would go beyond Facebook and effect all social media plug ins, which are important for many firms to expand their reach on the web.

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