

Facebook says EU antitrust probe invades employee privacy

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Facebook on Monday said it is asking EU courts to review "exceptionally broad" requests by antitrust regulators there that would scoop up employees' personal information.

The US-based internet colossus maintained it has been cooperating with a European Commission [antitrust investigation](#) and will continue to do so, but that the wording of commission requests casts a net so wide it will haul in Facebook employees' [private messages](#) and more.

The leading social network expects to give the commission hundreds of thousands of documents, according to Facebook associate [general counsel](#) for competition Tim Lamb

"The exceptionally broad nature of the commission's requests means we would be required to turn over predominantly irrelevant documents that have nothing to do with the commission's investigations," Lamb said in response to an AFP inquiry.

Those documents include "highly sensitive [personal information](#) such as employees' medical information; personal financial documents, and private information about family members of employees."

Facebook thinks such requests should be reviewed by EU courts, according to Lamb, and is asking the court to weigh in on broad search terms such as "applause" or "for free" that could easily be found in personal email messages or other exchanges way beyond the scope of antitrust matters.

Regulatory probes can involve requests for messages or documents bearing certain words or phrases, with those seeking information inclined to craft wide nets and those being queried wanting them narrowly targeted.

A highly anticipated US antitrust hearing, including top executives of four Big Tech firms, was originally set for Monday but has been postponed.

A notice filed by the House Judiciary Committee set no new date for the hearing titled "Examining the Dominance of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google."

The hearing would have conflicted with the memorial service for the late representative and civil rights leader John Lewis, who will lie in state in the US Capitol until Tuesday.

The antitrust hearing was called amid rising concerns over Big Tech dominance, which has become even more pronounced during the coronavirus pandemic and coincides with investigations at the federal and state levels into the online giants.

Chief executives Tim Cook of Apple, Jeff Bezos of Amazon, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook and Sundar Pichai of Google and its parent firm Alphabet had agreed to participate in the session.

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