

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2864/10  
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to the Commission

Subject: Data protection - Google Maps Street View

Google Maps Street View is a global project with the goal of collecting street-level photographs of locations around the world to improve the quality and functionality of Google's mapping products. The same service is provided in several Member States and implies the processing of personal data in Europe, the so-called 'raw data', i.e. imagery of people, cars and houses.

Following our previous question (E-1935/10), we are aware that an increasing number of complaints have been made by citizens that feel that their right to privacy has not been respected. Google stated that some features were introduced in order to protect privacy, but in practice there are already concrete data showing that the technology used is very weak and most of the time it is very easy to identify people, or even depending on the position of the person or of the number plate the blurring technique does not work.

Because we are talking about the processing of personal data in Europe and the European Data Protection Directive should apply, what are the Commission's views on the following points:

1. Should a common European approach be created (to avoid a different result depending on the country involved, for instance, in some countries Google notifies their processing to the authorities, in others not; there are also several differences in the way this notification is done, etc.)?
2. Is there a need to provide a set of measures in order to fully respect the right of privacy and data protection of individuals?
3. Is the system opt-out acceptable? Or should people be informed in an adequate way in advance? If a photo that is published in a newspaper without authorisation can lead to a criminal proceeding, why not in this case?
4. Why is there a need to store data and for such a long period of time (1 year)?
5. What security measures have been taken in order to protect the raw data, from the moment of collection up to publication and deletion?
6. Does the technology in use ensure an adequate level of blurring quality?