


Social media users treated as 'experimental rats,' By Facebook and Google EU data watchdog says



- Facebook needs to make sure its new privacy rules are done in "practice and not only on paper," the European Union's top data watchdog told CNBC.
- The social network has unveiled a raft of new tools since the Cambridge Analytica scandal broke.
- Giovanni Buttarelli, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), criticized the data collection practices of social media firms.

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 [Mark Zuckerberg, chief executive officer and founder of Facebook](#)

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Mark Zuckerberg, chief executive officer and founder of Facebook

Facebook needs to make sure the new tools it has introduced to help safeguard user data in the wake of the [Cambridge Analytica scandal](#) is done in "practice and not only on paper," the European Union's top data watchdog told CNBC.

The social network has unveiled a raft of new tools since news of the fiasco broke, with the aim of helping users understand and control how their data are used.

Giovanni Buttarelli, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), said Facebook CEO [Mark Zuckerberg](#) needs to ensure these changes are done in practice.

"I take note of what Zuckerberg has said recently, he said that he takes care of the privacy right. The question is they should do it in practice and not only on paper," Buttarelli told CNBC in a phone interview on Thursday.

Facebook revealed Wednesday [that 87 million users](#) were affected by the scandal which saw a quiz app scrape the data from profiles on the social network and pass them over to political consultancy Cambridge Analytica.

Buttarelli criticized social media firms' data collection practices.

"There are days when you have the impression people are treated as battery animals or experimental rats. We are treated as a farm for data. We are in within a walled garden and every single action is monitored," Buttarelli said.

'Far-reaching consequences'

The EDPS is in charge of making sure that data are being handled correctly within EU institutions like the Commission. But it is also part of a working group made up of the data protection authorities from various member states

Buttarelli said data protection authorities from across the EU will meet next week. Some already have ongoing investigations into the misuse of data, not just relating to the Cambridge Analytica scandal, but other companies too. The U.K.'s data watchdog, the Information Commissioner's Office, is looking into data analytics for political purposes and said in a statement on Thursday that it is investigating 30 organizations including Facebook.

"Facebook has been co-operating with us and, while I am pleased with the changes they are making, it is too early to say whether they are sufficient under the law," Elizabeth Denham, the information commissioner, said.

Buttarelli said there are likely to be far-reaching consequences which could include punishments for companies.

"I'm expecting far-reaching consequences on the broader scale. There is a need of a change of culture," he told CNBC.

Last month, European Parliament President Antonio Tajani invited Zuckerberg to testify in front of lawmakers and give reassurances that EU citizens' data were not used to "manipulate democracy."



Buttarelli said it would be "wise" for Zuckerberg to honor the invitation from Tajani.



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