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Consumer groups launch complaints against Meta's massive, illegal data processing behind its pay-or-consent smokescreen

- Tech giant's gargantuan collection of personal data is against GDPR principles of lawfulness, fairness, data minimisation and purpose limitation.
- 'Pay-or-consent' choice Meta has imposed on consumers is smokescreen to obscure real problem of illegal processing of data.
- These complaints come on top of those filed by the BEUC network in [November 2023](#) to consumer authorities which addressed the unfair, deceptive and aggressive marketing practices by which Meta imposed a fake choice on consumers.

Eight consumer groups from the BEUC network¹ are today filing complaints with their national data protection authorities against Meta, on the basis the tech giant does not adhere to the principles of fair processing, data minimisation and purpose limitation of the GDPR.

In addition, Meta does not have a valid legal basis to justify the massive collection of data it undertakes of Facebook and Instagram users, because the choice it imposes on its users can not lead to their freely given and informed consent.

With its illegal practices, Meta fuels the surveillance-based ads system which tracks consumers online and gathers vast amounts of personal data for the purpose of showing them adverts. It is also the main way Meta makes its profits.

Ursula Pachi, Deputy Director General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), said: *"Meta has tried time and time again to justify the massive commercial surveillance it places its users under. Its unfair 'pay-or-consent' choice is the company's latest effort to legalise its business model. But Meta's offer to consumers is smoke and mirrors to cover up what is, at its core, the same old Hoovering up of all kinds of sensitive information about people's lives which it then monetises through its invasive advertising model. Surveillance-based business models pose all kinds of problems under the GDPR and it's time for data protection authorities to stop Meta's unfair data processing and its infringing of people's fundamental rights."*

Background

Various court rulings and decisions from data protection authorities have pushed Meta to change the legal basis for its collection and processing of people's data. Meta's last resort is to obtain its users' consent for the data collection and processing it undertakes.

¹ The BEUC members participating in this action are dTest (Czech Republic), Forbrugerrådet Tænk (Denmark), EKPIZO (Greece), UFC-Que Choisir (France), Forbrukerrådet (Norway), Spoločnosť ochrany spotrebiteľov (S.O.S.) Poprad (Slovakia), Zveza Potrošnikov Slovenije – ZPS (Slovenia) and CECU (Spain). Consumentenbond (Netherlands) will be sending a letter to the Dutch data protection authority.

As a result, in November last year, Meta began offering Facebook and Instagram users an unfair and misleading choice to either pay to see a supposedly ad-free service or consent to the company's full commercial surveillance with ads. BEUC and 19 of its members already [filed](#) a complaint last year with consumer protection authorities to denounce the misleading and aggressive practices of the company. Today's complaints are based on the GDPR and data protection law.

Notes

You can find a summary of our complaint [here](#).

You can find the complaints BEUC and its members launched against Meta based on consumer law [here](#).

