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Spain blocks Meta election tools – but not pursuing final measures

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The Spanish data protection authority has blocked two tools by the tech giant ahead of the European Parliament elections.



The urgency procedure measures ahead of 9 June voting in Spain came over personal data processing concerns, including on lawfulness of processing, data minimisation and storage limitation.

The Election Day Information and Voter Information Unit tools remind Facebook and Instagram users of elections and direct them to official information. A Meta source noted the tools do not include any information about who users vote for.

The European Data Protection Board (EDPB) told Lexology Pro that Spain has not applied for an urgent opinion or binding decision from it. An authority can apply for one where it considers “final measures need urgently be adopted”

The authority said that Meta intended to process data including names, IP addresses, age and gender. Meta is now cooperating with the block.

The temporary, three-month block only applies to Spain. Meta intends to launch the tools across Europe – except for Italy, where there is an ongoing inquiry by the data protection authority into the issue.

The Spanish agency said the planned processing would violate rules on data minimisation, storage limitation, and the need for a legal basis for processing. It said the urgent measures would prevent data collection, user profiling and transfer of information to third parties.

It said that preventing transfer to third parties would stop “personal data from being used by unknown parties and for non-explicit purposes”.

The authority claimed that with the tools, users “would see an increase in the volume of information Meta collects about them, allowing for more complex, detailed and exhaustive profiling, and generating more intrusive processing”.

The authority also noted that the European Commission had opened proceedings against Meta over the European Parliamentary elections. These are under the Digital Services Act on issues including disinformation, visibility of political content, and monitoring tools.

Daniel López Carballo, a partner at ECIJA in Madrid, noted that the action “does not imply there will be a sanction”. He also pointed to similar actions undertaken by the Italian regulator and ongoing investigations in member states into the scraping of personal data from social media, and noted that the Digital Services Act also brings in stricter requirements for social media sites as well as introducing new rights for users.

A Meta spokesperson said: “Our election tools have been expressly designed to respect users’ privacy and comply with the GDPR. While we disagree with the AEPD’s assessment in this case, we have cooperated with their request.”