

Google Street View in Germany

In March 2011, a Berlin court ruled that Google Street View was not illegal after a private citizen filed a lawsuit, claiming the technology was an infringement of her property and privacy rights. Sebastian Huempfer looks at the case.



Google announced in May 2009 that it would expand Street View, its street-level imaging service, to 20 major cities in Germany. Following public and political pressure, Google worked with German authorities and gave households the chance to opt out and have images of their properties blurred. When the service was launched, 244,000 German households had [opted out](#). The opt-out process was [supervised](#) by the Technical Inspection Agency, an organisation, which certifies the safety of consumer products in Germany.

In March 2011, a Berlin court [decided](#) that Google Street View was not illegal. The ruling came in a lawsuit filed by a private citizen who had argued that her property and privacy rights could potentially be violated by Google Street View. She had argued that the cameras, mounted atop poles up to three metres high, allowed Google to take photos of her property, despite her house being shielded by a two metre-high hedge. Google has [argued](#) that there are no legal barriers for its service in Germany.

By the end of 2011, public concern and debate had largely [subsided](#). Only 80,000 households

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opted out of Microsoft's Bing Streetside. According to Google, Germans are amongst the heaviest users of Street View. After the introduction of Street View, usage of Google Maps rose by 25%. However, Google did not expand its service in Germany beyond the initial 20 cities, and has not [updated](#) photos of existing (and in some cases no-longer-existing) buildings since 2008.

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