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## **GDPR to herald privacy-first era in Europe**

From 25 May onwards, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will strengthen people's data protection rights and beef up the powers of authorities to go after companies who break the law.

The GDPR will apply to all 500+ million EU consumers and protect their privacy regardless of where the companies handling their data are based. It embodies the EU's aim to protect their citizens' fundamental rights – a badly needed effort considering a growing number of data leakages and companies' misconducts – and lays the groundwork for more privacy-friendly business models.

The GDPR will put consumers back in control. Companies for instance will have to give a genuine choice to consumers when they ask for their consent to use their personal data. This will require many companies to rethink their business model, especially those who make access to their service dependent on online tracking and profiling.

Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation, commented:

"Consumers are people, not products. The GDPR is the EU's response to the privacy challenges of a digitalised society. It is a game changer. Consumers should use their rights and draw clear boundaries regarding the use of their personal data.

"All companies would be well-advised to take the GDPR obligations very seriously. Not only because of the possibility to get fined but because it responds to the expectations of users who highly value their privacy.<sup>1</sup> Companies need to bring their technologies and services in line with people's fundamental rights.

"The GDPR has bestowed national data protection authorities with substantial powers to make companies play by the rules. They have a big responsibility to make GDPR a success.

"Consumer organisations also have a role to play. We will keep a close eye on the market and make use of the GDPR's toolbox to help consumers exercise their rights and to defend their collective interest"

[1] More than nine in ten respondents to a recent EU-wide survey say that it is important that personal information (such as their pictures, contact lists, etc.) on their computer, smartphone or tablet can only be accessed with their permission (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/eurobarometer-epriacy>)

ENDS

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