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Historic victory for Europeans' personal data rights

European consumers should see their personal data better protected when dealing with US companies following a landmark judgement of the EU's highest court today. The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) wholeheartedly embraces this ruling.

The European Court of Justice ruled that in the case of Austrian data rights advocate Max Schrems against Facebook that national data protection authorities must investigate if the personal data of a European citizen is adequately protected when dealing with a US company. The judgement also stipulates that Safe Harbor – a data transfer agreement between the EU and US – is unfit for purpose to safeguard EU data protection rights.

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

"This is a historic victory for the protection of European data privacy rights. The European Union's highest court has made it crystal clear: safe harbor is not safe. An agreement which allows US companies to merely declare that they adhere to EU data protection rules without any authority screening this claim is clearly not worth the paper it is written on.

"There is a clear message in today's judgement. Data protection laws need to be respected and enforced regardless if the company handling our data is European or US-based. The European Court of Justice rightfully reminded national authorities of their duty not to dodge this responsibility.

"A fast lane deal for personal data transfer to the US will have to fully comply with EU data protection rules. This includes that member states data protection authorities take action and penalise breaches where needed.

"Those doomsayers pretending this judgement will cut off any data transaction across the Atlantic deliberately exaggerate the consequences. EU data privacy laws provide alternative possibilities to do just that. In essence, if Facebook, Google et al. wish to continue sending European's personal data over the Atlantic they will just have to guarantee an adequate level of protection in line with EU rules."

END

Notes:

1 Click [here](#) for the European Court of Justice's press release.

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