

Contact: John Phelan: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
Date: 25/01/2012
Reference: PR 2012/002

Major EU update of Data Protection laws: Consumers handed greater control of their data

BEUC welcomes today's proposed update of EU Data Protection laws by the European Commission. These will make European standards applicable to all companies processing the data of European consumers.

Valid both on and offline, this wide-ranging review is particularly important for internet users. It outlines how personal data can and cannot be used by companies when consumers shop, email, use social networks etc. Among the many benefits for EU consumers are:

- Greater 'Transparency': Data subjects must be clearly informed what data is processed, by whom, for what purpose, and how long it is stored for.
- A 'Data Breach Notification': This major advance affords the right to be informed when personal data has been seriously compromised.
- New right of 'Data Portability': As consumers are increasingly locked-in to services (e.g. Facebook and Flickr), they will be entitled to retrieve their data and change provider.
- Introduction of 'Privacy by Design' and 'Privacy by Default': The former requiring high privacy standards embedded in ICT from the outset and the latter meaning high privacy standards should be the norm.
- Data protection authorities will have the power to enforce these laws, while individuals can seek redress for breaches or be represented by consumer organisations.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"In recent years personal data has been traded as a currency behind consumers' backs. Particularly online, users have found themselves having dramatically less control of their most personal data.

"Now the Commission has drawn a clear line in the sand. All the elements for a strong, user-centric legal framework are here. These must not be just virtual benchmarks, they must become our everyday standards.

"Today the EU is taking a large step towards giving data rights back to its rightful owners, individuals themselves."

(Continues on next page...)

Key info:

- 70% of those surveyed were concerned personal data is used by companies for purposes other than for what it was collected. 64% feel that information on how their data is processed is unsatisfactory.
- An overwhelming 82% of young people are very concerned that their personal data is used without their knowledge.
- 94% said they wish to retain more control over how their information is used.
- 87% want to be informed whenever information held on them is lost or stolen.
- 71% said it is important to be able to transfer personal information stored and collected by a website when they decide to change providers or stop using a service.

Source – Eurobarometer on Data Protection and Electronic identity
European Commission
2011

Viewable [here](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_359_en.pdf)
(http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_359_en.pdf)

ENDS

(Click [here](#) for BEUC's Data Protection video)