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Europe finalising robust data protection laws

A shake-up of EU data protection laws was given the go-ahead in a major European Parliament vote today.

The proposal for a General Personal Data Regulation, after European Council approval, will be applicable in all 28 EU Member States and updates the 1995 laws. Positive measures include:

- **Jurisdiction** – No matter where a company is based, it must observe the law if targeting users in Europe.
- **Definitions** – Crucially, the legal meaning of “personal data” remains broad and now includes computer IP addresses.
- **Principles and rights** – notably on ‘data minimisation’ and ‘portability’ for users are established.
- **Redress** – Collective legal actions if the personal data of many are breached, lost or stolen while under the control of a company.

The law now passes to the European Council, who BEUC urges to conclude the process speedily.

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

“This EU regulation on Personal Data can be the beginning of a tilt in balance of control back towards users. That is urgent and overdue.

“Most people are entirely unaware that their rights are being violated when online due to what are now everyday business practices. Those who are aware, have negligible ability to control how this data on their daily lives, buying behaviour, social media use, political views, hobbies, financial data and health records is collected and processed. That awareness and control need to be handed back.

“Billions of euro are made each day using personal data. Companies must stop seeing consumers as commodities and start seeing them as citizens with legal rights whose trust needs earning again. These laws must ensure user trust can be well-founded for years to come.

“We must bear in mind that in Europe the notion of personal data protection is not a passing trend or a fleeting cause, it is a longstanding fundamental right. The online world may be borderless, but the commercial acquisition, processing, retention and selling of personal data regardless where it occurs should not change this. We are encouraged that this law states, ‘if dealing with European consumers, adhere to European legal standards’. The EU must now take a strong lead and set a global standard.

“MEPs have dealt with the matter seriously and have voted for legal protections which are robust and appropriate. The challenge now is to ensure the substantial amount of work is not unravelled by national government representatives in the Council or in the face of transatlantic pressure.”

See BEUC’s key messages on EU Data Protection laws [here](#)

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