

Brussels, 10 July 2019

## Data Protection and Competitiveness in the Digital Age

**More than 300 guests attended a high-calibre panel discussion yesterday on the challenges for data protection and competitiveness in the digital age. Organised by the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) and the German Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (BfDI), topics up for discussion included possibilities for cooperation between regulators and the challenges new technologies pose to effective data protection.**

**Giovanni Buttarelli, EDPS, said:** “Massive scale data processing has serious consequences not only for individuals, but also for society, democracy and the environment. Data has become a geostrategic arena in which disparities in the digital dividend shared between those with power over their digital lives, freedoms and privacy, and those without, only continue to grow.”

The effects of data concentration on civil rights go far beyond the scope of individual areas of law. Data protection is no longer just an issue for data protection authorities, but also for other regulators, such as those working in consumer protection or competition law. In order to counter the power of large global technology companies, there needs to be stronger cooperation between the various supervisory authorities. The need for a strong pan-European presence in data protection can also be seen when considering new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud services or blockchain.

**Ulrich Kelber, BfDI, said:** “We should institutionalise the model of cooperation between authorities in different areas of law not only at national level but also at EU level. New technologies create opportunities but at the same time also risks, especially in regard to privacy. Therefore we must work together to proactively contribute to a “human-centered” technology that is in line with the guarantees of data protection as a fundamental right.”

Both Buttarelli and Kelber agreed on the importance of establishing the high level of data protection guaranteed by the GDPR as a global benchmark in the development of new technologies. The GDPR specifically, and data protection in general, should not be seen as a competitive disadvantage for European companies. Data protection is an essential ingredient for sustainable AI technology.

Also joining the EDPS and BfDI on the panel were President of the Bundeskartellamt, Andreas Mundt, President of the French data protection authority (CNIL) Marie-Laure Denis, Secretary General of the European Commission Martin Selmayr and UK Information Commissioner Elizabeth Denham. A [recording of the event](#) will soon be available online.