



Presentation of the EDPS Strategy 2015-2019

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to extend to you all **a very warm welcome** to the presentation of the new EDPS strategy.

Why a Strategic Plan for our five years mandate?

We are witnesses to **an historic moment** for data protection.

Technology is moving at lightning speed.

The politics around the reform of the data protection framework is gaining real momentum and at the EDPS we would like to **open a new deal**.

That's why when we were appointed my colleague Wojciech Wiewiórowski and I set ourselves a target of **setting a strategy in 90 days**. I calculate today to be 88 days since our appointment in December so, there you have it, you may say we have already exceeded one of the key targets of our mandate.

I believe it's **an ambitious but realistic agenda** and we are keen now to get to work.

Our watchwords for this mandate are **active cooperation** and **exemplary leadership**.

Contrary to what some people may say, sound data protection **is part of the solution**, not part of the problem.

Just read the first few lines of the current Data Protection Directive, adopted 20 years ago, and you see that the EU's aim with these rules is to **facilitate the free flow of data** within the internal market, not to hinder it.

But even before that comes the strongest possible statement of principle: "*data processing systems are **designed to serve man**... whatever the nationality or residence of natural person*". The Directive is to be modernised, but this principle is still valid.

This is Europe's Unique Selling Point in the increasingly vigorous global debate on privacy, digital rights and data protection: we place the interests of the individual **at the heart of our rulebook**.

Of that we should be proud.

What are these interests? The dignity of the individual whether as a citizen, consumer or trader; his or her rights to privacy and to personal identity in the digital world; his or her well-being or security; economic and social progress.

So Europe's approach is not to put a brake on economic and the creativity of technological challenges.

The new EDPS team intends to **be more proactive in engagement** with the EU institutions, especially the Parliament, Council and Commission represented today, in identifying innovative but workable solutions.

We intend to be more active than ever **in cooperating with our partner data protection authorities** at national level, and through the Article 29 Working Party.

The remit the institutions gave us when we were appointed was **clear and ambitious**: we were asked to '*develop and communicate an overall vision*', '*think in global terms*', '*to meet unforeseen challenges*' and '*represent at the highest levels*'.

The strategy builds on those expectations. We set out **three strategic objectives and ten priority actions**. Our key aims are:

First, to find **new ways for applying data protection principles to the latest technologies**, be it big data, the internet of things, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, drones or robotics. We need to place **the individual more firmly at the heart of technological development**, through transparency, user control and accountability.

My wish is for the EU to respond to the call from Stephen Hawking and the Future of Life Institute in their much publicised open letter in January, which said '*our AI systems must do what we want them to do*', and calling for interdisciplinary research.

Second, **we need global partnerships** to address the big questions posed by these technologies, and by the social and economic changes which accompany them. **Big data will need equally big data protection.**

We do not need to reinvent data protection principles, but we **do need to 'go digital'**, to make them more effective in practice in our technology-driven society, and to integrate them with some new principles specifically arising from the digital age.

Data protection is too important to be simply the subject of arid debates between privacy lawyers and regulators. This is why **we want to explore the ethics** of these changes.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to get **a rulebook which is clear**, more user-friendly, harmonised and unbureaucratic about the responsibilities who handle personal information. We cannot blow this chance. Scalable and future-oriented set of rules is key to solving Europe's digital challenge.

Colleagues in the Office of the EDPS stand ready to offer proactively their expertise and energies to **get the data reform right**.

Our vision is broad because as EU advisory body, we are constantly requested by law to exercise our consultative role on issues which may have an **impact also on private sectors and IT issues** (take, for instance, recent examples of the green paper on mobile health and road safety). So **the strategy envisions the EU as a whole**, not

any single institution, becoming a beacon and a leader in debates that are inspiring at global level.

My colleague Wojciech and I acquired a extensive experience as national regulators. We know how key is **constructive and active partnership with our colleagues** in the Member States and in the Article 29 Working Party.

I am confident that this statement on openness for cooperation will provide a strong platform for working together on our common aims and exciting challenges in the coming years.

We too understand at the EDPS that Europe is facing an unprecedented and serious terrorist threat, and **has to take meaningful action**.

We represent an independent institution and we are not *a priori* in favour or against any measure.

But we do take extremely seriously our mission of advising the institutions on the implications of policies which have a more serious impact on fundamental rights.

This is particularly important today. This moment is a test of whether the EU legislators are able to learn the lessons of the past, and invest energies on initiatives which are really effective or whose legality cannot be questioned.

Let me say in conclusion that is our pledge to be **more accountable and transparent** in the way we will perform our five year mission. We will publish annual management plans and annual reports to assess the Strategy. You will be entitled to measure our performance on a basis of key performance indicators.

I will appreciate your formal or informal feedback, to work together better.

Thank you all for joining us today. My special thanks to you, vice President Timmermans and all your staff at the Berlaymont for allowing us to host this event in the Commission's cosy headquarters.

Be reassured, dear Mr. Moraes and dear Ambassador Juhansone, that today's hospitality will in no way contradict our commitment to be close but equidistant from each of the institutions!

But I cannot conclude without **special thanks to the EDPS staff and its Director**, Christopher Docksey. They have been working hardly to deliver an ambitious strategy under time pressure, and I am grateful for the bottom-up approach and for the substantial ideas and insights they have generated.

Thank you.
