



Projecting privacy and data protection in a responsible, sustainable future

Brussels, 30 June 2020

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Ladies, Gentlemen, good afternoon,

I am delighted to address you on this special day for the EDPS and I wish you a warm welcome from Brussels.

When I had the honour of being appointed as the European Data Protection Supervisor, I was picturing a very different setting and atmosphere for the launch of my strategy.

Surely, the reality we have been through challenged some of my convictions, for example, the necessity to have a stylish reception to digest the declamation of policy statements.

The EDPS has grown over the years as a strong and mature institution, a stronghold/fortress of independent and courageous thinking. Credits go to my predecessors Peter Hustinx and Giovanni Buttarelli, the giants behind such a huge endeavour, and to whom I wish to pay tribute to.

The Strategy intends to set the priorities and line of actions, marking the mandate for the four years and a half to come. Do join me on this journey for the following 8 minutes.

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The GDPR was a global turning point for privacy and personal data protection. The European data protection law provided a solid basis for a human-centric data economy. As a result, the EU has been a source of inspiration for many countries worldwide.

This process will endure and Europe should keep the leading role not only in legislating but also – or rather first of all – in its implementation.

Europe should not rest on its laurels, as the success of the European approach to data protection will constantly be assessed. For example, in our ability to scrutinise growing complexities in digital systems, pervaded by business models relying on tracking and (too much) powerful controllers.

The new decade will see the crusade for industrial data, where Europe wants to play a leading role.

We will see a proliferation of inter-connected devices, extending the risk surface for criminal and state-sponsored hacking, to gain access to protected information and disrupt services. We will also see biometric technologies, facial and automatic recognition systems, Artificial Intelligence, Augmented/Virtual Reality, increasingly deployed in the spaces and facilities of public utility.

We are not questioning any technology per se. But, we oppose some untested and particularly invasive applications of certain technologies.

This is why, the EDPS expressed, in a recent opinion on the European Commission's White Paper on AI, our support for the idea of a moratorium on the deployment, in the EU, of automated recognition in public spaces of human features. Not only of faces but also of gait, fingerprints, DNA, voice, keystrokes and other biometric or behavioural signals, so that an informed and democratic debate can take place.

Security risks will be growing and cyber security will become more and more complex. Ensuring the security and fair competition throughout the electoral process will be of critical importance for democracies.

The crisis has revealed, even more so, the importance of ensuring that the privacy and personal data of people are protected. Epidemiological surveillance may pave the way for participatory and “under the skin” surveillance, whose repercussions may be long-lasting.

I am preoccupied that the economic impact of the crisis will increase the pressure on organisations to maximise their efficiency, in ways, which may sacrifice the rights and freedoms of individuals.

We must all engage in an informed debate around what shall constitute ‘public good’, whether in times of crisis, or not.

The “new normal” shall not give way to the permanent erosion of rights we have fought so long and hard to promote.

I want EU data protection norms to be solid road signs on the EU’s road to recovery.

I want to engage with the EU industrial policy to boost privacy enhancing technologies, designed in the EU and exported around the world. Europe should also use taxation and international trade to foster a fairer and more sustainable digital Europe.

We do not want artificial geographical borders, but we do have a preference for data being processed by entities sharing European values.

I stand by the European efforts on ‘digital sovereignty’, where data generated in Europe is converted into value for European companies and individuals, and, processed in accordance with European values.

I am also convinced that, as much as we need digital sovereignty, the EU also needs digital solidarity.

Digital solidarity would refuse to replicate the business model of constant surveillance and tracking, which have been damaging the trust in the digital society. This would allow for technology to work for all people in Europe, and especially for the most vulnerable.

And please remember that for me – a Polish man born in 70s– the word Solidarity has also a historical meaning of changing the world together.

We want to have foresight. But, above all – we want to implement practical actions.

This is how I intend to achieve the EDPS' goals, built around the following three main pillars: foresight, action, and solidarity.

➤ **First**

My institution will further expand as a hub of excellence.

We want to contribute to the understanding of the impact that digital technology has and *will have* on our rights.

Rest assured, we will use the best of our expertise to secure a fairer digital future.

I aim to achieve this through different actions: by continuing our contributions to data protection cases before the Court of Justice; monitoring the measures taken by EUI during this current health emergency, making sure that they are temporary; educating the new generation of EU staff on privacy and data protection matters.

I will also strengthen our engagements with NGOs and Civil Society, as they represent a pillar for advancing the understanding of complex systemic problems in our world.

➤ **Second**

We shall be constructive, positive and forward-looking to appreciate the opportunities new technologies hold for humanity, and make sure that data protection is embedded, by design and by default, in innovation.

We will monitor developments in the areas of freedom, security and justice, via our supervision of Europol, Eurojust, EPPO, Frontex, EASO or eu-LISA.

We will focus on areas where data protection interacts with technology, for example by closely monitoring and forecasting emerging technologies and giving the alert when technology is deployed in such a way that does not respect the essence of the fundamental rights to personal data protection.

Naturally, we will also prioritise areas where data protection interplays with other fields. We recognise the synergies between the enforcement of data protection and other rules applicable to the digital economy, especially concerning consumer and competition law, and will carry on our work to ensure that they are mutually reinforced.

➤ **Third**

The EU administration relies on external digital service providers to carry out some tasks.

We have witnessed how this is susceptible to exacerbate risks for data protection, particularly where there is a lack of alternatives to companies that, in some cases, may have questionable standards on privacy and transparency.

The EU has leverage to inject a real change in the market, and transform business models which depart from EU values and rights. Developing a strong oversight for technologies and tools, which are increasingly “endemic” to our digital ecosystem, will be key.

We shall aim to minimise our reliance on monopolies, avoid the EU lock-in syndrome, and explore free and open source software and solutions.

➤ **Fourth**

We will pursue efforts to guarantee the coherent application of laws throughout the digital European Union.

As a member and provider of the EDPB secretariat, we will strengthen the cooperation between national authorities for high profile and resource-heavy enforcement cases, by creating a Pool of Experts within the EDPB.

The Pool of Experts shall be the expression of stronger European solidarity, burden sharing and common approach to ensure the enforcement of our data protection rules.

We aim to provide support in adopting a strategic approach to enforcement for a fairer Digital Single Market based on human rights, promote joint enforcement actions and active mutual assistance.

We want the GDPR to work as a model for all democracies around the world, to boost trust and respect for the digital society.

➤ **Fifth**

The EU should promote digital justice and privacy for all.

Individuals should be given control, however in complex scenarios, 'consent' is not a panacea, as it will suffer from power imbalances between the controller and the individual.

Data protection is one of the last lines of defence for vulnerable individuals, such as migrants and asylum seekers, therefore we will make sure that their rights are preserved.

Moreover, privacy and data protection are an integral part of the rule of law and should never be treated in isolation. To this end, I wish to take action, when, for example, the independence of other DPAs is compromised.

➤ **Sixth**

We will be an even stronger socially-responsible organisation, to promote responsible data processing, vis-a-vis the environmental crisis, growing inequalities and geopolitical tensions.

As a data distribution policy measure, access to privately held data by non-profit stakeholders to foster social and solidarity innovation and scientific research in the public interest, deserves attention, and we will engage in such a debate.

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The EU needs to be smart in its approach towards new technologies. We should embrace those technologies that respect the principle of human dignity, which is the cornerstone of our Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Only then, will we inhabit a prosperous and sustainable future, which is fair and just to everyone. The EDPS stands ready to assist other EU institutions and other relevant stakeholders in this European project of shaping a safer, prosperous and sustainable digital future.

The breakdown of our future actions is in the text of the published Strategy, which I warmly invite you to consult and to comment.

Ladies, and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to further engaging with you all in the Q&A session after listening to our distinguished speakers Commissioner Reynders and Chairwoman Andrea Jelinek.