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26 January 2012 | General, ISCH, ICT, TD

European Privacy and Data Protection Day

The Council of Europe has chosen 28 January as European Privacy and Data Protection Day. This day celebrates privacy and the autonomy of the individual – and gives us the opportunity to engage as citizens in timely debates of today's societies and to reflect on the issue of data protection and privacy. The day is aimed at giving European citizens the chance to understand what their rights are in respect of the collection and processing of their personal data; and also to increase awareness of the risks associated with the illegal mishandling and unfair processing of their personal data.



Most European citizens are generally uninformed about data protection issues and their rights in this respect; how and where their personal data may be captured (while shopping, dealing with public authorities, using a car satellite navigation system, travelling, using the Internet - including social networking sites - or communicating via mobile phone); how this data is processed; the illegal misuse of this data and its consequences. Issues of privacy and data protection have not been far from the headlines in recent years, highlighting the importance of personal data sharing in ensuring a secure and safe society.

Living in Surveillance Societies

COST has supported a number of initiatives which enhance privacy and data protection. As a key contribution towards research in this field, COST is currently funding a pan-European science and technology network on this topic - COST Action IS0807 'Living in Surveillance Societies (LiSS)'. Its main objective is to produce concrete recommendations for the governance and practice of enhanced surveillance. The Action's work is timely, as the 1995 EU's Data Protection Directive is currently under review. The European Commission has just proposed a comprehensive reform of the EU's data protection rules which will safeguard online privacy rights and help boost Europe's digital economy. European citizens have a right to personal data protection through the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Protecting this right is increasingly important as we leave digital traces with almost every move we make.

The purpose and usage of the Internet has changed dramatically since its origin; it has become a storehouse of personal data as people are using it more and more as a medium for communication and a key form of social networking. Participants in COST Action LiSS have had many opportunities to network and engage with senior policy makers at the European Commission and have recently published a book on 'Internet and Surveillance. The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media'.

The publication's contributors explore this changing landscape by addressing topics such as commercial data collection by advertising, consumer sites and interactive media; self-disclosure in the social web; surveillance of file-sharers; privacy in the age of the internet; civil watch-surveillance on social networking sites and networked interactive surveillance in transnational space.

COST Foresight 2030

Another key activity supported by COST was the COST Foresight 2030 – a strategic initiative comprised of a series of workshops exploring a multidisciplinary vision for a future permeated and shaped by the Digital Revolution. The COST Foresight 2030 - Living the Digital Revolution workshop assessed that security and privacy issues must be addressed if people are to trust in, and accept new technologies. As life enhancements technologies become pervasive and personalised medicine evolves, the workshop concluded that society will have to address ethical considerations.

Related Links

- ▶ [European Privacy and Data Protection Day Website](#)
- ▶ [Council of Europe Data Protection Website](#)
- ▶ [COST Action IS0807 'Living in Surveillance Societies \(LiSS\)'](#)
- ▶ [Publication: 'Internet and Surveillance. The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media'](#)
- ▶ [COST Foresight 2030 – Living the Digital Revolution](#)
- ▶ [Reform of the EU's data protection rules](#)

Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship



Personal data is the currency of today's digital market. And like any currency it needs stability and trust. Only if consumers can 'trust' that their data is well protected, will they continue to entrust businesses and authorities with it, buy online, and accept new services – the new services, you in this audience, invent and develop. Reliable, consistently applied rules make data processing safer, cheaper and inspire users' confidence.





COST is supported by the EU
RTD Framework Programme



ESF provides the COST
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