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How will the data protection reform affect social networks?

Right to be forgotten: An Austrian law student requested all the information that a social networking site kept about him on his profile. The social network sent him 1,224 pages of information. This included photos, messages and postings on his page dating back several years, some of which he thought he had deleted. He realised that the site was collecting much more information about him than he thought and that information he had deleted – and for which the networking site had no need – was still being stored.

What are the problems with social networking?

Social networks provide a useful tool for staying in touch with friends, family and colleagues, but they also present a risk that your personal information, photos and comments might be viewed more widely than you realise. In some cases, this can have financial, reputational and psychological consequences. **Three-quarters** of Europeans think that the disclosure of personal data is an **increasing part of modern life**. At the same time, **72%** of internet users are worried that they give away **too much personal data** online. They feel they do not have complete control of their data.

What is the European Commission proposing?

The Commission is proposing a strengthened **right to be forgotten** so that if you no longer want your personal data to be processed, and there is no legitimate reason for an organisation to keep it, it must be removed from their system. Data controllers must prove that they need to keep the data rather than you having to prove that collecting your data is not necessary. Providers must take account of the principle of **'privacy by default'**, which means that the default settings should be those that provide the most privacy. Companies will be obliged to **inform you** as clearly, understandably and transparently as possible about how your personal data will be used, so that you are in the best position to decide what data you share.

Attitudes towards data protection

- **74%** of Europeans see disclosing personal information as an **increasing part of modern life**.
- The most important reason for disclosure is to **access an online service**, for both **social networking and sharing site users (61%)** and **online shoppers (79%)**.
- Over half of internet users are informed about the **data collection conditions** and the **further uses of their data** when joining a social networking site or registering for a service online (**54%**).
- Just over a quarter of **social network users (26%)** and even fewer **online shoppers (18%)** feel in **complete control of their data**.

Special Eurobarometer 359

Attitudes on Data Protection and Electronic Identity in the European Union, June 2011

Any questions?

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/index_en.htm

Contact Europe Direct: 00 800 67 89 10 11 - <http://europa.eu/europedirect/>

The proposals will make it easier for you to access your data and give you a right to data portability, which means it will be **easier to transfer personal data** from one service provider to another. They will also make sure that when users give their consent for companies to use their personal data, that agreement is given **explicitly** and with their full awareness. This will give users control over their data, and help foster **trust** in the online environment.

Why is this good for the digital economy?

A high level of data protection is essential to foster **people's trust in online services** and in the digital economy in general. Privacy concerns are among the top reasons for people not buying goods and services online. With the technology sector directly contributing to 20% of overall productivity growth in Europe and 40% of overall investment aimed at the sector, individual trust in online services is vital for **stimulating economic growth in the EU**.

With the increasing **globalisation of data flows**, and the growth of cloud computing, there is a risk of people losing control of their online data. The new rules will put people in **control of their personal data**, and will foster trust both in **social media and in online shopping and communication in general**.

What will be the key changes?

- Strengthening the **'right to be forgotten'** to help people better manage data protection risks online. When individuals no longer want their data to be processed and there are no legitimate grounds for retaining it, the data will be deleted. The rules are about empowering people, not about erasing past events or restricting the freedom of the press.
- Guarantee **easy access to your own data**.
- Establishing a right for individuals **to freely transfer personal data** from one service provider to another (data portability).
- Ensuring that **consent must be given explicitly** by individuals when it is required for certain types of data processing.
- Increasing the responsibility and accountability of those processing data by introducing **data protection officers for companies over 250 employees**, and the principles of **'privacy by default'** and **'privacy by design'** to ensure that individuals are informed in an easily understandable way about how their data will be processed.