

**Contact: John Phelan +32 (0)2 789 24 01**  
**Date: 21/10/2013**  
**Reference: PR 2013/021**

## **This time it should be personal: EP takes strong stance on data protection law**

The European Parliament's Civil Liberties committee vote today as they lead efforts to seal an update of EU Data Protection and privacy laws.

The European Commission proposed its General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in January 2012, now overseen by the Parliament, and it has taken on even greater importance following the recent PRISM/TEMPORA scandals.

Consumers leave digital footprints when they shop, search or communicate online. Companies can now easily merge personal data in order to identify, analyse or sell on individuals' details. Aside from privacy concerns, consumers can be refused specific services or their contract conditions changed in a discriminatory way, e.g. with insurance.

Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation commented:

"It is of fundamental importance to reinstate the meaning of the word 'personal' in the global data debate. The basic right to privacy is being entirely diluted in today's flash floods of data. So we need to enact and enforce EU laws which will properly stand the tests of time and technologies.

"The symptoms of surrendered control over personal data have been gradual and silent. Too many services demand possession and control of consumers' information. That every aspect of their daily lives, buying habits, photos, political views, hobbies, financial data and health records, are aggregated in the process of 'profiling' is unconscionable and flouts longstanding laws. Commercial use of personal data has strayed into overuse and misuse.

"Such practices coupled with the continuing PRISM and TEMPORA revelations show it's time to roll these processes back. People are looking to European lawmakers to ensure EU data protection standards are rebuilt. We are encouraged by MEPs' cross-party, strong stance on the central issues so far.

"Specifically we need strong safeguards on the transfer of data outside the EU. The EU proposal clearly says if European consumers' data is taken by an international company operating inside Europe or transferred outside, then EU law should apply. We strongly support this drive for clarity.

"Most companies cite 'legitimate interests' as a valid reason to Hoover up more data than is required for the service, for example Google's pooling of all info on users of many disparate services. This terminology is often used as a vehicle to escape compliance with data protection principles. We need to be vigilant that 'legitimate interests' does not become the legal loophole of the new Regulation."

ENDS

You can find BEUC's key messages on the EU update of Personal Data laws [here](#).