



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Brussels, 11 February 2013

EU Data Protection Reform: Major Telecoms Operators Support Push for Level-Playing Field

Today, Vice-President Viviane Reding is meeting Luigi Gambardella, chairman of ETNO, who represents the leading telecommunications network operators in Europe to discuss the EU Data Protection rules proposed by the European Commission in January 2012 (see [IP/12/46](#) and [IP/13/57](#)).

Vice-President Reding and ETNO (the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association) jointly call on the European Parliament and Council to ensure that provisions that facilitate **a level playing field between all actors** of the ICT industry remain a key building block of the EU Data Protection Regulation, in order to guarantee fair competition between EU companies and those based outside of the Union but which operate on Europe's single market. This will guarantee consistent and robust data protection for all consumers. Data Protection is a fundamental right enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. EU citizens' personal data must be granted the same level of protection, regardless of the geographical location or the economic sector of the service provider.

"We are creating a 'one-stop-shop' for data protection in the EU. Data protection compliance will be simpler than ever before. The Commission has calculated that the revamped rules can save companies up to EUR 2.3 billion per year," said Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU's Justice Commissioner. "Our proposed rules are creating a level-playing field: non-EU companies, when offering services to EU consumers, will have to apply the same rules and adhere to the same levels of protection of personal data. The reasoning is simple: if companies outside the EU want to operate on the European market then they have to play by the European rules. We also need a level-playing field across different sectors. For example, on data breach notification it makes sense to apply the same rules for operators regulated under the ePrivacy Directive as operators regulated under the data protection rules."

"The Data Protection Regulation is a major move towards establishing a truly level-playing field, allowing all players in the EU to compete on equal footing. The challenges operators are facing today in the field of data protection are important and we need to put an end to regulatory fragmentation and inconsistent application of the rules to help accelerate the Digital Single Market. The consistency mechanism in the proposed Data Protection Regulation is crucial to ensure the Commission is there as a backstop when regulators can't agree a common line," said Luigi Gambardella, ETNO Executive Board Chair. "Consumers must be able to benefit from new innovative services based on an intelligent and effective data use. The new rules help realising the potential of the internal market for digital content and services and will enhance European industry's competitiveness while at the same time, encouraging more consumers to embrace broadband, in line with the Digital Agenda goals."

The proposed data protection rules strike the **right balance between data protection and innovation**. EU e-communications providers, while continuing to invest in consumer trust and confidence, should be in a position to meet consumer demand for new innovative services. The future EU legal framework will allow responsible companies to unlock the potential of personal data through the new digital services that consumers are demanding. In turn, these services will help generate growth and jobs throughout the EU.

This balanced approach can help unleash the benefits of the digital economy for consumers, citizens and business within the Internal Market. Data Protection rules should not penalise but enhance competitiveness, innovation and the development of new technologies.

The European Commission will work closely with ETNO and the telecoms industry to continue creating the right legal framework for a competitive telecoms sector that can take advantage of the EU's Digital Market.

"The proposed data protection reform follows the same logic as the EU's telecoms reform which I proposed in 2007 and which was adopted in 2009. The aim is to overcome inconsistent data protection rules which are damaging for companies and damaging for Europe's economy, especially in a growth sector such as digital services", said Vice-President Reding and added: "But there is more to be done. The Single Telecoms Market needs a new push. We need to create the right legal framework to stimulate cross-border investments in the telecoms sector encouraging network operators to cooperate across borders" (see [SPEECH/07/86](#), [SPEECH/08/400](#), [SPEECH/08/561](#), [SPEECH/09/336](#)).

For more information

The EU Data Protection reform explained:

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-13-39_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-39_en.htm)

Press pack: data protection reform:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/data-protection/news/120125_en.htm

Homepage of Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU Justice Commissioner:

<http://ec.europa.eu/reding>

About ETNO (the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association):

ETNO's 37 member companies and 12 observers, including leading telecoms operators and equipment manufacturers, from Europe and beyond represent a significant part of total ICT activity in Europe. They account for an aggregate annual turnover of more than €600 billion and employ over 1.6 million people. ETNO companies are the main drivers of broadband and are committed to its continual growth in Europe.

More information about ETNO: www.etno.eu

For press requests, please contact Ralph Lloyd-Davis, (+32 2 227 10 88/ +32 477 77 56 18 – Lloyd@etno.be)