Campaign "Reclaim your Data!"

Press Release 30 September 2009
For immediate release

* European Civil Rights Groups start Campaign Against Police Databases
* Criticism at EU'S Transition towards a "Database Society"
* Exercising the "Right to Access" in National and European Databases

With an event in Berlin this 1 October, numerous European groups and networks start a campaign against the massive storage of personal data by European police authorities. The campaign is pillared from different spectrums, such as civil and human rights groups, migration, data protection, antirepression, summit protests and solidarity.

The call "Reclaim your data from the European police authorities!" encourages people to exercise their right to access police databases, including the Schengen Information System (SIS), the computer systems of the European Police Office Europol or data that is exchanged via the so called "Prüm treaty".

Europeanwide, personal data from billions of people is stored in information systems, that are run by police or secret services and polled automatically. Affected are mostly immigrants and asylum seekers, who were never accused of having committed any offence.

"The practice of warrants of third country nationals in the Schengen Information System by the responsible authorities is in a frightening number of cases unlawful and mistaken," critizises the lawyer Angela Furmaniak from Freiburg (Germany)." As already today a storage in the SIS has wide-ranging consequencies for the people affected, it is to be feared with the planned expansion of the capabilities of retention that the abuse of data will increase."

Targetted also are EU citizens, for example of having random groundless ID checks at political protests or sporting events.

"A first data storage involves unpleasant consequences at further checks and can lead to a denial of entry or departure from one country to another, and other police harassment", says Heiner Busch from the German Committee of Constitutional Rights and Democracy. "With the challenged introduction of a new data category of 'Troublemaker' in the SIS this arbitrariness would be automated".

European Ministers of Interior, facing an "enormous amount of data", demand more competencies and technical requirements for the utilization of this "data-tsunami" (original quote from European Ministers of Interior issued in a strategy paper) for the police authorities.

"For European police, these already existing massive disposable data of persons, things and their relations are trimmed by use of 'data-mining' software", states Matthias Monroy of the group Gipfelsoli. "Databases are thus processed by computers, which should detect 'risks' at an early stage and preview any deviant behaviour. The EU becomes a database society".

The "Stockholm Programme", that European Interior Ministers want to have released in

December, declares the creation of a boundless compound of information – including the USA – to a top priority of European home affairs in the next five years.

Data protection is miniaturised in European police collaboration: Data protection does not figure highly in European police cooperation; a set of common standards is kept to a minimum. Issues of proportionality or prescribed data storage periods are generally ignored.
Thus the danger is the normalization of uncontrolled storage and cross-referencing of data collected in one country to be continued by another country.

"To rid oneself of the suspicion and mistrust that undermines personal and civil liberties, in serious cases one is forced to take expensive and exhausting legal action", comments Eric Toepfer of the Berliner Institut für Buergerrechte und Oeffentliche Sicherheit.

With the campaign "Reclaim your Data!" the signatories are calling people to assure themselves about a possible retention by exercising the right to access in police databases.

The switchboards for the cross-border exchange of information are central police authorities of the respective EU member state. However, the central police authorities are also obliged to provide information on data that might be stored there.

The digest received in response will help as a starting point for getting your data out of the computer systems, by legal or political means.

The start of the campaign "Reclaim Your Data!" will be presented at an event in Berlin organised by the Committee for Constitutional Rights and Democracy
(see http://euro-police.noblogs.org/post/2009/09/22/meine-daten).

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Further information

* Website of the campaign with current signatories:
http://euro-data.noblogs.org
* Future plans of European ministers of interior and justice:
http://stockholm.noblogs.org

European signatories (always updated on http://euro-data.noblogs.org)