A modern internet governance model should be universal and respectful of fundamental freedoms

The efforts of the European Union (EU) to build an integrated model of internet governance and data protection should be complemented by an effective reform of the EU’s own legal framework and the swift adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation, said the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) following the publication of his Opinion on the Commission Communication on Internet Policy and Governance – Europe’s role in shaping the future of Internet Governance.

Given the increasingly dominant role of the internet in our everyday lives and its importance in driving economic growth, it is essential that the EU’s efforts to build a model of internet governance that respects the individual’s rights to privacy and data protection are not made in isolation. The EDPS supports a broad representation of groups and organisations from civil society and industry – with particular attention being paid to balance the representation of internet giants.

This multistakeholder approach should include data protection authorities as they can play a vital role in ensuring that the future internet governance model does take due account of individuals’ rights to privacy and data protection. This responsibility should be reflected in their legal mandates and the resources provided to them.

Data protection is essential to restoring users’ confidence in the internet so the protection of fundamental rights on the internet cannot be left to self-regulation alone. This means that the structures and processes of governance as well as administrative procedures must have a built-in mechanism for their protection. Furthermore, the EDPS reminds ICANN that the data protection issues of the Whois system, which the Article 29 Working Party has repeatedly criticised, must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) is an independent supervisory authority devoted to protecting personal data and privacy and promoting good practice in the EU institutions and bodies. He does so by:

- monitoring the EU administration's processing of personal data;
- advising on policies and legislation that affect privacy;
- cooperating with similar authorities to ensure consistent data protection.

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