

Abstract

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Privacy is at the core of what we do at Facebook. The dual objectives of promoting a thriving digital economy in Europe and protecting citizens' privacy are not mutually exclusive. Our services are designed to make both possible.

Facebook is strongly regulated by the Irish Data Protection Commissioner (DPC). We have our European Headquarters in Dublin, which is a symbol of our commitment to working with EU authorities and citizens. The recent audit by the Irish DPC recognized that Facebook's current privacy practices go far beyond the existing legal requirements, which proves how seriously we take the issue.

The new legislative framework proposed by the European Commission, for a Data Protection Regulation and Directive, needs to encourage best practices without being overly prescriptive. 'Privacy-by-design' is an important principle which is recognized in the Commission's proposal. It is also one of the core principles of Facebook's privacy programme: From the conception of our products we have dedicated privacy experts working with our engineers to ensure that the products are built taking into account all privacy implications. Facebook's implementation of 'privacy-by-design' is a prime example of how companies offer control to citizens over their own information and online footprint. Our users are empowered with control over each piece of content they share and the possibility to choose the audience with whom they are sharing it with.

The European Commission's objective in bringing more harmonization in Data protection legislation in Europe is

welcomed. This approach will be an enabler for online businesses to thrive and operate across a variety of platforms and national markets. For businesses to operate by the same rules across Europe, principles like the 'one-stop-shop' proposed in the regulation are essential. This rule is important in terms of harmonization and ensuring legal certainty for companies, large and small, operating in the EU.

The 'one-stop-shop' approach is an important incentive for European start-up companies who will be relieved of the burden of complying with 27 different legal regimes. If defined appropriately, this regulatory method will contribute to the further development of the EU single market, and will support the digital economy. A recent study from Deloitte shows that positive economic effect, concluding that Facebook added more than €15 billion in value to the European economy in 2011, driving more than €32 billion in revenue to European businesses and supporting more than 230,000 jobs.

The current legislative proposals have the potential to facilitate innovation, as well as providing consumers with greater transparency and control over the use of their personal data. It is possible to have sound privacy regulation and a thriving digital sector, and at Facebook we believe that we are leading the way in promoting both objectives.