



Protect your privacy: think twice before you give yourself away

Sometimes, it is just so tempting. You fall madly in love, get angry, or drunk, and you want to tell the whole world - so you put it on Facebook. You put your address and telephone number on the internet when you buy something. Your doctor has your medical record in an online database. You share thoughts and data online without even thinking about it. But what if you want to remove them?

The EP has been looking at the issue of personal data protection both in international relations (SWIFT, NPR) and at home, trying to strike the right balance between privacy and security.

On the occasion of the **European Day of Data Protection** on Saturday we have selected some interesting data from last year's Eurobarometer on the subject and asked German Socialist **Birgit Sippel**, a member of the Civil Liberties Committee, to comment, in view of Parliament's activities and a new Commission proposal for the reform of data protection rules.

In July, the EP welcomed the plan to come up with new rules to protect data and a new policy for the processing of personal data in police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters. The "right to be forgotten" is one of the points, on which the Commission and Parliament agree.

74% of Europeans see disclosing personal information as an increasing part of modern life - Sippel says the rules dating from 1995 no longer meets the needs of the digital age and must be adapted. "We need rules that guarantee a high level of protection, without unnecessarily restricting the right of freedom of opinion and freedom of information, or preventing the daily, often harmless, processing of personal data."

75% of EU citizens think they should be able to delete personal information stored on a website - the "right to be forgotten" must be guaranteed for all EU citizens, so that their data is deleted when the grounds for storing them disappears, says Sippel. It is particularly important that the person concerned always knows by whom, when, for what purpose and for what period data will be stored and how it will be processed. The right of EU citizens "to be forgotten" should also be secured outside the EU.

67% of Europeans are not aware of the existence of a national public authority responsible for protecting their rights regarding personal data - national data protection authorities are currently subject to very different rules and EU minimum standards are not implemented in the same way, she notes. The EP welcomes the Commission's proposal to make national data protection authorities stronger. "We need to raise awareness on how to handle personal data...only a harmonised European legal framework can offer EU citizens protection against misuse of their data."