

Bye bye cookies? MEPs consider new e-privacy rules

A new e-privacy regulation promises to change the way our data is protected online, starting from the way website cookies track our online activities.

New rules promise to change the way we use and share information online. This information is stored by websites in the form of cookies that we can either accept or reject via a pop up window that appears when we visit a new website. In January the European Commission proposed a new e-privacy regulation that could change this procedure in favour of setting preferences in our devices or browsers to avoid having to deal with these pop up windows every time. Before these new rules can enter into force, they will still need to be approved by the European Parliament. MEPs are expected to vote on the proposal during a plenary session in October. We discussed the plans with Estonian S&D member Marju Lauristin, the MEP responsible for steering the new rules through Parliament.

Why is there a need to update the present rules on online privacy?

The [original directive](#) was created in 2002: you can imagine how many things have changed since then! One of the most important changes is how we exchange information about our private life. We don't exchange information through phones anymore, not even through emails so much. We exchange information through all kinds of social media: Instagram, WhatsApp, Messenger and so on. All these tools and all these channels are not covered by the previous directive.

In addition this legislation will be implemented in all member states in similar ways, so there will be the same level of protection.

How is the new regulation going to work when it comes to accepting or rejecting cookies on websites?

You will have in your browser or website or on your smartphone the opportunity [to accept cookies]. For example, I like that my location is tracked because I want to know it in case I lose my phone, or I want to use Uber and for that I give it the opportunity to track me. We need to ensure that our private environment is under our control, not under somebody else's control.

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Marju Lauristin

There is an obligation for developers and providers to give sufficient, understandable and simple information. The choice for the consumer should also be gradual, so that there would be more and more interaction between the provider and the customers.

I think that this will also give European industries a competitive advantage. I personally know of several small and medium-sized enterprises where young people are working already on this type of innovative solutions and on how to protect consumer privacy.

European publishers have expressed concerns over the change in the cookie rules, claiming it would give too much power to internet giants who control browsers, the place where the consent for data use is likely to be given. How do you respond to that?

We are well informed about these concerns and we take them very seriously. When we looked at the text proposed by the Commission and discussed that with all stakeholders, many of them said they are very concerned that the number one browser provider for all of us is Google.

We tried to solve this issue by giving consumer different levels of choice. We want to achieve that the default settings are “no tracking”. We all should have appropriate information about what different cookies mean. We would then give consent according to our own interests. European companies will communicate more actively about their offers so that really we can make conscious and informed choices.

Find out more

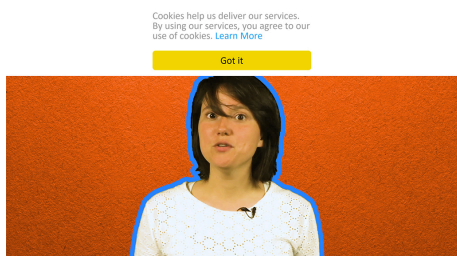
[Articles on the digital single market](#)

[Digital Agenda for Europe](#)

[EU fact sheet: personal data protection](#)



Marju Lauristin



Cookies explained

<https://www.europartv.europa.eu/en/programme/society/cookies-explained>