

The EU has a strong, comprehensive and enforceable privacy protection framework. The new rules proposed by the Commission will further strengthen and harmonise data protection laws throughout the Union, giving greater control to citizens over their data and creating an environment of legal certainty for companies.

Setting the global standard

The EU is a global standard setter for privacy and data protection. Non-EU countries can obtain an "adequacy" ruling from the European Commission that makes it easier for companies to exchange data with EU companies. This serves to raise standards right around the world.

As privacy is the cornerstone of free speech and democracy, it is absolutely crucial that the European Union gets this right...not just to protect European citizens and businesses, but to set the standard for these rights around the world.

US counter-lobbying

However, the US Government has gone to great lengths to portray the EU as isolated for adopting a pro-privacy approach. US Ambassador William Kennard has been getting increasingly aggressive on this point in recent speeches.

Even Google's Global Privacy Counsel, Peter Fleisher, has written about this in his blog. He says that, "...the "world" will have to watch Europe do its own thing in its own backyard, while maintaining a different, faster, more innovative pace in the "rest of world"."

Behind the flamboyant and inventive lobbying, the fact remains that the new Regulation does little more than ensure that existing legal principles are adapted to the digital age. The lobbying is not to fight against a new measure, but to fight to reduce existing safeguards.

Economic value

There are very strong economic incentives for strengthening data protection. The disastrously low trust of citizens, both in the EU and US, in online companies is clearly unhelpful for the growth of a thriving online economy.

Building democratic foundations around the world

The economic benefits of an "adequacy" rating creates a strong incentive for countries to increase their data protection standards. So far the EU has given Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Uruguay, Switzerland, Argentina, Israel, Andorra, Isle of Man, Faeroe Islands and Guernsey the EU seal of approval on Data Protection. Emerging economies are increasingly seeing the economic and societal benefit of an adequacy ruling from the European Commission.

Many countries, especially developing nations, have passed their very first data protection frameworks, or are currently updating them, in response to the rapid advancement of the information society. Their frameworks have been, and continue to be, strongly influenced by Europe's 1995 Directive. These include, Canada, Hong Kong, Jamaica, the Philippines, South Korea, Israel, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, Peru, Costa Rica and Colombia.

Boosting privacy globally

And it's not only regulatory standards: companies operating globally, like Google, will have to respect EU privacy law in the EU. Economies of scale mean that it would be easier for them to offer similar levels of protection around the world.

The existing EU Directive has helped improve privacy standards and, as a result, free speech and democracy around the world. A successful modernisation of the Directive will prolong this positive effect.