

Digital privacy

The ePrivacy Directive and the General Data Protection Regulation help ensure digital privacy for EU citizens.



When you access the web, you often entrust vital personal information, such as your name, address, and credit card number, to your Internet Service Provider and the website you are using. What happens to this data? Could it fall into the wrong hands? What rights do you have with regards to your personal information?

Common EU rules have been established to ensure that there is a high standard of protection for personal data everywhere in the EU. Currently, the two main strands of the data protection legal framework in the EU are the ePrivacy Directive (Directive on privacy and electronic communications), and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The ePrivacy Directive builds on EU telecoms and data protection frameworks to ensure that all communications over public networks maintain respect for fundamental rights. There should be a high level of data protection and of privacy regardless of the technology used.

The European Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation on Privacy and Electronic Communications to replace the Directive in 2017.

The EU GDPR ensures that personal data can only be gathered under strict conditions and for legitimate purposes. Organisations that collect and manage your personal information must also protect it from misuse and respect certain rights.

Informed consent for 'cookies' and other devices

The ePrivacy Directive requires EU countries to ensure that users grant their consent before cookies (small text files stored in the user's web browser) are stored and accessed in computers, smartphones or other device connected to the Internet.

The draft Regulation introduces the concept of "privacy by design" whereby users can choose a higher or lower level of privacy.

Personal data breaches

Telecom operators and Internet Service Providers possess a huge amount of customers' data, which must be kept confidential and secure. However, sometimes sensitive information can be stolen, lost, or illegally accessed. The ePrivacy Directive ensures that the provider reports any personal data breaches to the national authority and informs the subscriber or individual directly of any risk related to personal data or privacy.

The draft Regulation does not include specific provisions on personal data breaches but relies on the relevant provisions of the GDPR.

List of national competent authorities

[Learn more about data protection](#)

Latest

PRESS RELEASE | 03 June 2021
Commission seeks views on data sharing

The European Commission has launched an open public consultation on the announced Data Act aiming to create a fair data economy by ensuring access to and use of data. The consultation seeks to gather views from citizens, businesses, online

platforms, academics, civil society, administrations and all interested parties. It is open until 3 September.

PRESS RELEASE | 19 October 2020

Coronavirus: EU interoperability gateway goes live, first contact tracing and warning apps linked to the system

To exploit the full potential of contact tracing and warning apps to break the chain of coronavirus infections across borders and save lives, the Commission, at the invitation by EU Member States, has set up an EU-wide system to ensure interoperability – a so-called ‘gateway’.

PRESS RELEASE | 10 September 2020

Fighting child sexual abuse: Commission proposes interim legislation to enable communications services to continue detecting child sexual abuse online

The Commission has proposed an interim Regulation to ensure that providers of online communications services can continue detecting and reporting child sexual abuse online and removing child sexual abuse material.

PRESS RELEASE | 16 April 2020

Coronavirus: An EU approach for efficient contact tracing apps to support gradual lifting of confinement measures

EU Member States, supported by the Commission, have developed an EU toolbox for the use of mobile applications for contact tracing and warning in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This is part of a common coordinated approach to support the gradual lifting of confinement measures, as set out in a Commission Recommendation last week.

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Big Picture

Online privacy and safety

Common EU rules guarantee a high standard of privacy online. The EU is committed to ensuring citizens, and particularly children, are safe online.

Dig deeper

Proposal for an ePrivacy Regulation

The European Commission's proposal for a Regulation on ePrivacy aims at reinforcing trust and security in the digital world.

See Also

Creating a better Internet for kids

The strategy for a better Internet for children provides actions to empower young people as they explore the digital world.

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