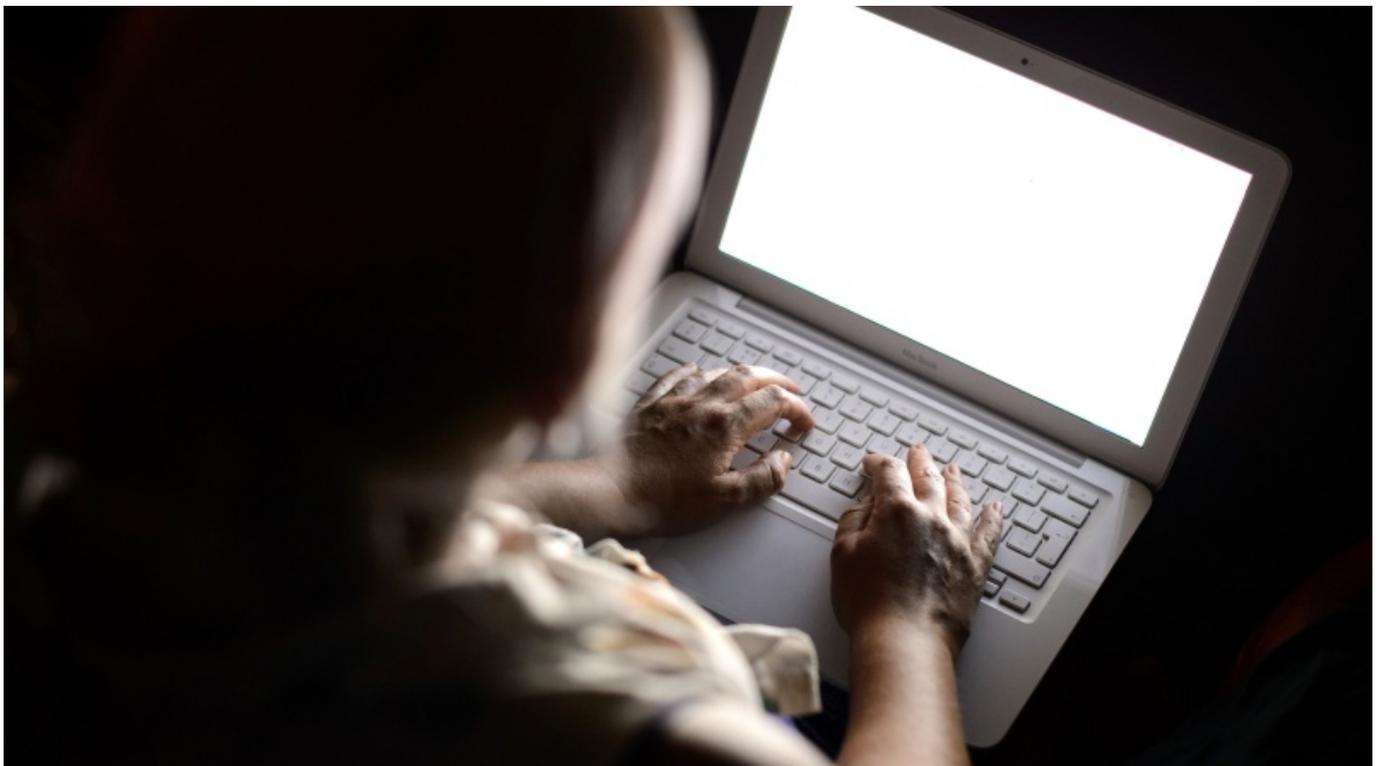


No EU data protection deal 'before end of year'

Written by Julie Levy-Abegnoli on 8 January 2015 in News
News

Rapporteur on the EU data protection regulation says parliament and council are 'heading in two different directions'.



The implementation of the general data protection regulation is proving to be a tricky task. The commission presented its initial legislative proposal on the matter in January 2012, but has since then been unable to reach an agreement with parliament and council.

Parliament's civil liberties, justice and home affairs (LIBE) committee adopted its version of a first draft regulation in March last year, but discussions have so far failed to yield any tangible results.

Jan Philipp Albrecht, a vice-chair on the LIBE committee and rapporteur on the issue, warned that "even if the council is ready to negotiate somewhere in June, it is not sure we will finalise a compromise before the end of the year".

He complained that "council and parliament are heading in two completely different directions" and that the current approach of "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" was to blame for the delay

in negotiations.

The German deputy called on the council to "be tough on individual rights and sanctions otherwise we will not have an agreement".

"Every day we postpone this procedure, the standards for the protection of personal data in Europe are endangered more and more" - Jan Philipp Albrecht

He said that if companies are left to their own devices in deciding to what extent they wish to comply with the law, "then on the other side you have to be very strong on individual and consumer rights - consumers need to have the ability to enforce their individual rights and we need to ensure high sanctions in case of a breach of rules".

Albrecht highlighted that "every day we postpone this procedure, the standards for the protection of personal data in Europe are endangered more and more".

And while he is pleased that the Latvian EU council presidency will be taking on this issue during its term, he stressed that "a small presidency cannot be the only one" to tackle the problem - "the bigger states need to push for it, Germany and France but also the UK".

However, he did praise the EU for "rightly deciding to exclude the issue of data protection in TTIP [transatlantic trade and investment partnership]" talks, explaining that "we first of all need to decide our own rules in the EU [...] otherwise we divide ourselves in these trade talks and we will just be the party that has to accept third parties' standards".

If standardised EU data protection regulation were to be put in place it is not clear who exactly would be in charge of overseeing things. Albrecht rejected the idea of a single European data protection authority, saying, "no one wants that - it would be very far away from the citizens and there would be a work overload".

Nevertheless, he is confident justice, consumer and gender equality commissioner Vera Jourová "will be strong enough to show clearly where the red lines for the commission are and push for a quick adoption of this regulation".

Parliament hopes to enter trilogues with the commission and council before the summer break and for the legislative work to be completed by the end of the year.

About the author

Julie Levy-Abegnoli is a journalist and editorial assistant for the Parliament Magazine

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