

Press Release
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**Declaration of Alex Türk, Chairman of the Article 29 WP on
the European Data Protection Day - 28 January 2009**

The celebration of the 3rd of Data Protection Day will give the European Data Protection Authorities the opportunity to remind strongly the basic right of everyone to the protection of his/her personal data.

It is indeed unacceptable that in our countries where the right to data protection is a constitutional right, just as freedom of movement or freedom of the press, the vast majority of our fellow citizens are neither fully aware about such rights or their importance nor have heard about them.

We must firmly initiate powerful awareness-raising campaigns aimed at explaining that data protection is not, and must not be seen as, an abstract or a theoretical subject.

What is it actually? Data protection rules aim at upholding the right not to be on file or monitored in an abusive manner even if there is nothing wrong against us. Thus they aim at protecting human dignity and the intimate life of everyone.

At a time when we leave every day even more personal data on the Internet, and where we accept more or less consciously to be subject to daily tracing (through biometrics, RFID chips, videosurveillance, search engines, geolocalisation and so on), private life and public space are intermingled to the point that they now challenge our right to intimacy. It must be fought against this drift, refusing to admit the idea of being traced, not to be penalized for all and to exercise self-vigilance.

The awareness of the citizens throughout all Europe and particularly of the youngsters to the fundamental right to the protection of their personal data accounts thus among the top priorities of our Data Protection Authorities. In 2008, they have taken several actions in this direction. Thus, the Article 29 WP has adopted in 2008 several key opinions for the citizens. They are related to search engines and the protection of minors.

In the same spirit, at the last International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners held in Strasbourg in October 2008, the representatives from 60 Data Protection Authorities from all continents have adopted two resolutions focused on social networks and on the protection of minors.

Because of the seriousness of both risks and drifts outlined, Data Protection Authorities must, as a matter of urgency, be provided with the necessary means to make their actions more effective at the international level. Data protection must be made more concrete and accessible to the public at large, and call upon self-vigilance of all. It is on this double condition only that these authorities will be in a position to influence public opinion and thus be heard by the States and the international community.

In this regard, it would be particularly welcome to establish each year, an international Privacy and Data Protection Day or even Week, as unanimously recommended at the 30th International Data protection Conference, last October.

Done at Brussels, 27 January 2009
Chairman of the Article 29 WP
Alex Türk