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Issued by the Article 29 Data Protection Working Party

The European data protection authorities assembled in the Article 29 Working Party express their greatest indignation after the attacks recently perpetrated in Paris, especially on Wednesday 7 January 2015 in the premises of the French newspaper Charlie Hebdo and in the following days.

The Working Party expresses its most sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

Today more than ever, European citizens need to show that our societies will stand strong on their common values. These values are fundamental democratic assets, which have developed and matured over centuries and must not be surrendered, whatever the circumstances.

The protection of private life and of personal data is a key part of this democratic heritage, including because it conditions the respect of other fundamental freedoms such as freedom of speech or freedom of movement. It is a principle that is neither absolute, nor self-centered as it must be combined with the respect of other such freedoms, public security requirements and the need to foster innovation.

The current situation obviously makes it more necessary than ever to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between these different, but not contradictory objectives.

While the criteria to be weighed certainly may change under circumstances, the need to make sure that this balance is struck always stays. This requirement is a barrier that democracies must set to themselves so as to remain within the rule of law.

In this specific context, the data protection authorities of the EU firmly reiterate their collective commitment to contribute to preserving our European values and principles. They thus look forward to contributing to the discussion on how to strike this balance.

Background information

The Article 29 Working Party on the Protection of Individuals with regard to the Processing of Personal Data is an independent advisory body on data protection and privacy, set up under Article 29 of the Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC. It is composed of representatives from the national data protection authorities of the EU Member States, the European Data Protection Supervisor and the European Commission. Its tasks are described in Article 30 of Directive 95/46/EC and Article 15 of Directive 2002/58/EC. The Article 29 Working Party is competent to examine any question covering the application of the data protection directives in order to contribute to the uniform application of the directives. It carries out this task by issuing recommendations, opinions and working documents.

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/index_en.htm