



ePrivacy: European telcos support a strong alignment with GDPR

Brussels, 10 February 2021 – Europe’s telecommunication industry is fully committed to the principle of confidential communications and supports the Continent’s ambition to lead the data economy. European citizens deserve access to digital services that are trustworthy and based on European values.

The telecommunications sector recognises the significant efforts undertaken by the Portuguese Presidency, which led to an agreement at this week’s COREPER. The introduction of the principle of compatible further processing of metadata, and of the risk-based approach, are important steps in the right direction when it comes to aligning the ePrivacy with the GDPR.

However, we now must work further on ensuring that European telecom companies, while regulated under the ePrivacy, are able to effectively innovate and compete with other players in the digital economy. If regulatory asymmetries linked to the discrepancy between ePrivacy and GDPR persist, European players will face hurdles: this is both a matter of competitiveness and ability to develop European data services inspired by European values. Only if aligned with the ambitions in the European Commission’s Data Strategy, can the ePrivacy Regulation accelerate Europe’s economic recovery, while ensuring the highest privacy standards.

The principle of confidentiality of communications is core to our sector and to the customers we serve. As emphasized throughout the process, we believe that a flexible, risk-based approach to processing communications metadata will be critical to ensuring that telcos can innovate and participate in the data economy on an equal footing with other digital players.

The Council text further aligns ePrivacy rules with the GDPR, without diminishing the high protection of communications data that has traditionally fostered customer trust in our sector. As we look toward the negotiations with the European Commission and European Parliament, this text is a baseline to ensure the full alignment of the ePrivacy with the GDPR. We must overcome the disparity between the ability of European telcos to innovate compared to other players, so that citizens are empowered through access to secure and innovative European services.

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