



*19th Meeting of the Central and Eastern European Data Protection Authorities*

*17 and 18 of May 2017*

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Ladies and Gentleman,

Dear colleagues,

It is a privilege to say a few words, for the second time, at the Conference of the Central and Eastern European Data Protection Authorities, hosted this year by the Office of the Personal Data Protection of Georgia, which I sincerely thank for the invitation.

I regret that, once again, I cannot be there in person, due to urgent commitments here in Brussels.

I am sure you will understand me, because as you well know this is a very important time for the future of the data protection.

We have had very intense moments in the past, but never as intense as the current one. I am sure it is the same on your side.

There are many challenges that arise in front of us.

We have 368 days to become fully ready to enforce or to comply with the GDPR and the directive on data protection in law enforcement and criminal justice, and this entails greater efforts and greater attention than usual.

The ePrivacy Directive and the Regulation on data processing by EU bodies are currently under discussion and they will be the natural completion of the new package of rules.

In the EU we are setting up a package of rules suitable for incorporating innovative ideas coming from the continuous technological development without diminishing the level of protection of personal data.

Indeed, new rules guarantee a much higher level of protection.

The GDPR has recognized the essential need to ensure the freedom of data flow within the Union, combining it with the need to develop the Digital Market, without losing the way to make protection of individuals effective.

It is an innovative text that has modernized, and in some ways revolutionized, the approach to privacy.

To give you an example, which probably is the biggest policy and legal innovation in the GDPR: the principle of accountability in handling personal information is now expressly introduced at the regulatory level. It is a fundamental step for data protection, because accountability means transparency and effectiveness.

So, we are creating a law system which helps people to feel safe from the many threats that they face every day in sharing their personal information, both online and offline.

We did and we are doing a good job.

We must be proud of it.

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But, at the same time, I believe that laws are not enough to get concrete results.

There is a need to ensure effective regulatory provisions in order to be fully satisfied with the work we are doing.

Well, to make this happen, four things are indispensable: full independence of DPAs, proactivity, coherence, and cooperation.

And here is the reason why I can only be deeply grateful for the existence of CEEDPA, which should be taken as an example for the complete achievement of the goals incorporated in this four concepts.

Under the first point of view (full independence), because our organizational, financial and decision-making full independence is the guarantee of the effectiveness and credibility of our activities. Some authorities gathered in CEEDPA are those who perhaps have had to struggle more to achieve full independence and therefore you have to be proud of it.

Under the second (proactivity), because comparison generates activism, and I believe that initiatives like this Conference are a great occasion for comparing views and consequently to be proactive.

Under the third point of view (coherence), because the associative union of multiple DPAs aimed at sharing information and best practices, habitually results in more and more consistent approaches.

Ultimately, under the fourth point (cooperation), because as we all know, laws are subject to the principle of territoriality, but personal data are not.

So now is the time to build bridges between the regions of the world on sustainable personal data processing.

We have learned a lot in the past years about the need to participate in a global conversation in order to find comprehensive answers to the challenges posed by flows of data in the networked world.

From this point of view, CEEDPA is more than useful to support the implementation of international data protection standards and share the experience and best practices of the Central and Eastern European States.

Europe needs to be the engine in shaping a global, digital standard for privacy and data protection that centres on the rights of individuals.

DPA's have to share knowledge, exchange information, discuss about the different aspects of personal data protection and the existing challenges and opportunities to ensure international standards for data protection.

That is why last year the EDPS have launched the Digital Clearing House, including willing enforcement agencies worldwide.

The Digital Clearing House is meant to connect authorities on a purely voluntary basis.

The main goal of the House is to build an additional instrument to safeguard individual positions that are threatened by the online market distortions and failures.

We want to build a safe space on the web in which everyone can benefit from the progress of technologies without undermining the right to privacy and freedom of expression.

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Coming into conclusions...

As I said at the beginning of this brief intervention, this is a very important moment for data protection.

New challenges arise and new scenarios are opening up.

DPA's have been entrusted with greater powers, and we all know that with more power comes more responsibility.

It is the time for us to think about common values and turn them into reality on the ground.

I believe we must collectively analyse how we implement data protection principles ethically and supplement them where necessary.

We have to construct a civil society in which people feel safe in sharing information.

And while we do it, we must remember ourselves that the way we respond to today's needs will have consequences for the next generations, who deserve a splendid and safe future.

I am sure we can work all together in this important mission.

Our citizens expect nothing less from all of us: to stand up for their right to data protection.

I hope it was useful.

I send you sincerest regards.

