

Data protection body condemns "unsubstantiated proposal" by European Commission

The Working Party on Police and Justice (WPPJ) expresses deep concerns about a decision by the European Commission to adopt an amendment that would grant law enforcement agencies access to Eurodac, an EU fingerprint database of asylum seekers.

The WPPJ recalls that the Eurodac system was set up for specific purposes and contains very sensitive data on a group of highly vulnerable individuals, i.e. asylum seekers. The WPPJ emphasizes that there are already many other databases and information channels available to law enforcement for countering terrorism and other serious crimes. Conversely, it is as yet to be demonstrated by the European Commission that access to the Eurodac database is actually necessary for these purposes. Moreover, the proposal runs counter to other fundamental data protection principles such as proportionality of the processing and respect for purpose limitation.

The Working Party on Police and Justice will look more closely at the Commission's proposal and provide a more substantive opinion, whilst it urges the European Parliament and the Council to start an in-depth debate on these initiatives in the light of their possibly far-reaching implications for citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms.

Notes for editors:

1. The Working Party on Police and Justice is a body set up by the Conference of European Privacy and Data Protection Commissioners to examine issues of data protection and privacy in policing and justice at European level.
2. The Eurodac system is a fingerprint database set up to help ensure that applications for asylum are dealt with by the European Union member state where the applicant first claimed asylum.