



EUROPEAN DATA PROTECTION SUPERVISOR

EDPS Opinion X/2018

on the Proposal for a Regulation preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online



xx October 2018

The European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) is an independent institution of the EU, responsible under Article 41(2) of Regulation 45/2001 'With respect to the processing of personal data... for ensuring that the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons, and in particular their right to privacy, are respected by the Community institutions and bodies', and '...for advising Community institutions and bodies and data subjects on all matters concerning the processing of personal data'. Under Article 28(2) of Regulation 45/2001, the Commission is required, 'when adopting a legislative Proposal relating to the protection of individuals' rights and freedoms with regard to the processing of personal data...', to consult the EDPS.

He was appointed in December 2014 together with the Assistant Supervisor with the specific remit of being constructive and proactive. The EDPS published in March 2015 a five-year strategy setting out how he intends to implement this remit, and to be accountable for doing so.

This Opinion relates to the EDPS' mission to advise the EU institutions on the data protection implications of their policies and foster accountable policymaking - in line with Action 9 of the EDPS Strategy: 'Facilitating responsible and informed policymaking'. While the EDPS supports the objectives to combat the dissemination of terrorist content online, thus contributing to a more secure Union overall, he considers that the Proposal should be improved in certain key aspects to ensure compliance with data protection principles.

Executive Summary

This Opinion outlines the position of the EDPS on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online.

The EDPS has carefully assessed the Proposal and issues several recommendations to assist the legislator to ensure that the proposed Regulation will be compliant with Union privacy and data protection law, in particular Articles 7 and 8 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The EDPS recognises the need to combat the dissemination of terrorist propaganda online, in particular with regard to the potential of such material to groom and recruit new terrorists and to prepare and facilitate terrorist attacks. However, the EDPS underlines that the Proposal will have a significant impact on fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of expression and information, the right to an effective (administrative or judicial) remedy, the right to respect of private and family life and the right to the protection of personal data.

While the EDPS welcomes that the Proposal underlines the necessity to take into account the fundamental rights to privacy and data protection, he has serious concerns on aspects of the Proposal that need further evaluation, adjustment and even reconsideration by the legislator, in particular:

- as the proposed measures will have a serious impact on the fundamental rights to privacy and the right to data protection a detailed impact assessment should be conducted;
- the safeguards for proactive measures, in particular with regard to the use of automated tools, should be strengthened;
- the proposed obligation for hosting service providers to preserve terrorist content as well as (unspecified) “related data” for the ~~double~~ purposes of administrative or judicial review and for prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences should be reconsidered;
- the possibility for competent authorities to impose a general monitoring obligation on hosting service providers, which would affect a large and undefined number of individuals, appears to exceed the limits posed by the principles of necessity and proportionality and should be reconsidered.

The Opinion provides further recommendations in terms of data protection and privacy that should be taken into consideration in the legislative process.

Finally, as the Proposal shares relevant similarities with the Proposal on e-evidence, in particular regarding context and terminology, the EDPS calls upon the legislator to ensure a consistent and coherent approach for these two Proposals.

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THE EUROPEAN DATA PROTECTION SUPERVISOR,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 16 thereof,

Having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Articles 7 and 8 thereof,

Having regard to Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data¹, and to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation)²,

Having regard to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data³, and in particular Articles 28(2), 41(2) and 46(d) thereof,

Having regard to Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA of 27 November 2008 on the protection of personal data processed in the framework of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters⁴, and to Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA⁵,

HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING OPINION:

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Context of the Proposal

1. On 12 September 2018, the European Commission published a Proposal for a Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online¹ (hereinafter “the Proposal”).
2. The aim of the Proposal is to establish uniform rules for hosting service providers (hereinafter “HSPs”), such as social media platforms, video streaming services, video, image and audio sharing services, but also file sharing and other cloud services that make information available to third parties as well as websites where users can make comments or post reviews, who offer their services within the Union - regardless of their place of establishment - to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content through their services and to ensure, where necessary, its swift removal.

¹ COM (2018) 640 final, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online.

3. The Proposal builds on HSPs' obligation pursuant to Directive 2000/31/EC² to remove illegal content that they store and can be seen as part of a series of regulatory and non-regulatory initiatives to combat illegal content online³ and also as part of the anti-terrorism package⁴.
4. In this regard, the EDPS takes notice that Member States are already obliged by Article 21 of Directive (EU) 2017/541 to ensure the prompt removal of online content that constitutes public provocation to commit terrorist offences and that the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive⁵ will also require Member States to ensure that video-sharing platforms take appropriate measures to protect the public from public provocations to commit a terrorist offence.
5. Moreover, the EDPS observes that the Proposal shares relevant similarities with the Proposal on e-evidence⁶ and therefore calls upon the legislator to ensure a consistent and coherent approach⁷. In particular, the EDPS - taking into account his Opinion 09/2018 on Proposals to establish European Production and Preservation Orders to gather e-evidence in criminal matters - recommends to have uniform and clear definitions (Point 4.2), to introduce strong security safeguards for transmissions, including authenticity certificates for removal orders and referrals (Point 5.2.3) and to clarify that legal representatives are not representatives in the meaning of GDPR and the Police Directive (Point 5.2.4).

1.2 Content of the Proposal

6. In the Explanatory Memorandum it is stressed that terrorists misuse the internet for the purposes of grooming and recruiting supporters, preparing and facilitating terrorist activity, glorifying their atrocities and urging others to follow suit.⁸ Even though Member States and HSPs have established voluntary partnerships and frameworks to reduce the accessibility to terrorist content, it is argued that these measures are not sufficient to

² Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2000 on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market ('Directive on electronic commerce'), OJ L 178, 17.7.2000, p. 1–16.

³ These initiatives include inter alia Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA, OJ L 335, 17.12.2011, p. 1–14; Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, OJ L 88, 31.3.2017, p. 6–21; COM (2016) 593 final, Proposal for Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on copyright in the Digital Single Market and most recent COM (2018) 1177 final, Commission Recommendation of 1.3.2018 on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online .

⁴ Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, OJ L 88, 31.3.2017, p. 6–21.

⁵ COM(2016) 287 final Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services in view of changing market realities.

⁶ COM(2018) 225 final, Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Production and Preservation Orders for electronic evidence in criminal matters.

⁷ The EDPS observes in particular that Recital 32 of the Proposal already refers to the e-evidence Proposal.

⁸ In the Impact Assessment it is stated that the terrorist group Daesh produced in the years 2015-2017 an average of 1200 new propaganda items every month (cf. Impact Assessment, p. 7).

adequately address this issue.⁹ However, as Directive (EU) 2017/541 was only to be transposed by Member States by 8 September 2018, the EPDS finds this assumption premature.

7. The Proposal establishes a minimum set of duties of care for HSPs and sets out various obligations for Member States, notably to enforce the Proposal. In particular, the Proposal introduces the following measures:
 - HSPs will have to remove or disable access to terrorist content within one hour upon receipt of a removal order issued by a competent authority of a Member State (Article 4);
 - HSPs will have to assess referrals sent by Member States' competent authorities and by Union bodies (such as Europol) whether the content identified in the referral is in breach of the HSPs' respective terms and conditions and decide whether or not to remove that content or disable access to it (Article 5);
 - HSPs will have to implement proactive measures to protect their services against the dissemination of terrorist content, inter alia by using automated tools to assess the stored content (Article 6);
 - HSPs will have to preserve the content that has been removed and which are necessary for the purposes of subsequent administrative proceedings, judicial review and the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences (Article 7);
 - HSPs will have to establish a relevant complaint mechanism, by which persons whose content was removed pursuant to a referral or a proactive measure can submit a complaint to the HSP (Article 10);
 - Member States will have to designate one or several authorities competent to issue removal orders, detect or identify terrorist content and issue referrals to HSPs, oversee the implementation of proactive measures and enforce the obligations established by the Proposal through penalties (Article 17).
8. The EDPS recognises the objective of the Proposal and also understands the need to combat the dissemination of terrorist propaganda online. However, he wants to stress that the Proposal will have a serious impact on several fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of expression and information, the right to respect of private and family life, the right to an effective remedy, and in particular the right to the protection of personal data.
9. In this regard, the EDPS observes that the accompanying Impact Assessment¹⁰ does not adequately assess the impact of the proposed measures on the fundamental rights to privacy and data protection¹¹, nor does it assess the effectiveness of already existing tools. The EDPS emphasises that an impact assessment is not only an important condition of the

⁹ Explanatory Memorandum, p. 1.

¹⁰ SWD(2018) 408 final, Impact Assessment, Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online.

¹¹ The Impact Assessment merely states that the Proposal will interfere with the right to the protection of personal data, and hence any future instrument should have sufficient guarantees to effectively protect personal data (Cf. Impact Assessment p. 43).

Commissions' policy of better regulation¹² but also an essential prerequisite when fundamental rights are at stake¹³.

10. The EDPS notes that he was neither consulted by the Commission during the inter-service consultation stage, nor immediately after the adoption of the Proposal. However, due to the serious impact of the Proposal on the right to privacy and the protection of personal data, the EDPS has decided to issue this Opinion.

2. COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Preliminary remarks

11. The EDPS observes that the Proposal is based on Article 114 TFEU which provides for the establishment of measures to ensure the functioning of the Internal Market. As the objective of the Proposal is clearly linked to the prevention, detection and investigation of criminal offences, in particular the prevention and combat of terrorism, the Proposal seems to fall into the scope of Title V of the TFEU. The EDPS recommends to assess whether Article 114 TFEU is the appropriate legal basis for the Proposal.
12. The EDPS takes notice that the Proposal stresses in several provisions that it will ensure the protection of the fundamental rights at stake and that HSPs should always take into account the fundamental rights of the users and also the importance of these rights.¹⁴ In this respect, the EDPS observes that Recital 7 of the Proposal explicitly stresses that the Regulation will ensure the rights to respect for private life and to the protection of personal data.
13. However, the EDPS notes that the Proposal contains no reference to the applicable data protection legislation, i.e. the Regulation (EU) 2016/679¹⁵ (hereinafter “the GDPR”) and the Directive (EU) 2016/680¹⁶ (hereinafter “the Police Directive”). Therefore, and for the sake of clarity, the EDPS recommends to insert in the Proposal a specific reference to the aforementioned legal acts.
14. In this regard, the EDPS notes that pursuant to Article 17 of the Proposal, Member States can designate one or more competent authorities with the different tasks laid down in the Regulation. Nevertheless, while the Proposal sometimes specifies the relevant competent authority (e.g. Article 16(4) of the Proposal states “[...]the competent authority referred to

¹² Communication from the Commission to The European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions Better regulation for better results - An EU agenda and Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on Better Law-Making.

¹³ EDPS, Opinion 9/2017 on the Proposal for a Regulation on the eu-LISA.

¹⁴ For instance Recital 7 and 17 or Article 3 and 6 of the Proposal.

¹⁵ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1–88.

¹⁶ Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA, OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 89–131.

in Article 17(1)(d)[...]”) the EDPS observes that the Proposal lacks this clarity in other instances (e.g. Article 13 of the Proposal merely states “*Competent authorities in Member States[...]*”). As different data protection rules will apply to the Proposal and subsequently also to the different competent authorities, the EDPS recommends to clarify throughout the Proposal to which specific authority a provision does refer to.

15. Furthermore, the EDPS observes that Article 3 of the Proposal provides that HSPs, when taking actions against the dissemination of terrorist content, should take into account “*the fundamental importance of the freedom of expression and information in an open and democratic society*”. Nevertheless, as these actions will also have a significant impact on the fundamental rights to privacy and to the protection of personal data, the EDPS recommends to insert in Article 3 of the Proposal a reference to these fundamental rights.
16. Pursuant to Article 4(2) of the Proposal, HSPs should remove terrorist content within one hour from receipt of the removal order. In this regard, the Impact Assessment explains that terrorist content is most harmful in the first hours of its appearance because of the speed at which it is disseminated and therefore multiplied.¹⁷ However, the Impact Assessment does not provide any evidence that such a short time period is indeed feasible. On the contrary, HSPs highlighted that such a short time limit is deemed unworkable for smaller companies.¹⁸ The EDPS is sceptical whether such a short time period is indeed feasible and recommends to make it a preferred time-limit rather than a compulsory one.

2.2 On proactive measures

17. Pursuant to Article 6 of the Proposal, HSPs should take proactive measures to protect their services against the dissemination of terrorist content. Recital 18 of the Proposal elaborates that such measures could consist of measures to prevent the re-upload of terrorist content which has previously been removed, checking the content against publicly or privately-held tools containing known terrorist content as well as using reliable technical tools to identify new terrorist content.
18. The EDPS takes notice that pursuant to Article 6 of the Proposal, such proactive measures should be “*effective and proportionate, taking into account the risk and level of exposure to terrorist content, the fundamental rights of the users, and the fundamental importance of the freedom of expression and information in an open and democratic society*”. While the EDPS welcomes this provision, he considers that with regard to the fundamental rights a stronger wording is needed and recommends to replace “*taking into account*” with “*respect*”¹⁹.
19. Furthermore, as Article 6 of the Proposal also refers to the “*risk and level of exposure of the HSP to terrorist content*”, the EDPS recommends to introduce in the Proposal an obligation for HSPs to: (i) perform a risk assessment on the level of exposure to terrorism content and (ii) to draw up a remedial action plan to tackle terrorist content proportionate

¹⁷ Cf. Impact Assessment, p. 8.

¹⁸ In the Impact Assessment it is stated Cf. Impact Assessment, p. 86.

¹⁹ This would also be in accordance with the wording of Recital 7 of the Proposal.

to the level of risk identified²⁰. Thereby, the proactive measures of HSPs would achieve a better targeting and HSPs would also have a useful accountability tool to their disposal.

2.3 On the use of automated tools in the context of proactive measures

20. The EDPS observes that Recital 16 and 18 of the Proposal specifically provide that proactive measures may include the use of automated tools. The EDPS is aware that due to the vast volume of data, the use of automated tools may be necessary to enable HSPs to search for terrorist content. However, such automated tools should only be used in a cautious and targeted way, whereas the relevant search parameters should not be based solely on sensitive information, as for instance religious beliefs.
21. In this respect, the EDPS wants to recall that the GDPR introduced in Article 25 the concept of data protection by design and by default. This concept requires controllers to implement appropriate technical and organisational measures in order to effectively ensure compliance with the data protection principles and to integrate the necessary safeguards to meet the requirements of the GDPR and in particular to protect the rights of data subjects. Moreover, the concept requires controllers to ensure that by default only those personal data are processed, which are necessary for the specific purpose of the processing. Therefore, the EDPS recommends to introduce in the Proposal a specific reference to Article 25 GDPR and the concept of privacy by design and by default.
22. Furthermore, the EDPS recalls that Article 22(1) GDPR provides a general prohibition of solely automated individual decision-making, which produces legal effects or similarly significant effects on data subjects. However, Article 22(2) GDPR foresees exceptions to this general prohibition and sets out specific cases and requirements under which such decision-making is permissible. In particular, Article 22(2)(b) GDPR provides that Union or Member States law can authorise such decision-making when it also lays down “*suitable measures*” to safeguard the data subject’s rights and freedoms as well as legitimate interests. In this respect, Recital 71 GDPR stresses that such “*suitable safeguards*” should include in any case specific information to the data subject, the right to obtain human intervention, in order to express his or her point of view and to obtain an explanation of the decision reached after such assessment and to challenge the relevant decision.
23. In this regard, the EDPS observes that Article 8(1) of the Proposal provides that HSPs should set out in their terms and conditions their policy on the prevention of terrorism content, “*including, where appropriate, a meaningful explanation of the functioning of proactive measures including the use of automated tools*” (emphasis added). Moreover, Article 9(1) of the Proposal provides that HSPs should introduce effective and appropriate safeguards to ensure that decisions, which are based on automated tools, are accurate and well-founded. In particular, Article 9(2) of the Proposal provides that such safeguards should consist of “*human oversight and verifications where appropriate and, in any event, where a detailed assessment of the relevant context is required [...]*” (emphasis added).

²⁰ The Impact Assessment refers to these two safeguards, “risk assessment” and “remedial action plan, as alternative options to Option 3. The EDPS considers that Option 1 and 2 refer to a feature that is different from the *scope*, namely to the implementation of *safeguards* for the measures under Article 6 of the Proposal pursuant to a risk-based approach.

24. While the EDPS welcomes the adopted safeguards, he is of the opinion that a stronger wording is needed and recommends to replace in Article 8(1) and 9(2) of the Proposal the wording “*where appropriate*” with “*in any case*”.
25. The EDPS also notes that, pursuant to Article 6(2) of the Proposal; HSPs should submit reports to the competent authorities allowing the latter to evaluate, among others, the functioning of the automated tools. While the EDPS welcomes this provision, he recommends to specify in the Proposal that HSPs should provide the competent authorities with all necessary information about the automated tools used to allow a thorough analysis by the competent authorities and in particular to ensure that these tools will not produce discriminatory, untargeted, unspecific or unjustified results.
26. The EDPS also wants to draw attention to Article 35 GDPR which obliges controllers to carry out a data protection impact assessment where a type of processing is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of natural persons. In accordance with Article 35(3)(a) GDPR, which provides that an impact assessment is imperative in the context of automated individual decision-making, the EDPS considers that HSPs will necessarily have to carry out such an assessment with regard to the envisaged automated tools.
27. However, due to the high risk to the rights and freedoms of natural persons and by analogy with Article 36(5) GDPR, the EDPS calls upon the legislator to explore the possibility to introduce for HSPs a mandatory consultation with, and obtain prior authorisation from the competent data protection authority.

2.4 On the derogation of Article 15(1) of Directive 2000/31/EC

28. The EDPS observes that pursuant to Article 17(1)(c) of the Proposal each Member State has to designate a competent authority to oversee the implementation of proactive measures by HSPs. In case a competent authority considers that the measures in place are insufficient and no agreement with the relevant HSP can be reached, Article 6(4) of the Proposal provides that the competent authority can issue a decision imposing specific, additional proactive measures on a HSP.
29. In this respect, Recital 19 of the Proposal elaborates that such a decision “*should not, in principle, lead to the imposition of a general obligation to monitor, as provided in Article 15(1) of Directive 2000/31/EC.*”²¹ However, Recital 19 stresses that “*the decisions adopted by the competent authorities on the basis of this Regulation could **derogate from the approach established in Article 15(1) of Directive 2000/31/EC**, as regards certain specific, targeted measures, the adoption of which is necessary for overriding public security reasons*” (emphasis added).

²¹ See also Recital 23 of the Directive (EU) 2017/541 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and amending Council Decision 2005/671/JHA: “*The removal of online content constituting a public provocation to commit a terrorist offence or, where it is not feasible, the blocking of access to such content, in accordance with this Directive, should be without prejudice to the rules laid down in Directive 2000/31/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council. In particular, no general obligation should be imposed on service providers to monitor the information which they transmit or store, nor to actively seek out facts or circumstances indicating illegal activity*”.

30. The EDPS understands that Recital 19 seeks to constitute a derogation from Article 15(1) of Directive 2000/31/EC and would thereby enable competent authorities to impose a general monitoring obligation on HSPs. The EDPS recalls that any interference with the fundamental right to data protection must comply with the criteria set out in Article 52(1) of the Charter, in particular the principle of necessity and proportionality.
31. The EDPS considers that the imposition of a general monitoring obligation on HSPs, which would affect a large and undefined number of individuals, irrespective of whether they are under suspicion to disseminate terrorist content or not, constitutes a disproportionate measure exceeding the limits posed by the principles of necessity and proportionality.²² Furthermore, the EDPS reiterates his concerns regarding the “delegated monitoring” of individuals by commercial companies in the context of activities traditionally falling under the competence of law enforcement authorities as regulated under the national law of the Member States and under Union legislation.²³
32. The EDPS has strong reservations about the envisaged derogation of Article 15(1) of Directive 2000/31/EC and recommends to reassess the need for such a far-reaching measure.

2.5. Preservation of removed content and related data

33. The EDPS observes that pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Proposal, HSPs are required to preserve removed content and related data for the purpose of subsequent administrative proceedings and judicial review (Article 7(1)(a) of the Proposal) ~~(as a safeguard in cases of erroneous removal)~~ as well as for the purpose of prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences (Article 7(1)(b) of the Proposal)²⁴ (“double purpose”)²⁵.

~~33-34.~~ While the EDPS considers that the preservation of removed content and related data for the purpose of subsequent administrative proceedings and judicial review could be justified by the need to grant content providers with effective measures of redress, including the reinstatement of erroneously removed content, he questions the proposed data preservation for the purpose of prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences (see Point 39 - 41). Nevertheless, the EDPS is of the opinion that regardless of the proposed

²² See Joined Cases C-203/15 and C-698/15, *Tele2 Sverige AB v Post- och telestyrelsen* and *Secretary of State for the Home Department v Tom Watson and Others*, para. 104-107.

²³ EDPS Opinion of 23 June 2008 on the Proposal for a Decision establishing a multiannual Community programme on protecting children using the Internet and other communication technologies; EDPS Opinion of 22 February 2010 on the current negotiations by the European Union of an Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA); EDPS Opinion of 10 May 2010 on the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating the sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, repealing Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA.

²⁴ The EDPS notes that Recital 22 of the Proposal also provides for access by national competent authorities: “To ensure proportionality, the period of preservation should be limited to six months to allow the content providers sufficient time to initiate the review process and to enable law enforcement access to relevant data for the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences. However, this period may be prolonged for the period that is necessary in case the review proceedings are initiated but not finalised within the six months period upon request by the authority carrying out the review. This duration should be sufficient to allow law enforcement authorities to preserve the necessary evidence in relation to investigations, while ensuring the balance with the fundamental rights concerned” (Emphasis added).

²⁵ Cf. Recital 21 of the Proposal.

purposes, Article 7 of the Proposal needs more clarification and also substantive modifications.

~~34.35.~~ While The EDPS observes that Article 7 contains no definition of the term “related data”. However,⁷ Recital 20 of the Proposal elaborates that such data “*can include ‘subscriber data’, including in particular data pertaining to the identity of the content provider as well as ‘access data’, including for instance data about the date and time of use by the content provider, or the log-in to and log-off from the service, together with the IP address allocated by the internet access service provider to the content provider*”. The EDPS recalls that a clear definition of “related data” will avoid uncertainties for HSPs and would also ensure legal certainty. He therefore recommends to clearly define the term “related data” and provide an exhaustive list of data categories that should be preserved by HSPs.

~~35.~~ With regard to the double purpose of the envisaged data preservation, the EDPS considers that the retention of removed content and related data for the purpose of subsequent administrative proceedings and judicial review can be justified by the need to enable content providers with effective measures of redress, including the reinstatement of erroneously removed content. However, the EPDS is deeply concerned about the second purpose of the data repository, i.e. to retain content and related data for the purpose of prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences.

~~36.~~ Moreover, the EDPS notes that the imposition of the proposed data preservation obligation on HSPs. The imposition of such a data retention obligation on HSPs would amount to a situation where private entities are required to retain personal data relating which in the most case would refer to criminal offences for law enforcement purposes for the period of a six months period.²⁶ In this respect †The EDPS recalls that pursuant to Article 10 GDPR the processing of personal data relating to criminal offences should be carried out only under the control of official authority or when the processing is authorised by Union or Member State law providing for appropriate safeguards for the rights and freedoms of data subjects.

~~37.~~ Against the background of Article 10 GDPR, and as the relevant preservation is not under the control of official authority, the provided safeguards have to be appropriate for the rights and freedoms of data subjects.

~~37.~~ In this regard, †The EDPS observes that Article 7(3) of the Proposal provides that HSPS should “ensure that the terrorist content and related data [...] are subject to appropriate technical and organisational safeguards” and that these “technical and organisational safeguards shall ensure that the preserved terrorist content and related data is only accessed and processed for the [relevant] purposes [...] and ensure a high level of security of the personal data concerned.”

~~38.~~

²⁶ In particular Recital 22 of the Proposal provides: “To ensure proportionality, the period of preservation should be limited to six months to allow the content providers sufficient time to initiate the review process and to enable law enforcement access to relevant data for the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences. However, this period may be prolonged for the period that is necessary in case the review proceedings are initiated but not finalised within the six months period upon request by the authority carrying out the review. This duration should be sufficient to allow law enforcement authorities to preserve the necessary evidence in relation to investigations, while ensuring the balance with the fundamental rights concerned” (Emphasis added).

~~39.38. The wording is almost identical with~~The EDPS recalls that Article 7 of the later repealed Directive 2006/24²⁷ ~~which provided in this respect~~ that “the data shall be subject to appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect the data against accidental or unlawful destruction, accidental loss or alteration, or unauthorised or unlawful storage, processing, access or disclosure”; and that “the data shall be subject to appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure that they can be accessed by specially authorised personnel only”. However, the EDPS recalls that the CJEU concluded in *Digital Rights Ireland Ltd*; that the provided safeguards are not sufficient to ensure effective protection of the retained data against the risk of abuse, unlawful access and subsequent use of that data.²⁸ For this reason, the EDPS recommends to revise Article 7(3) of the Proposal and introduce better and stricter safeguards.

~~40.39. With regard to proposed data preservation for the purpose of prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences~~ Moreover, the EDPS is of the opinion that legislation that imposes the preservation of personal data should necessarily entail provisions relating to access by the competent national authorities to the data retained by the providers.²⁹ However, the EDPS observes that the Proposal contains no such provisions, whereas Recital 23 of the Proposal merely states the Regulation “does not affect the procedural guarantees and procedural investigation measures related to the access to content and related data preserved for the purposes of the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences, as regulated under the national law of the member States, and under Union legislation”. In this respect, the EDPS wants to stress that the CJEU also repealed Directive 2006/24 as it did not contain any substantive and procedural conditions relating to the access of the competent national authorities to the data and to their subsequent use.³⁰ Along these lines, the mere reference in Recital 23 of the Proposal that it would be for each Member State to define the procedures to be followed and the conditions to be fulfilled in order to gain access to the retained data can by no means considered to be sufficient. ~~takes notice that the Proposal does not contain any substantive and procedural conditions relating to the access and the subsequent use of the preserved data, as it was required by the CJEU in the aforementioned judgment.~~³¹ ~~The mere reference in Recital 23 of the Proposal, according to which the Regulation “does not affect the procedural guarantees and procedural investigation measures related to the access to content and related data preserved for the purposes of the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences, as regulated under the national law of the member States, and under Union legislation” can by no means considered to be sufficient.~~

~~41.40. Furthermore, the EDPS questions the necessity of the data~~ retention ~~proposed~~ preservation obligation on HSPs for the purpose of prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences, as Article 13(4) of the Proposal already obliges HSPs to

²⁷ Directive 2006/24/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on the retention of data generated or processed in connection with the provision of publicly available electronic communications services or of public communications networks and amending Directive 2002/58/EC, OJ L 105, 13.4.2006, p. 54–63, repealed by Judgment of the Court (Grand Chamber), 8 April 2014, Joined Cases C-293/12 and C-594/12, *Digital Rights Ireland Ltd v Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and Others and Kärntner Landesregierung and Others*.

²⁸ Joined Cases C-293/12 and C-594/12, *Digital Rights Ireland Ltd*, para. 54 - 55 and 65 - 67.

²⁹ Cf. Joined Cases C-203/15 and C-698/15, *Tele2 Sverige AB v Post- och telestyrelsen and Secretary of State for the Home Department v Tom Watson and Others*, para. 79.

³⁰ Cf. *Digital Rights Ireland Ltd*, para. 61 - 62 and 65.

³¹ Cf. *Digital Rights Ireland Ltd*, para. 61 – 62.

promptly inform the competent law enforcement authorities of any evidence of terrorist offences they become aware of. In addition, Article 13(4) of the Proposal provides that HSPs could also, in case of doubt, transmit such information to Europol for appropriate follow up.

42.41. For all these reasons, the EDPS strongly recommends to reconsider the proposed data retention obligation on HSPs for terrorist content and related data for the purpose of prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences as laid down in Article 7(1)(b) of the Proposal.

2.6 On the complaint mechanism

43.42. The EDPS takes notice that pursuant to Article 10 of the Proposal, HSPs are required to establish effective and accessible mechanism allowing content providers, whose content were removed or access to it was disabled, to appeal against the decision of the HSP. In accordance with Article 10(2) of the Proposal, the responsible HSP shall promptly examine the complaint and inform the content provider about the outcome of the examination.

44.43. The EDPS welcomes the introduced obligation for HSPs to establish a complaint mechanism as this constitutes an adequate safeguard against erroneous removals. Nevertheless, he wants to stress that pursuant to Article 8(3) of the Charter the right to data protection has to be subject to the control by an independent authority. As the Proposal does not indicate the possibility for content providers to seek independent redress, the EDPS recommends - for the sake of clarity - to add in the Proposal a specific reference, stating that the final decision of a responsible HSP has to be subject to review by an independent authority. Furthermore, the EDPS recommends to include in the Proposal a legal remedy for cases in which the responsible HSP does not react to the complaint of a content provider.

3. CONCLUSIONS

45.44. After carefully analysing the Proposal, the EDPS makes the following recommendations:

- the Commission should conduct or make available a detailed impact assessment to assess the impact of the Proposal on the right to privacy and the right to data protection;
- the Proposal should be consistent with the Proposal on e-evidence, in particular with regard to uniform and clear definitions, strong security safeguards for transmissions and authenticity certificates for decisions;
- HSPs should be obliged to perform a risk assessment on their level of exposure to terrorism content and to draw up a remedial action plan to tackle terrorist content proportionate to the level of risk identified (Article 6);
- HSPs should fully respect the fundamental rights of its users, when establishing proactive measures (Article 6);

- HSPs should take into account the concept of privacy by design and by default when creating automated tools and should at least conduct a data protection impact assessment (Article 6);
- HSPs should in any case give data subjects a meaningful explanation of the functioning of their implemented proactive measures including the use of automated tools (Article 6);
- a HSPs' decision based on automated tools should in any case be subject to human oversight and human verification (Article 6)
- HSPs should provide competent authorities with all necessary information on automated tools to allow a thorough analysis of these tools, in particular to ensure that no discriminatory, untargeted, unspecific or unjustified results are produced;
- the proposed derogation from Article 15(1) of Directive 2000/31/EC, which would enable the imposition of a general monitoring obligation on HSPs, should be reconsidered (Article 6);
- with regard to HSPs obligation to preserve terrorist content and related data, the term "related data" needs to be precisely circumscribed (Article 7);
- the obligation for HSPs to preserve terrorist content and related data for the purpose of prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of terrorist offences should be reconsidered in the light of the requirement set out by the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (Article 7);
- the decision of a HSP on the complaint brought by the content provider has to be subject to the control by an independent authority (Article 10);
- a legal remedy has to be introduced for cases where HSPs do not react to the complaint of the content provider (Article 10).

[46.45.](#) The EDPS remains available to provide further advice on the Proposal.

Brussels, xx November 2018

Giovanni BUTTARELLI

Notes

¹ OJ L 281, 23.11.1995, p. 31.

² OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1.

³ OJ L 8, 12.1.2001, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 350, 30.12.2008, p. 60.

⁵ OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 89.