

Data violations unpunished in EU: rights agency

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A surveillance camera in Paris. Data protection in many European countries suffers from a lack of funds, staff, independence and most importantly, a lack of sanctions for violators, the EU's rights agency reported Friday.

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In several countries -- including Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands and Poland -- "prosecutions and sanctions for violations of data protection law are limited or non-existing," the Agency for Fundamental Rights, FRA, found in a report.

Also, national authorities "are often not equipped with full powers of investigation and intervention or the capacity to give legal advice or

engage in legal proceedings," it deplored.

In some [European Union](#) states, surveillance cameras were simply not registered with the authorities and thus remained outside their area of supervision.

Meanwhile, lack of independence from the government in countries such as Britain, Ireland and the Baltic states meant the data protection agencies had limited credibility, FRA added, calling for broad reforms.

"Improvements need to take place concerning the independence, effectiveness, resources and powers of data protection authorities," FRA chief Morten Kjaerum urged in a statement.

The agency also expressed concern about the lack of clarity in areas where data protection laws overlap with [national security](#), warning against "potentially serious consequences for fundamental rights protection."

According to FRA, some 72 percent of EU citizens did not even know they had a national data protection authority.

Unlike other state or multi-state treaties, the right to data protection is specifically cited in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, not merely implied as part of the right to [privacy](#).

The report is available on FRA's website:

www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/m...dia/mr-070510_en.htm

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