

EU, US discuss data protection deal

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US Attorney General Eric Holder (R) and US Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano wait for the start of a meeting at the Grassalkovich Royal Palace in Godollo. EU and US officials met in Hungary Thursday to try to move forward negotiations for a framework deal to protect the privacy of European citizens' data in future anti-terror operations.

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"It is very important to have ... an umbrella agreement" that balances security with [privacy](#) rights, Viviane Reding, the EU justice commissioner, said after talks with US [Homeland Security](#) Secretary Janet Napolitano.

"Once we have such an agreement it will be much easier to have specific

agreements" on various areas, Reding said after the talks outside Budapest.

Concerned about privacy rights, the [European Parliament](#) blocked a banking data sharing deal between the [European Union](#) and United States in February 2010, leading to negotiations that ended in July with a new agreement.

To keep [privacy concerns](#) from poisoning negotiations on any other future data sharing deals, the EU wants to establish a data protection framework that would cover all future arrangements.

Reding expressed confidence that, following an "intensive exchange of views", a deal could be reached.

"The European Parliament is going to watch very closely what we are doing, and after an intensive exchange of views, I think we'll make it very soon," Reding said.

Last September, talks started about a specific data swap deal between the EU and the United States, Canada and Australia, in the field of air travel.

"We believe that the sharing of passenger data can be very consistent with protection of privacy, these are not mutually exclusive systems. The challenge is to knit them together effectively," Napolitano said.

A deal on passenger data is crucial for European airlines since the transfer of such information is a condition for flying to the US.

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