

EU moves toward single set of rules on data protection

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EU justice ministers meeting in Luxembourg agreed to have businesses deal with one [data protection](#) law rather than 28—one that could see

them fined if they violate the rules.

It will affect US Internet giants like Google, Facebook that have already stoked concerns over privacy in Europe.

"High data protection standards will strengthen consumers' trust in digital services, and businesses will benefit from a single set of rules across 28 countries," said Vera Jourova, the European commissioner for justice.

The commission added: "Companies based outside Europe will have to apply the same rules when offering services in the EU."

The rules now go to the European parliament for approval, which Jourova said could happen by the end of the year.

The European Commission, the EU's executive, said setting up one data protection law will also save businesses around 2.3 billion euros a year by cutting red tape.

The commission said the rights of citizens will be strengthened, including the "right to be forgotten."

Google and Brussels have previously clashed over the EU's so-called "right to be forgotten", in which citizens have the right to require search engines to erase results involving them after a period of time.



Google Chief Legal Officer David Drummond (C) listens to a panel during a meeting of the Advisory Council to Google on the Right to be Forgotten, in Paris on September 25, 2014

With the rules, national data protection authorities will be empowered to fine firms that break EU data protection rules, with penalties of up to one million euros or up to two percent of a company's global annual turnover.

The rules will also set up a "one-stop shop" where companies deal with one single supervisory authority, not 28, while individuals will deal with their "home national data [protection](#) authority, in their own language."

But the Interactive Advertising Bureau, which represents 650 media and technology firms, warned the rules "could hamper the data-driven advertising that funds much of the Internet".

Brussels is seeking to extend the single market to the digital era.

Europe as a bloc is the world's biggest economy, but despite its 500 million potential consumers it largely remains a divided continent of 28 distinct economies, especially when it comes to media and the Internet.

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