

EU parliament overhauls Internet data protection rules (Update)

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A demonstrator holds up a poster reading, "Stop data preservation" during a protest in Berlin on April 18, 2015

The European Parliament on Thursday adopted for the first time a single set of rules for the 28-nation EU to protect the privacy of people using the Internet.

The reform replaces a patchwork of rules introduced two decades ago at

the dawn of the Internet age and boosts efforts by the European Commission, the EU executive, to build a single digital market for 500 million people.

Under the rules, national watchdogs will be empowered to fine firms up to four percent of their total worldwide annual turnover if they are found to have broken EU-wide data protection rules.

"These new laws will ensure that the fundamental right to personal data protection is upheld for all European citizens," the commission's First Vice President Frans Timmermans said after the vote in Strasbourg, France.

"And they will help stimulate the digital single market in the EU by fostering trust in online services by consumers and certainty for businesses," Timmermans added.

The new rules, which took four years to hammer out, include guarantees on the so-called "right to be forgotten."

Google and Brussels have previously clashed over this right, which allows citizens to require search engines to erase results involving them after a period of time.

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