



US NSA: stop mass surveillance now or face consequences, MEPs say

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Parliament's consent to the EU-US trade deal "could be endangered" if blanket mass surveillance by the US National Security Agency (NSA) does not stop, MEPs said on Wednesday, in a resolution wrapping up their six-month inquiry into US mass surveillance schemes. The text also calls on the EU to suspend its bank data deal with the US and the "Safe Harbour agreement" on data privacy. The fight against terrorism can never justify secret and illegal mass surveillance, it adds.

The resolution, in which MEPs set out their findings and recommendations to boost EU citizens' privacy, was backed by 544 votes to 78, with 60 abstentions. "The Snowden revelations gave us a chance to react. I hope we will turn those reactions into something positive and lasting into the next mandate of this Parliament, a data protection bill of rights that we can all be proud of", said Civil Liberties inquiry rapporteur Claude Moraes (S&D, UK). "This is the only international inquiry into mass surveillance. (...) Even Congress in the United States has not had an inquiry", he added.

Parliament's should withhold its consent to the final Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) deal with the US unless it fully respects EU fundamental rights, stresses the resolution, adding that data protection should be ruled out of the trade talks. This consent "could be endangered as long as blanket mass surveillance activities and the interception of communications in EU institutions and diplomatic representations are not fully stopped", notes the text.

MEPs also call for the "immediate suspension" of the Safe Harbour privacy principles (voluntary data protection standards for non-EU companies transferring EU citizens' personal data to the US). These principles "do not provide adequate protection for EU citizens" say MEPs, urging the US to propose new personal data transfer rules that meet EU data protection requirements.

The Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP) deal should also be suspended until allegations that US authorities have access to EU citizens' bank data outside the agreement are clarified, insist MEPs.

European whistle-blower protection and EU cloud

The text also calls for a "European whistle-blower protection programme", which should pay particular attention to the "complexity of whistleblowing in the field of intelligence". EU countries are also asked to consider granting whistleblowers international protection from prosecution.

Furthermore, Europe should develop its own clouds and IT solutions, including cybersecurity and encryption technologies, to ensure a high level of data protection, adds the text.

The UK, France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Poland should clarify the allegations of mass surveillance - including potential agreements between intelligence services and telecoms firms on access to and exchange of personal data and access to transatlantic cables - and their compatibility with EU laws, the resolution says.

Other EU countries, in particular those participating in the "9-eyes" (UK, Denmark, France and the Netherlands) and "14-eyes" arrangements (those countries plus Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Sweden) are also urged to review their national laws to ensure that their intelligence services are subject to parliamentary and judicial oversight and that they comply with fundamental rights obligations.

Background

The Civil Liberties Committee inquiry into mass surveillance of EU citizens began in September 2013. A total of 16 hearings have been held since then. For further details, please see background note (*link to the right*).

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