



Press Release

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Claudette Buttigieg participates in the ICM on the data protection package organised by the European Parliament

On 15 May, Claudette Buttigieg MP participated in an inter-parliamentary committee meeting organised by the European Parliament's LIBE Committee in Brussels on the implementation of the data protection package at the eve of its application. The aim of the meeting with national parliamentarians was to share their views and best practices on the implementation of the package prior to its application on 25 May.

In April 2016, the EP and the Council adopted the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Directive for law enforcement purposes. These two instruments will be applicable as of 25 May this year, following a two-year period given to member states to implement them in their national laws.

Many participants argued that the principle of proportionality should be upheld when applying the GDPR, otherwise smaller companies, which are not exempt from the new rules, will have to face excessive burdens, including financial costs. There is a lack of legal certainty as to how the rules should be applied and guidelines on how to apply them were sent out too late.

Buttigieg intervened in the second session. She said that she has been receiving feedback from owners of small companies in Malta who have expressed their concerns on the GDPR. She emphasised the importance of listening to these concerns, arguing that the tools needed for proper implementation need to be made available, shared and, most importantly, understood and accepted by SMEs. She stressed that small companies are doing their best to comply and their mistakes do not constitute an attempt to misuse personal data in all instances. For this reason, smaller and larger companies should be addressed in different ways which would increase the level of acceptance and fairness. She concluded by saying that the procedures should be further simplified and made easier to understand.

In replying to these concerns, some argued that the focus should not be on the size of the company but on the risk that it could create in terms of data protection, thus agreeing with the harmonisation of the rules throughout the Union. Panellists among others argued that member states should have started preparing for the implementation of the new rules a long time ago as this would have increased legal certainty and confidence both among businesses and consumers.

The one-day meeting was divided into four main sessions: the first session looked at the institutional aspects as regards the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation; the second analysed its impact on the private sector including SMEs; the third focused on the GDPR and technological

innovation; and the last session looked specifically at the implementation of the Police Data Protection Directive.

The aim of the GDP package is to harmonise data privacy laws across Europe, to protect and empower all EU citizens' data privacy, and to reshape the way organisations in the EU approach data privacy.