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Issued by the Article 29 Data Protection Working Party

The European data protection authorities, assembled in the Article 29 Working Party (WP29) at its Plenary meeting of 16 and 17 September, adopted an opinion on the Internet of Things (IoT). Drawing the attention on the privacy and data protection challenges raised by “smart things” which are gradually entering our daily lives, the WP29 helps stakeholders acquire a strong competitive advantage by explaining them how to implement a sustainable IoT which complies with the data protection legal framework.

Privacy and data protection are the cornerstones of trust the society will place in the Internet of Things ecosystem. While recognising the significant prospects of growth for a great number of innovating and creative EU companies, the WP29 is keen that the expected benefits for businesses and citizens are not to the detriment of addressing the many privacy and security concerns that are also associated with the IoT.

The opinion stresses that the EU legal framework is fully applicable to the processing of personal data through devices, applications or services used in the context of the IoT. Considering the complex ecosystem of the IoT, the opinion highlights with specific examples the essential data protection obligations weighing on stakeholders and the rights granted to data subjects by EU law in that context. Also highlighted are the security issues that already emerged in the IoT and the practical measures that must be taken by data controllers.

Focusing on recent developments of the IoT – Quantified Self, Wearable Computing and Home Automation – the opinion provides a comprehensive set of practical recommendations addressed to the various stakeholders involved in the development of the IoT (device manufacturers, application developers, social platforms, further data recipients, data platforms and standardisation bodies). The WP29 underlines the competitive advantage there is for stakeholders in the IoT to enable users to remain in complete control of the sharing of their data and to rely as much as possible on their consent.

With this opinion, the WP29 intends to contribute to the uniform application of the EU legal framework, to help data controllers comply with their obligations under EU law and to contribute to the development of the IoT in full conformity with data protection principles. The WP29 also intends to contribute to the discussions on the IoT at the International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners, in Mauritius on 13-16 October 2014.

Background information

The Article 29 Working Party on the Protection of Individuals with regard to the Processing of Personal Data is an independent advisory body on data protection and privacy, set up under Article 29 of the Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC. It is composed of representatives from the national data protection authorities of the EU Member States, the European Data Protection Supervisor and the European Commission. Its tasks are described in Article 30 of Directive 95/46/EC and Article 15 of Directive 2002/58/EC. The Article 29 Working Party is competent to examine any question covering the application

of the data protection directives in order to contribute to the uniform application of the directives. It carries out this task by issuing recommendations, opinions and working documents.

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/data-protection/index_en.htm