

Spain joins the complaint to the online advertising industry presented in front of the European data protection agencies

In the week of the first anniversary of the entry into force of the General Data Protection Regulation (RGPD)

Monday May 20, 2019

This morning, complaints were lodged with the data protection authorities in Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal and Luxembourg against the "Real-Time Bidding" (RTB) system used by the online advertising industry, and in particular Google, to share personal data with third parties without the knowledge or control of users, in what may constitute a massive violation of the data protection of the citizens of Europe.

The complaints have been filed by [Gemma Galdon Clavell](#) (Fundación Eticas) and [Diego Fanjul](#) (Finch) in Spain, [David Korteweg](#) (Bits of Freedom) and [Jef Ausloos](#) (University of Amsterdam) in the Netherlands, [Pierre Dewitte](#) (University of Leuven) in Belgium, [Patricia Macedo Alves](#) (Antas da Cunha Ecija & Associados) in Portugal, and Jose Belo (International Association of Privacy Professionals) in Luxembourg. The complaints that have been filed today are in addition to those already filed in [Ireland, the United Kingdom and Poland](#), thus reaching 8 countries and data protection authorities, in the same week of the first anniversary of the entry into force of the GDPR.

"We hope that this complaint sends a strong message to Google and to all the organizations that use online advertising and personalization tools in their web pages and products," says Gemma Galdon Clavell, President of the Eticas Foundation. "Data protection is an obligation that must be translated into concrete practices and technical specifications."

Every time a person visits a website that uses RTB systems, personal and intimate data about that person and what he or she does while online is sent in the form of a "bid request" to tens of thousands of companies who resell it to advertisers who offer a better bid in the auction, in exchange for the opportunity to show advertising to that particular person. The data exchanged in these transactions may include each person's exact location, religious beliefs, sexual or political preferences, what they are reading, watching or listening to online, and unique identification codes that make it possible to identify the same person at different times and build an individualized profile that is completed over time and with each online interaction.

As we say in the complaints that we present today, this occurs hundreds of thousands of times every day, and is **the most massive personal data breach identified to date**.

Google's DoubleClick system (which recently changed its name to "Authorized Buyers") is active on 8.4 million websites, and sends personal data about the people who visit those websites to more than **2,000 companies**. The second such system by volume of personal data is AppNexus, owned by AT&T, which makes **131 billion shipments of personal data every day**.

There is no control over what happens to that data once it is sent to those third party advertising companies. The case is similar to what happened with the leak that allowed **Cambridge Analytica** to profile individuals, but on a much **larger scale**. Google, for example, has self-regulatory [guidelines](#) that rely on companies receiving data to report violations to Google. According to Google, more than 2,000 companies it works with have been "certified," and on that basis it shares personal and intimate data about virtually every user with those companies **tens of thousands of times a day**.

According to the **GDPR** (General Data Protection Regulations), companies cannot use personal data unless they effectively control what happens to that data. Article 5 (1)(f) requires that personal data be "processed in such a way as to ensure appropriate security of personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss, destruction or damage".

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