Press release | 30.11.2009

EU-US bank data transfers

Data protection and basic rights: EU governments pull a SWIFT one

EU interior ministers today approved an agreement on providing data on bank transfers through the SWIFT system to US authorities. The agreement, which is not reciprocal, lacks critical safeguards including passing of information to third parties and the right of scrutiny by an independent data protection body.

German Green MEP **Jan-Philipp Albrecht**, member of the EP civil liberties committee, commented:

"Today is a black day for citizens' rights and democracy in Europe. The EU has caved into pressure from US security services and agreed to downgrade fundamental rights and data protection standards for its own people.

It is a disgrace that EU interior ministers have rushed through this decision on the very last day before the EU Parliament gains co-legislative rights on this issue. The agreement disregards calls by Parliament and data protection rights organisations to respect basic international standards. The US has been given a carte blanche to ignore EU legal provisions on data protection.

Last minute attempts to placate the Parliament with promises for the future are worthless. Today's contractual decision sets a precedent that the US can count on, despite any protests. A return to clearly defined rights is simply not possible on the basis of this agreement. I am considering making a complaint to the European Court of Justice, since national governments are clearly not acting in the interests of their own people."

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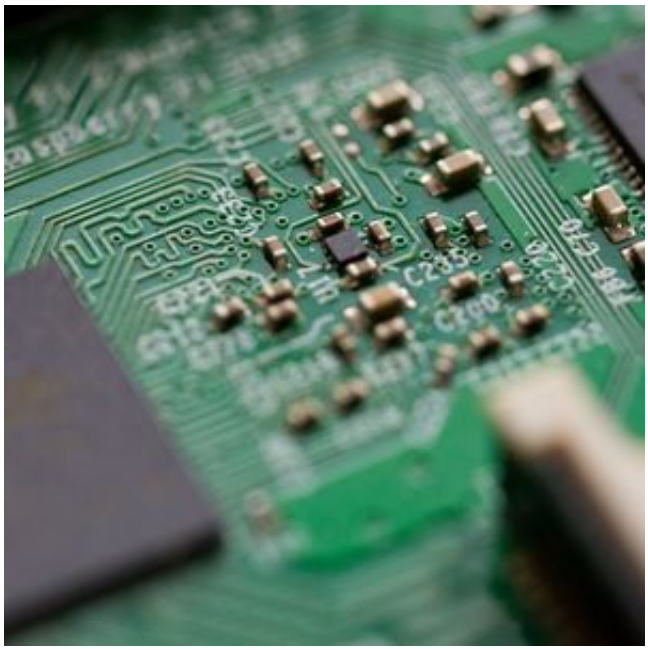


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