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Study | 02.02.2022

Impacts of the use of biometric and behavioural mass surveillance technologies on Human Rights and the Rule of Law

A study commissioned by the Greens/EFA

Public authorities justify the implementation and further development of biometric and behavioural technology as a need that requires no discussion, in order to fight terrorism and ensure security. However, so far they have failed to bring evidence of efficiency and added-value, and they appear to circumvent any serious debate on the very principle of prohibiting this technology.
Despite this position, an impact analysis articulates intolerable risks to rights and freedoms that are the foundations of any political democracy that cares about respecting its individual members. In particular, it is demonstrated that biometric identifier theft or diversion of the processing purpose may have very serious impacts on individuals, along with affecting their dignity based on a non-consensual processing of one of their more intimate data. This occurs in a context where the mismanagement of existing biometric databases by institutions of the European Union and some member states has already been demonstrated.

Consequently, the member states of the European Union find themselves confronted with a crucial political choice. They can choose to rediscover the principles and values of the rule of law and the respect of human rights, and to ban the use of biometric identifiers and of biometric recognition, at the very least in publicly accessible places. Or they can choose to stray from this path and go down the road to totalitarianism, by keeping their current trajectory. Such a statement will be understood by anyone who looks at history and is conscious of the relevance and the value of the principles transmitted to us by the writers of the European Convention on Human Rights. It will also be understood by anyone aware of the calls to prohibit facial recognition from almost all residual democratic checks and balances, including the United Nations, the European Parliament, and Data Protection Authorities.

The answer to this choice, in relation to the arguments to be opposed to terrorism, will undoubtedly be decisive.

- READ THE FULL STUDY
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Responsible MEPs

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield

Member

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