

**Science Europe Press Release: *for immediate release***

**Science and Personal Data: Reconciling the Protection of Individual Rights to Privacy with the Needs of Scientific Research**

(Brussels, 8 May 2013) With the EU institutions currently debating the proposal for an EU Regulation on data protection, Science Europe has just released a Position Statement highlighting the need to reconcile the protection of individual rights to privacy with the safe processing of personal data for scientific research.

The Statement, which is accompanied by an Opinion Paper by the Science Europe Scientific Committee for Medical Sciences, highlights how research depends heavily on access to and use of personal data; for this reason, academic research is already conducted in well-recognised secure environments, preventing the identification of individuals when possible or otherwise balancing risks and benefits through application of well-established ethical safeguards, without creating additional administrative burden.

*“In conducting research scientists give the highest value to the protection of individuals’ privacy”, say Science Europe’s members in the Statement. “This is why scientific research that relies on personal data is already conducted within a robust ethical framework. Either by disconnecting the data entirely from the subject (so-called ‘anonymised data’) or by replacing personal identifiers with a code (so-called ‘pseudonymised data’), the identity of the individuals concerned is protected”.*

It is therefore essential that the Data Protection Regulation includes the necessary provisions and derogations for scientific research, so as to avoid unnecessary burdens and obstacles which would risk hampering future scientific research in the EU. Of particular concern are some amendments proposed to the current Regulation Proposal that do not take into account the well-established good practices for the processing of personal data for scientific research purposes, and therefore risk creating obstacles to future scientific developments.

Ahead of the upcoming vote on amendments in the Committee for Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE Committee) of the European Parliament, Science Europe aims to add the scientific community’s viewpoint to the debate, and provides concrete recommendations to structure a legal framework for personal data protection that will still allow the optimisation of the societal benefits linked to scientific research and innovation.

Science Europe urges European legislators to incorporate the specific needs of the different scientific disciplines into the Regulation, and offers the expertise of its Member Organisations and its Scientific Committees to support the EU institutions in this important piece of legislation.

*Science Europe is an association of 51 Research Funding and Performing Organisations from 26 countries, representing around €30 billion per annum. It was founded in October 2011 with the aim of promoting the collective interests of members and providing them with a platform to collaborate at both policy and activity level.*

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