

1. European Data-Breach Rules May Spur Action in Congress

The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) [website](#) has a countdown clock ticking away to May 25, when new rules governing data privacy and reporting requirements for breaches go into effect.

The rules will likely affect companies, nonprofits and others around the world offering products and services to European Union citizens. Companies face fines of up to 4 percent of their global revenues for violations for "not having sufficient customer consent to process data or violating the core of privacy by design concept," according to the EU. Companies must also notify authorities within 72 hours of any data breach if it is likely to "pose a risk to individuals."

Everything from a person's name, a photo, and email address to bank details, posts on social networking websites, medical information, or a computer IP address is considered personal data, and companies must obtain explicit consent for processing such information, according to the regulations.

Trying to figure out how to comply is a top priority for in-house counsels in many organizations, according to Corporate Counsel, a specialty publication focused on corporate lawyers.

Across the Atlantic, Congress may be spurred to pick up the thread from where it left off in 2016. Rep. [Jeb Hensarling](#), R-Texas, chairman of House Financial Services, has said that legislation may be needed to address data theft, especially after the Equifax hack that exposed financial information of more than 140 million Americans. The committee approved a data security measure in the 114th Congress, but it never got any House floor votes.

"The need to revisit that legislation and, where necessary, improve upon it should be obvious to all," Hensarling said in October. "The status quo is failing consumers and leaving them extremely vulnerable."

Rep. [Debbie Dingell](#), D-Mich., has introduced legislation ([HR 3904](#)) that would require the Federal Trade Commission to prescribe rules for protecting "sensitive personally identifiable information against a security breach."

A spokeswoman for House Energy and Commerce, which also has responsibility for data protection, said the panel sees "data breach and consumer protection issues" as a priority and is considering proposals "from all angles as we work toward a possible legislative solution."