

Information and Data Protection Commissioner

CDP/COMP/783/2023

vs

COMPLAINT

1. On the 21st August 2023, Mr [REDACTED] (the “**complainant**”) lodged a complaint with the Information and Data Protection Commissioner (the “**Commissioner**”) in terms of article 77(1) of the General Data Protection Regulation¹ (the “**Regulation**”), alleging that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] installed a video device on the façade of [REDACTED] overlooking his private property, and therefore considered that the processing of his personal data by means of this video device is infringing the provisions of the Regulation.

INVESTIGATION

2. Pursuant to the internal investigation procedure and article 58(1)(a) of the Regulation, by means of a letter dated the 15th September 2023, the Commissioner provided the controller with a copy of the complaint and requested the controller to submit any information which they deemed relevant and necessary to defend themselves against the allegation raised by the complainant. In particular, the Commissioner requested the controller to submit a copy of the image grab taken from the footage of the video device.
3. By means of an email dated the 22nd September 2023, the controller submitted a copy of the image grab “*showing the blacked out neighbour premises*”. Furthermore, the controller

¹ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

submitted that “*I wish to include that it is not in our interest to look what other people are doing but only want to have security for our house only*”.

LEGAL ANALYSIS AND DECISION

4. In principle, the Commissioner recognises the need for the installation of a video device to ensure the security and safety of private property. However, appropriate and sufficient guarantees should be effectively provided to ensure that such device is not capturing a public space and, or third-party properties.
5. In this regard, it should be pointed out that article 1 and recital 10 of the Regulation aim to ensure a high level of protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms of natural persons, in particular, article 8 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which states that each and every person has the right to the protection of their personal data.
6. Having noted the submissions provided by the controller by means of an email dated the 22nd September 2023, wherein the controller submitted a copy of the image grab taken from the footage of the video device “*showing the blacked out neighbour premises*”. The Commissioner could indeed note that the controller had implemented the masking technique to black out the premises pertaining to third parties, however, the video device is still extensively capturing public space, which could be freely accessed by everyone. This brings about the collection and retention of the data of all the individuals accessing this public space, and thus, this constitutes a processing activity in terms of article 4(2) of the Regulation.
7. The Court of Justice of the European Union in the Ryneš² judgment held that video surveillance which “*covers, even partially, a public space and is accordingly directed outwards from the private setting of the personal processing the data in that manner, it cannot be regarded as an activity which is a purely ‘personal or household’ activity*” [emphasis has been added]. This reasoning was endorsed by the Information and Data Protection Appeals Tribunal in relation to the decision ‘*Raymond u Mary Ann konjugi Cutajar vs Kummissarju għall-Infommazzjoni u l-Protezzjoni tad-Data*’³, where a video device was installed on the façade of a private property in such a manner to capture public space.

² Case C-212/13, paragraph 33.

³ Appeal Number 4/2019, decided on the 27th October 2020.

8. In the present case, it is abundantly clear that the processing activity conducted by means of the CCTV does not fall within the household exemption in terms of article 2(2)(c) of the Regulation, and therefore, the processing of personal data should fully comply with the provisions of the Regulation and the rights and freedoms of the affected data subjects.
9. The principle of lawful processing, which is one of the principles of data protection, states that every processing data operation needs to have a legal basis for processing. Therefore, article 6(1) of the Regulation stipulates what could constitute as a legal basis while also considering the other principles for data processing as stipulated in article 5 of the Regulation.
10. The European Data Protection Board⁴ provides that every legal basis that falls under article 6(1) of the Regulation can provide a basis for the processing of personal data by means of video recording. For the purpose of this legal analysis, the Commissioner noted that the video device is angled in such a manner to cover a wide view of an entire public space. The installation of the video device which is capturing public space is generally deemed to be unlawful, unless in very exceptional cases, the controller manages to concretely prove that there is a compelling legitimate interest to conduct this processing operation. However, even in such cases, the controller should strictly monitor the immediate surroundings of the premises and not excessively monitor a public space. This led the Commissioner to conclude that the controller had not managed to demonstrate that there is indeed a lawful basis that could legitimise the processing activity conducted by means of the video device. The systematic and continuous monitoring of a public space, which leads to the processing of personal data of all the data subjects in a general and non-discriminate manner, is deemed to be unlawful and an infringement of the rights and freedoms of the data subjects.

In the light of the foregoing, the Commissioner hereby decides that the processing activity undertaken by the controller by means of the video device is not in conformity with article 6(1) of the Regulation. In terms of article 58(2)(d) of the Regulation, the Commissioner is ordering the controller to bring the processing operation into compliance with the provisions of the Regulation by ensuring that the angle of view of the device is solely capturing the façade of their private property.

⁴ Guidelines 3/2019 on Processing of Personal Data through Video Devices, Version 2.0, adopted on the 29th January 2020, paragraph 16.

If this is not possible due to a technical reason or any other reason whatsoever, the video device shall be removed. The controller shall comply with this order by no later than twenty (20) days from the date of receipt of this legally-binding decision.

The controller is requested to inform the Commissioner of the corrective action taken immediately thereafter, supported by a copy of the image grab or photographic evidence that the device has been removed. The information about the action taken shall be submitted by means of an email on idpc.cctv@idpc.org.mt

In terms of article 83(6) of the Regulation, “[n]on compliance with an order by the supervisory authority as referred to in Article 58(2) shall, in accordance with paragraph 2 of this Article, be subject to an administrative fine up to 20 000 000 EUR”.



Ian Deguara

Information and Data Protection Commissioner

Right of Appeal

The parties are hereby being informed that in terms of article 26(1) of the Data Protection Act (Cap. 586 of the Laws of Malta), any person to whom a legally binding decision of the Commissioner is addressed, shall have the right to appeal to the Information and Data Protection Appeals Tribunal within twenty (20) days from the service of the said decision as provided in article 23 thereof.

An appeal to the Tribunal shall be made in writing and addressed to “The Secretary, Information and Data Protection Appeals Tribunal, 158, Merchants Street, Valletta.”

