

# Youngest MEP challenges privacy and data issues



Amelia Andersdotter

Amelia Andersdotter is a member of the Pirate Party and has a seat in the European Parliament. At 22, she is the Parliament's youngest MEP. She challenges EU-wide legislation on matters of data retention, patents and copyright. *EESC info* asked Amelia

to discuss how the issues she deals with affect Europe's youth.

**EESC info: In what ways do you believe personal freedoms and citizen rights of the youth have regressed in Europe since 9/11?**

Amelia Andersdotter: We are getting new technologies all the time, we're finding new ways of collecting data, new ways of interacting with people. One of the greatest freedoms that has disappeared in that context is the control over what data we emit and when. When you look at the privacy discussions taking place between the youth today, they are

actually related to what data we are forced to let go of. Can we get this data back? How do we know what is being done with this data?

This is the essence of all privacy discussions right now. Youth in general don't seem to mind online communities like Facebook. Every piece of information I put on Facebook I have control over — more or less. When users haven't been given adequate control over information they put on Facebook they get upset.

Similarly, when we are forced to undergo body scans in airports without the choice of opting out, we get upset. The easy way of changing

that is obviously by creating policies and structures that allow users and citizens to always have control over the information they emit. There is a need to get the control back into the hands of the citizens.

**Does growing up in an environment where data is routinely collected impact the personal development of young people?**

I think so. Having control of what data you emit and when is crucial to personal development. I know the example often given concerns the issue of homosexuality. You choose when you come out and when you

don't because it is still a slightly controversial subject. But if any data could be taken from you at any point, you can't keep secrets, which eventually leads to self-censorship.

We need to be able to control our personal information in order to develop as individuals. When you have secrets, and when you have things you don't want to tell other people about, even though those things may be normal, you need to be the one to decide when that information is released. Certain barriers are barriers you have to climb over on your own. You can't have someone else decide to forcefully tear them down for you. ●