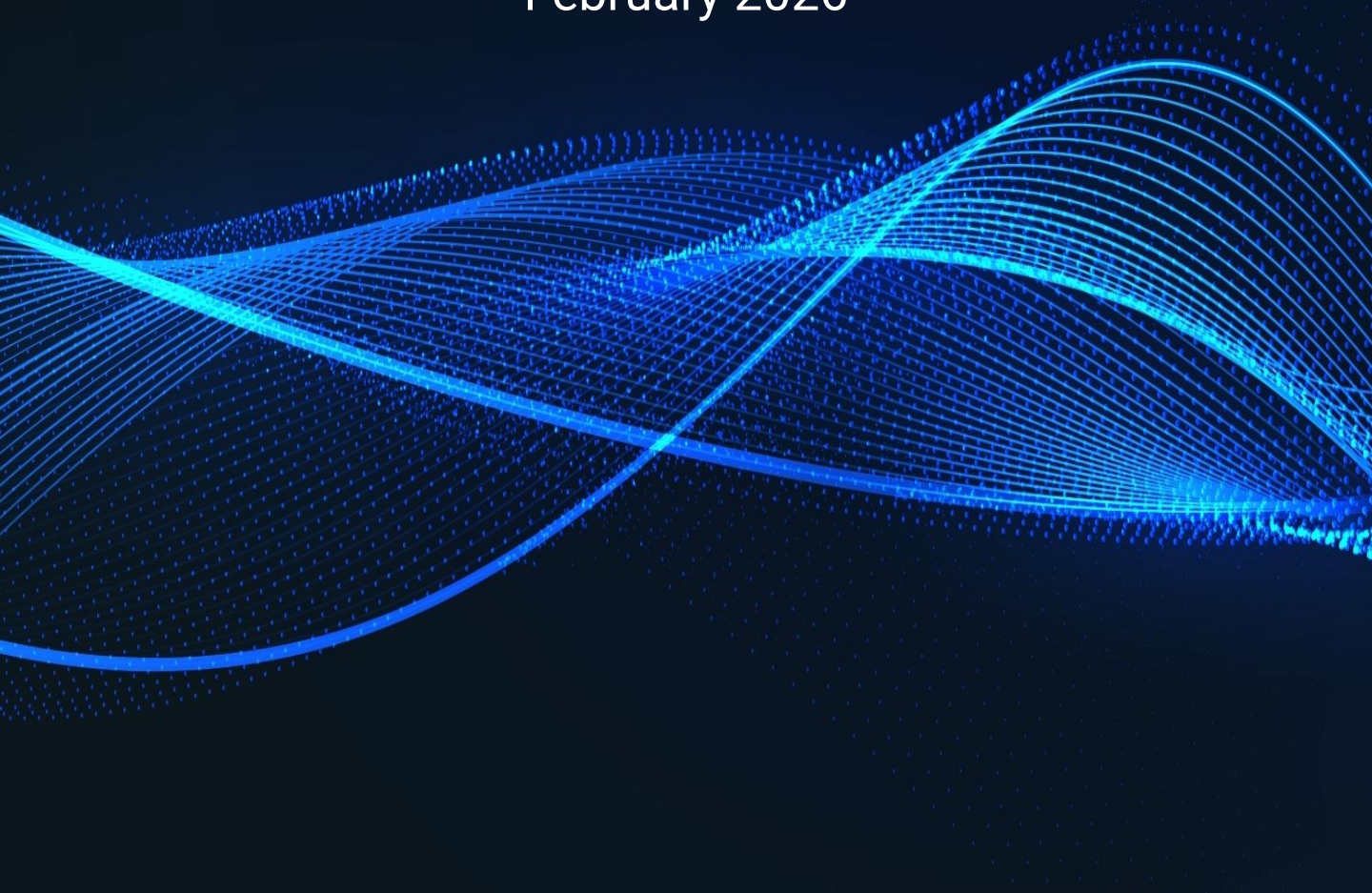


Data Protection, AI & Cybersecurity

Brief

February 2026



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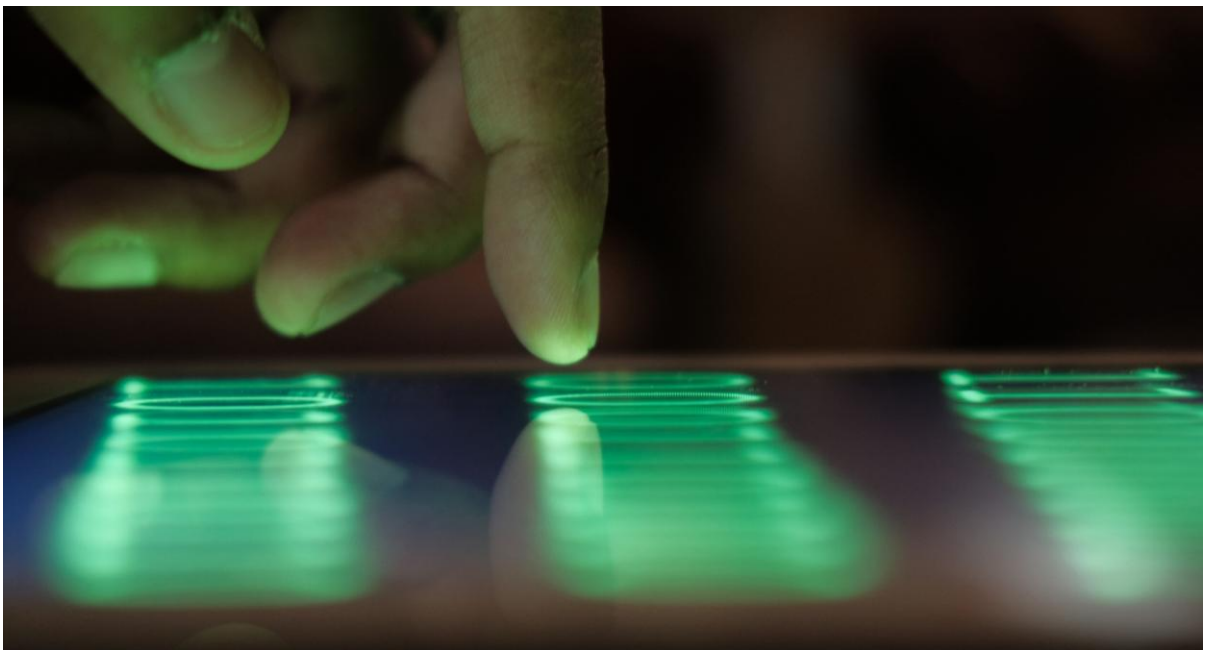
The EU's New Cybersecurity Rules

In January 2026, the European Commission (EC) introduced a major **revised Cybersecurity Act** designed to significantly strengthen the EU's digital resilience. The original framework of the Cybersecurity Act, adopted in 2019, established the basis for the European Cyber-security Certification System and strengthened the mandate of the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) as the Union's technical reference authority. The proposal aims to update and expand the EU cybersecurity framework by reinforcing the role of the ENISA in threat detection, early warning, and incident response, including coordinated support for ransomware attack mitigation.

It also seeks to **harmonize and simplify cybersecurity certification** across the EU under an enhanced European Cybersecurity Certification Framework (ECCF), making it easier and faster for products, services, and organizations to demonstrate compliance with EU security standards. A key innovation is a new **supply chain security framework** to reduce systemic risks from high-risk suppliers, especially those from third countries, and to protect critical infrastructure sectors. The reform package also includes **targeted amendments to the NIS2 Directive** to clarify obligations, streamline compliance for thousands of companies and improve ransomware reporting and cross-border cooperation.

The EU's New Cybersecurity Rules

Why it matters: Once formally adopted by the European Parliament and Council (expected later in 2026 or probably within 2027), these changes are expected to expand legal obligations for businesses, to implement stricter cybersecurity measures. Non-compliance could result in fines or restricted market access while alignment with other EU laws like NIS2 and DORA is essential.



EU survey: Rising Concerns of EU Citizens regarding Cybersecurity

The European Parliament's latest Eurobarometer survey reveals that cybersecurity and personal data protection have become rising concerns for EU citizens, amid ongoing geopolitical tensions. Two-thirds of Europeans (66%) are worried about cyber-attacks from non-EU countries, whilst an even higher proportion (68%) express concerns about insufficient data protection. These digital threats sit alongside broader communication-related risks that Europeans find deeply troubling, including disinformation (69%) and fake content generated by artificial intelligence (68%). In response, 89% of respondents believe EU member states should be more united, and 66% want the EU to play an active role in keeping them safe.

Greek citizens demonstrate particularly strong support for collective EU action in this context. With 93% of Greek respondents calling for greater unity among member states and 82% supporting increased EU resources to tackle global challenges (both figures exceeding the EU average), Greece stands out as a proponent of a more robust European response.

Greece's New Art Law Strengthens IP Protection



Enacted on 30 January 2026, the new Greece's new anti-forgery law No. 5271/2026 introduces, for the first time, a comprehensive framework aimed at preventing and combating forgery and fraud in artworks and collectible objects, establishing a stricter and more complete institutional structure for the protection of cultural heritage, creators, and the proper functioning of the art market. It introduces substantial sanctions, with standard penalties including imprisonment from **six months to five years** and fines of **€5,000 to €120,000**, while aggravated cases involving organized crime or large-scale commercial activity can result

in imprisonment of up to **ten years** and fines up to **€300,000**. A key feature is the Registry of Certified Art Experts, designed to track and prevent the recirculation of fakes, enhance transparency, and support collaboration between authorities, experts, and market participants. By improving traceability and oversight, the law aims to safeguard collectors, museums, galleries, and investors, while restoring confidence in the Greek art market.

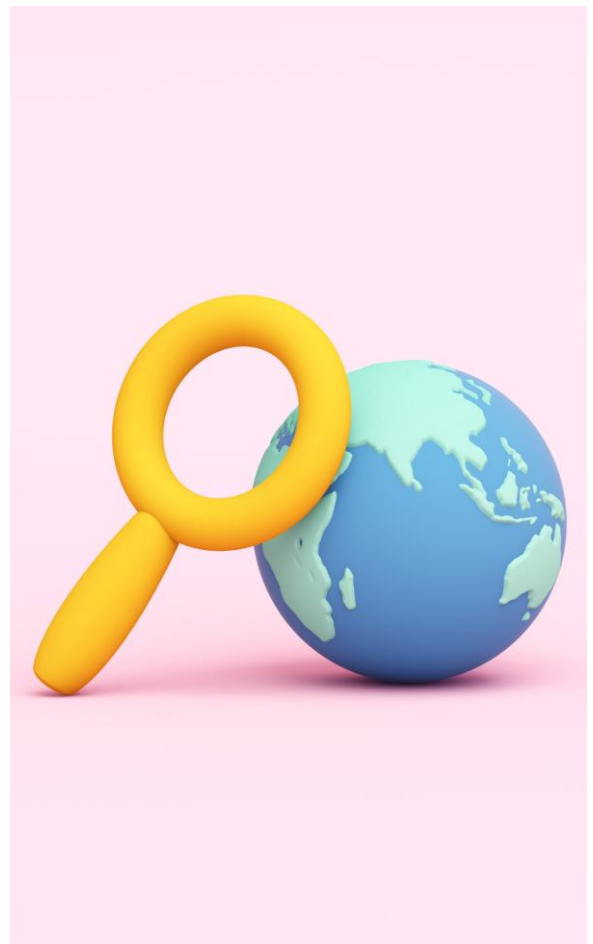
Why it matters: By criminalizing misrepresentation of origin, date, or creator—even in the absence of proven financial gain—the law reinforces core IP principles, particularly moral rights and the right of attribution.

DesignView Becomes the World's Largest Design Image Search Engine

DesignView provides a free online resource, available in multiple languages, through which users can search, examine and compare industrial designs held by participating IP offices worldwide. As of 9 February 2026, DesignView has become the largest search engine for industrial design images globally. Users may explore more than 111 million searchable industrial design images from a total of 76 Intellectual Property offices around the world.

Originally launched in 2012 by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), it has evolved into the world's largest free online design database. This achievement is a result of the Flagship Tools IP Alliance, an initiative of the EUIPO's 2030 Strategic Plan, which works to foster digitalization and strengthen global IP cooperation.

Why it matters: This change enhances global design information accessibility and supports innovation by enabling easier and more efficient visual comparison of design images from around the world.



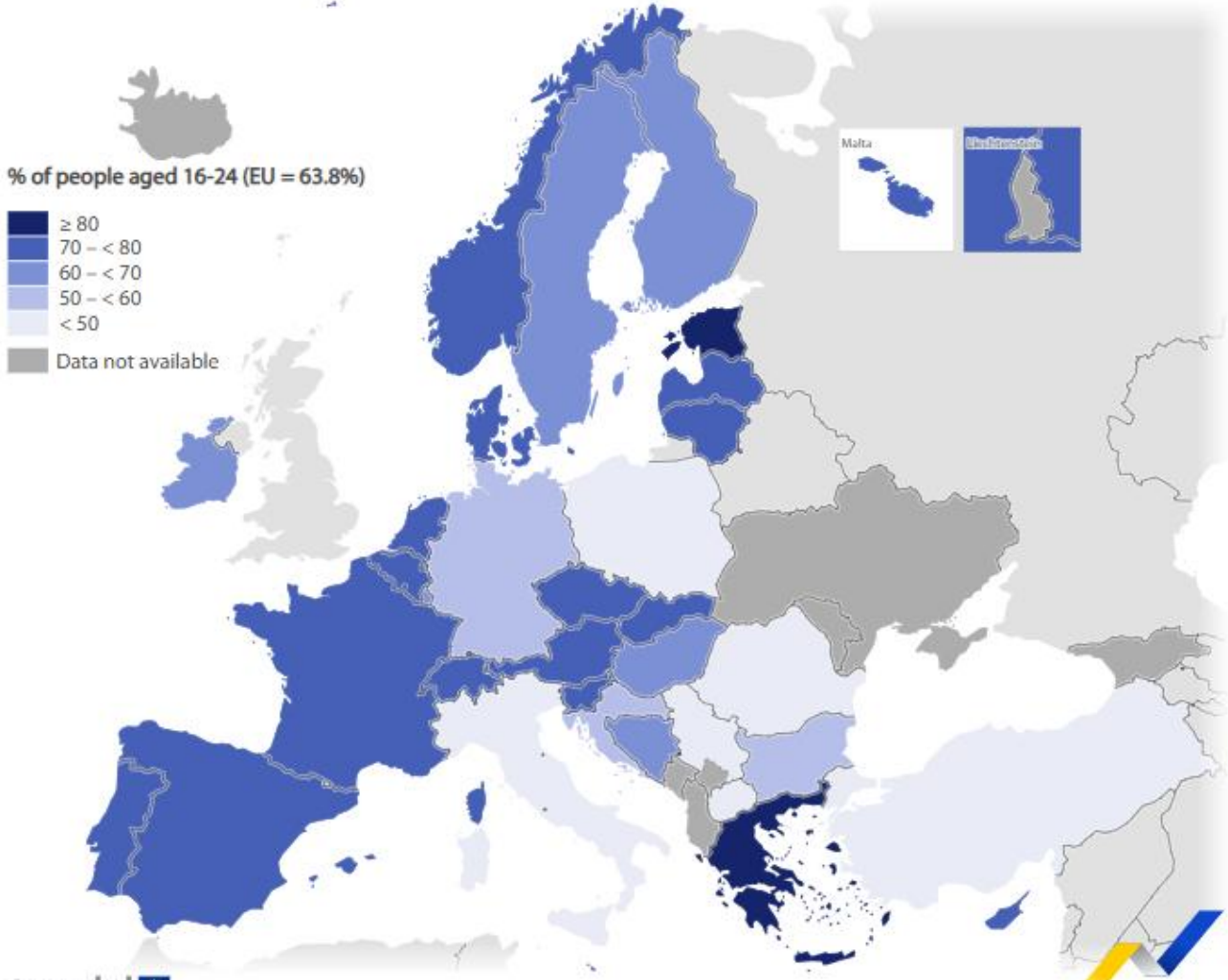
Use of generative AI tools by young people in the EU - Greece on top of European Rankings

New Eurostat figures show a striking generational gap in artificial intelligence usage across the European Union, with nearly two-thirds (63.8%) of young people aged 16-24 having used generative AI tools in 2025, which is nearly twice as high as the rate of the general population. Greece appears to lead Europe in AI adoption by young people, with 83.5% of 16-24 year-olds using generative AI tools, substantially higher than the EU average and ahead of Estonia (82.8%) and Czechia (78.5%).

The data shows that young people are integrating AI across multiple aspects of their lives. For private purposes, 44.2% of young people used AI tools (compared to 25.1% of the general population), whilst 39.3% used AI for schoolwork and university studies. Greece's leading position likely reflects a combination of factors, including strong digital skills and willingness to experiment with new technological tools.

Use of generative AI tools by people aged 16-24, 2025

(%)



eurostat 
Source dataset: [isoc_ai_iaiu](#)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © OpenStreetMap
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 01/2026
Kosovo* - This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Source dataset: [isoc_ai_iaiu](#)

WhatsApp Can Challenge EU GDPR Fine

On February 10, 2026, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that WhatsApp can directly challenge a 2021 European Data Protection Board (EDPB) binding decision, which led to a €225 million GDPR fine. This ruling allows Meta to contest the legality of the EDPB's findings on transparency and data processing, sending the case back to the General Court for review. The court clarified that EDPB decisions, being legally binding on supervisory authorities, are directly challengeable in EU courts, allowing WhatsApp to bypass procedural obstacles and seek review at the General Court. This procedural victory does not annul the fine but opens the door for WhatsApp to contest both the legality and proportionality of the EDPB's

corrective measures, setting a significant precedent for how tech companies can challenge EU data protection enforcement.

Why it matters: Traditionally, companies had to challenge national supervisory authority decisions (e.g., Ireland's Data Protection Commission). This decision enables companies to directly challenge EDPB decisions in EU courts, setting a precedent for future privacy litigation.

Court of Appeal sends strong message on unsolicited calls

By Decision no. 401/2025, the Single-Member Court of Appeal of Piraeus issued a ruling consistent with the Supreme Court's landmark Decision no. 564/2024 on unsolicited commercial calls and the constitutionality of the statutory minimum compensation for any breach of the respective obligations.

In this case, although the plaintiff had registered his mobile number

in the special opt-out registry provided by Article 11 of L. 3471/2006 to avoid direct marketing calls, he received several unsolicited promotional calls from an electricity supply company. The plaintiff argued that these calls violated his right to privacy and informational self-determination, causing him moral harm and loss of personal and professional time, and sought a compensation of €10,000 per call.



Court of Appeal sends strong message on unsolicited calls

The Court of Appeal upheld the lower court's findings and invoked Supreme Court Decision no. 564/2024. It reiterated that the national legislator established a minimum compensation threshold of €10,000 to ensure effective protection of citizens against data privacy violations by powerful commercial entities and to maintain a deterrent effect. The court held that this threshold does not violate the constitutional principle of proportionality (Article 25 par. 1 of the Greek Constitution) but aligns with article 2 par. 1, which safeguards human dignity. The Court of Appeal set the compensation at €10,000 per call, awarding a total of **€50,000** for five proven calls.

Why it matters: This decision reinforces the importance of compliance with Greece's electronic communications privacy framework, which requires businesses conducting telephone marketing to consult opt-out registers maintained by telecommunications providers and ensure that subscribers' declarations are respected up to thirty days before any call is made.

Google introduces optimized process for removing sensitive images

Google has introduced an optimized reporting process for removing explicit or intimate personal images from Google Search results.

Users can now click the three dots on any image in Search results, select "remove result," and choose the option indicating "It shows a sexual image of me". The tool allows users to report multiple images at once and opt-in to safeguards that will proactively filter out similar explicit results in future searches. It is important to note that whilst these tools remove content from Google Search results, they do not delete the information from the web entirely.



Other Developments

UK Supreme Court-Patentability of AI

In February 2026, the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom delivered its landmark judgment in *Emotional Perception AI Ltd v Comptroller-General of Patents*, significantly clarifying the patentability of AI-related inventions. The Court held that artificial neural networks are not excluded from patent protection merely because they constitute computer programs, and confirmed that AI inventions may be patentable where they demonstrate technical character and satisfy the usual requirements of novelty and inventive step. The decision brings UK practice closer to that of the European Patent Office and is expected to support broader protection for AI-driven technologies.

Reddit Fined £14.47M by UK ICO Over Children's Privacy Failures

In February 2026, the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) fined Reddit £14.47 million for significant failures in protecting children's privacy, marking the largest penalty the regulator has issued in this area. The ICO found that Reddit relied on self-declared ages and lacked proper age-verification and risk assessments, meaning it processed children's personal data without a lawful basis and exposed them to potential harm. Reddit says it plans to appeal, arguing that stricter identity checks conflict with its privacy philosophy. The ruling highlights growing regulatory pressure on tech platforms to strengthen safeguards for young users.

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