The Data Protection Commissioner and US Federal Trade Commission have signed a memorandum of understanding to “promote increased understanding and communication” between both agencies.

According to Billy Hawkes, the development will mean “valuable assistance” to his Office “both as a basis for the sharing of experiences and knowledge of issues encountered by both agencies in their interactions with consumers and businesses, and also in relation to cross-border enforcement cooperation where necessary.”

The MOU was signed in late June 2013. It is not known how subsequent revelations by Edward Snowden regarding US spying on EU institutions will affect implementation of the agreement.

Meanwhile, Ireland is said to be seeking to position itself as the EU’s premier data protection hub for US multinationals, while rejecting claims from some European partners that it operates a ‘light touch’ regulatory regime.

Taking a contrary position to many of the key European privacy regulators, Billy Hawkes recently said that adopting a ‘one stop shop’ regulatory approach for companies operating across borders was the right move. He said: “The idea of having a single regulator responsible for oversight of a multinational company makes sense.”

“Our experience of dealing with multinational companies here would suggest that it is best if a particular regulator has to become very familiar with the business of a giant such as Google and Facebook. Merkel said that, in discussions on a European privacy protection agreement, Berlin would be taking ‘a very firm stance’ on the issue.

“Internationally, we should also negotiate an agreement. It would of course be good if Europe spoke with one voice”, the Chancellor added.

Pointing the finger at Ireland to ensure that it stays on top of the companies, Merkel added “We have great data protection laws in Germany but if Facebook is based in Ireland, then Irish law applies.”

The EU’s Justice Commissioner, Viviane Reding, has urged all EU Member States to follow Merkel’s demand for strict privacy rules to ensure companies 

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