

'Staatstrojaner' is watching you!

In the wake of every recent terrorist attack in Europe, there have been calls for increased surveillance, especially of electronic communications. French, British and [European](#) officials have all pushed for more, and more intrusive, means of observation, while the Luxemburgish government is [proposing a law](#) which would permit, among other things, the use of "Staatstrojaner", or state-sponsored malware.

The *FVDE a.s.b.l.* is convinced that, no matter how well intentioned these measures may be, they are fundamentally unsound and could be counterproductive in practice. It is not only possible, but highly probable, that they will have little use in fighting terrorism and will in fact reduce overall security.

On the one hand, available information suggests that more electronic intelligence would not have been helpful in the case of the recent Paris attacks. In that case, and despite claims to the contrary, the terrorists [did not employ strong encryption](#) and were in fact known to the security services long in advance. More manpower for ordinary police/intelligence work, such as tailing, infiltration and so forth might have helped, but more communications surveillance would have meant searching for a constant number of needles in a much larger and ever-growing haystack.

On the other hand, many of the proposed measures would require tried and tested security methods to be weakened or, quite possibly, vulnerabilities in systems to be concealed rather than fixed. That this would make access easier [not only for our own security agencies but also for criminals](#) or, in the case of sensitive business information, foreign intelligence services is too often forgotten.

This point is especially important, and deserves further elaboration: Privacy is not just for people with guilty consciences. It is a human right and a necessity of everyday life. To put the matter very bluntly, if people have a right to curtains and locked front doors, they have the right to secure communications. There is, or should be, no difference between a document in a drawer or on a cloud drive, between talking face to face or over a telephone.

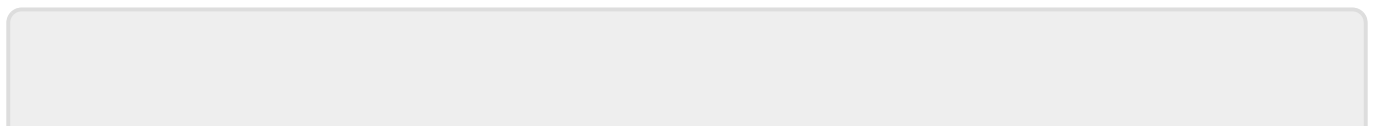
Not so long ago, the West condemned other countries for spying on their own citizens on flimsy pretexts of national security. Today, the surveillance deployment of the NSA alone [makes a mockery](#) of the feeble efforts of the once terrible East German Stasi.

Finally, there is a strange implication to calling for even the possibility of universal surveillance: It that the presumption of innocence - another human right! - is obsolete, that everybody is a suspect and should be investigated pre-emptively.

With this in mind, we urge the Luxembourgish and European authorities to reconsider what we have reason to believe is a rash and ill-advised course of action, and call on every citizen to bring similar pressure to bear on his representatives.

Frënn vun der Enn a.s.b.l. 12/2015

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