



CNPD suspends collection of Worldcoin biometric data

The Portuguese Data Protection Authority (CNPD¹) decided yesterday to suspend, in the national territory, the collection of biometric data of the iris, eyes and face carried out by the Worldcoin Foundation, in order to safeguard the fundamental right to the protection of personal data, in particular of minors.

The CNPD ordered the data controller to carry out, within 24 hours, the temporary limitation of the collection of biometric data, for a period of 90 days, until the CNPD completes its investigation and issues a final decision.

The adoption of this urgent interim measure follows large dozens of complaints received in the CNPD in the last month, reporting the collection of data of minors without the authorisation of parents or other legal representatives, as well as deficiencies in the information provided to the data subjects, the impossibility of erasing the data or withdrawing consent. This made the need to act on the part of the CNPD imperative.

The news coverage made by the media also brought to the attention of the CNPD that more than 300 thousand people in Portugal had already provided their biometric data, an indispensable condition for receiving a certain value in cryptocurrency, called Worldcoin. Data collection sites using the Orb device, located in large retail outlets, almost doubled in six months. The large influx of people, including minors, to join the Worldcoin project and receive *tokens* has led to the need for advance booking of the process of registration and collection of biometric data. There is no mechanism for verifying the age of the adherents.

Biometric data are qualified as special data in the GDPR² and therefore enjoy increased protection and the risks of their processing are high. On the other hand, minors are particularly vulnerable and are subject to special protection by the European and national legislation, because they may be less aware of the risks, consequences and guarantees of the processing of their personal data and their rights.

¹ CNPD – Comissão Nacional de Proteção de Dados.

² Regulation (EU) 2016/679 – General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)



Given the current circumstances, in which there is unlawful processing of the biometric data of minors, combined with potential infringements of other GDPR rules, the CNPD considered that the risk to citizens' fundamental rights is high, justifying an urgent intervention to prevent serious or irreparable harm.

The President of the CNPD, Paula Meira Lourenço, said, «this order of temporary limitation of the collection of biometric data by the Worldcoin Foundation is, at this time, an indispensable and justified measure to obtain the useful effect of defending the public interest in safeguarding fundamental rights, especially minors».

The CNPD continues its investigation, carrying out additional diligence and analyzing the complaints it continues to receive on a daily basis, with a view to concluding its inquiry.

Lisbon, 26 March 2024