Big Brother is (still) watching you
Aspects of the new surveillance

The Internet is becoming increasingly the core of today's digitized world. Individuals use the medium of the media -as Internet could be consider- not only for communication but for social, economic, political, commerce, business, search and entertainment activities. Aspects of everyday life are mirrored in the cyberspace, while government services lead to compulsory internet use. Meanwhile broadband connections supported the evolution of Web 2.0, an environment in which uploading content became easy and fast and social networking websites attracted millions. In this context information, full of value and easy to be accessed in the digital era, transformed cyberspace to a new gold mine and digital digging for information became business. Information about online browsing habits, purchasing behavior, and other online activity is collected, analyzed, combined with other online or offline information, used, and shared, often instantaneously and invisibly. Tracking technology is getting smarter and more intrusive. New "tools" scan in real time what people are doing on a Web page, then instantly assess location, income, shopping interests. Coming to politics and even medical conditions this procedure is really dangerous. Search engines that offer e-mail services -such as Yahoo or Gmail- retain the personal information users are required to enter when opening an e-mail account. Social networking websites allow advertisers too much access to their users' behavior and data. And users have not control over all their personal data and the right to be forgotten is really forgotten. Surveillance empowered by technology violates privacy and in some cases the cost is larger than the violation of a fundamental right. The legal framework is facing real challenges as it tries to follow the rapidly changing technology and the differences across borders. Which are the consequences of this online surveillance and which are the principals on which the new European framework for personal data and privacy protection would be structured? These are the questions I intend to answer.

Marina Rigou
Journalist, teaching in the Department of Communication, Media and Culture of Panteion University of Athens (ΕΕΔΙΠ)