

Update to the Open Letter on Global Privacy Expectations of Video Teleconference Providers

Open letter

On 21 July 2020 the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, Hong Kong and five other data protection authorities from around the world jointly signed an open letter to companies providing video teleconferencing services. The five data protection authorities are the Information Commissioner's Office of the United Kingdom, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority and the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner of Switzerland.

While the letter recognised the value of video teleconferencing in keeping people connected, it also set out concerns about whether privacy safeguards are keeping pace with increased risks from the sharp uptake of these services during the current pandemic. The joint signatories provided video teleconferencing companies with principles to guide them in addressing some key privacy risks.

The joint signatories sent the letter directly to Cisco, Google, Houseparty, Microsoft and Zoom. These companies were invited to respond and demonstrate how they take the principles into account in the development and operation of their video teleconferencing offerings.

Responses

Cisco, Google, Microsoft and Zoom replied to the open letter. The joint signatories thank these companies for engaging on this important matter and for acknowledging and responding to the concerns raised. In their responses the companies highlighted various privacy and security best practices, measures, and tools that they advise are implemented or built-in to their video teleconferencing services.

The information provided by these companies is encouraging. It is a constructive foundation for further discussion on elements of the responses that the joint signatories feel would benefit from more clarity and additional supporting information.

The joint signatories have not received a response to the open letter from Houseparty. They strongly encourage Houseparty to engage with them and respond to the open letter to address the concerns raised.

Next steps

Moving forward, the joint signatories will undertake further engagement with these companies. They will invite more detail on the privacy and security safeguards built-in to the video teleconferencing services, and give the companies the opportunity to

demonstrate how they achieve, monitor, and validate the measures set out in their responses.

Following this engagement, the joint signatories will issue a more substantive public statement on their findings, learnings, and outcomes from this activity in 2021.