



17 October 2023

EUROPEAN DATA PROTECTION SUPERVISOR

The EU's independent data
protection authority

*“Speaking notes for the Giovanni
Buttarelli Award Ceremony for Andrea
Jelinek at the 45th Global Privacy
Assembly meeting”*

Wojciech Wiewiórowski,
European Data Protection Supervisor

Dear members and observers of the Global Privacy Assembly,
Dear colleagues,
Dear Friends.

As the European Data Protection Supervisor, and a friend of Giovanni Buttarelli, I am truly honoured to be here with you today on the occasion of Giovanni Buttarelli award ceremony.

This award is not only an occasion to reward wonderful personalities in the data protection world. It is also a moment to appreciate the outstanding career and life of Giovanni, his devotion and commitment to the ideas that inspired so many.

I would like to thank the Executive Committee of the GPA for making this award the best possible way to pay tribute to Giovanni and his vision. My thanks go also to the staff of the ExCo Secretariat, who worked hard to make this award a reality.

I am thankful to Giovanni's family, to Serena, Gianluca, Eleonora for their fundamental support to this initiative.

Professor Shoshana Zuboff and Elisabeth Denham were the two first and remarkable recipients of this Award, and I could hardly think of a more honourable and distinguished recipient for the third edition of this Award.

Dr Andrea Jelinek has played a key role as the head of Austrian data protection authority for many years. As we all know, Andrea will always remain the first Chair of the European Data Protection Board.

I can witness that she played this role with passion, devotion and incredible talent for 5 years. Thanks to her leadership - and the tremendous work deployed by the EDPB Secretariat and EDPB members that Andrea inspired and led - the Article 29 Working Party was transformed into an efficient and well respected EU body making the GDPR a reality.

Andrea's career is not a typical data protection one. Although, coincidentally, a one that I feel myself akin to. We are - in fact - both from the Ministry of Interior, we both worked with law enforcement, we both came to the world of data protection somehow from "the other side".

Now, I am probably not the best placed to reflect on what being a woman in the world of Austrian police officers mean. But I think I can imagine how she made it, having been working with her, and having her next to me, as the EDPS, for so many years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me say it simply: Andrea is fearless and resilient. She has always been, and she always will be. Andrea has her views, but above all - she has a perfect understanding of what is expected from the functions she holds. She is institutional, never making it about herself. She is a perfect civil servant. And a perfect civil servant is not someone who blindly follows the line, but - on the contrary - someone who merges the personal input with a modest sense of being part of something bigger.

And so has been Andrea's immense contribution to data protection. She knows so much, and has answers to so many questions, she pushes things forward; but doing it all in a way that everybody around her feels is the right direction. It is maybe difficult to explain - but I think many colleagues from the EDPB would agree here - the GDPR, the EDPB, the shape of data protection, could have looked differently without Andrea. It is truly a blessing we have had her.

I sometimes wonder what would Giovanni think about where we are, about the world we live in that has gone through so much in past years, past months, past heartbreaking weeks. Andrea has always been there to remind us about our collective goal and objective: the technology should be designed to serve mankind - as recalled in recital 4 of the GDPR, often quoted by Andrea. And I deeply believe, had Giovanni been with us, he would appreciate Andrea even more (even if he might not want to admit it fully!).

Andrea and Giovanni shared a mutual appreciation of one another and represent true believers and defenders of the European project and of the European approach to the protection of personal data.

Both have worked so that privacy rules would be not ends in themselves but rather means for safeguarding and promoting human dignity and social justice, locally and globally, to ensure a fairer digital future for all.

Andrea, with this award we are trying to say thank you for everything. We are proud to know you, and we are grateful.