



EUROPEAN DATA PROTECTION SUPERVISOR

Dear Friends,

I see the world around me changing in ways that I do not always comprehend. The past years, and especially the past months have been - I think it is fair to admit it - scary. But they also showed a lot of courage, resilience and leadership. They showed, once more, how much power people have when they deeply care about something.

This feeling of uncertainty, on one hand, and hope and possibility, on the other, has been with me ever since I took on the role of the European Data Protection Supervisor. It made me realise at a certain moment that we need to look more bravely into the future. And it was this thought that birthed the idea of the conference.

When I began building this conference a year ago, I was confronted with many uncertainties. Would it be possible to host an in-presence event in June 2022? Should we already begin discussing the future of data protection? Is there political, legal, or even a general appetite to discuss aspects of the data protection framework that could be improved?

Indeed, such discussions are not easy. Yet, I think we must have the courage to engage in them nonetheless, for they are often the most important. We cannot blindly walk into our future, hoping to stumble onto the path of effective enforcement on the way.

When I first announced this conference, I made a promise to you to engage in a meaningful discussion about the future of the digital sphere. With the conference program that we have put together for you and with the narrative it sets into motion, I intend to deliver on that promise. Here is how:

We will begin the conference paradoxically where we want it to end: by discussing what effective enforcement means and how to get there. We then move to a consideration of whether we risk diminishing the global impact of the GDPR if compliance is not stepped up. To do this, we will look at what the GDPR can learn from the world in terms of approaches to enforcement and assess whether these could be mirrored in the EU regulatory framework. Building on the notion of experience from elsewhere, we will discuss the governance models of the so-called Digital Rulebook and whether they may serve as a source of inspiration for data protection.

Then, we will turn to practice and talk about the problems on the ground. This will bring us to the larger question of how we should share the burden of enforcement, whether there should be an overarching legal standard of ‘fairness’, and what procedural issues constitute a barrier to the efficient functioning of the One-Stop-Shop model.

After talking problems, we will talk solutions. We will reflect on empowering the European Data Protection Board, explore judicial remedies, and debate class actions and complaints handling. We will examine whether other fields of EU law have particular characteristics that make them more effective. We will consider these reflections in light of our own challenges, such as those of combining different procedures, or enforcing with reference to public authorities. We will discuss e-Privacy and the journalistic exemption under the GDPR.

We will then hone back in on a discussion on the future of data protection, where we will anticipate our perceptions and debates over the next couple of years. We will deliberate on the current landmark judgments from the Court of Justice of the European Union.

And with this, we will move to a reflection on whether we need to be more innovative, using foresight instruments and tools, or new cooperation mechanisms, to design data protection authorities of the future that are anticipatory and well-suited to the realities of our intertwined world.

In between all of this, we will have keynotes from high-level guests, workshops, and networking events, allowing you to take discussions beyond the four walls of the breakout rooms and bring them to life in animated dialogue.

I hope that by walking you through the program and connecting the dots of our carefully crafted narrative, you will catch a glimpse of what we have been stringing together for you this past year here at the EDPS.

Yours,

Wojciech Wiewiórowski