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**EUROPEAN
DATA
PROTECTION
SUPERVISOR**

The EU's independent data
protection authority

*“Annual Report 2025: protecting people
in a changing digital world”*

Speech

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European Data Protection Supervisor

Thank you, Chair, for that introduction.

Honourable Members of the European Parliament, it is my privilege to present to you the EDPS Annual Report for the year 2025 [yet another year of this prolonged term].

If 2024 was a year of taking stock and celebrating our 20th anniversary, 2025 has been defined by the transition from strategic preparation to robust operationalisation across our expanding mandate. In this increasingly complex digital landscape, we focused on delivering concrete results to ensure that the fundamental rights of individuals remain protected within the ambitious and evolving Digital Rulebook.

Our work throughout the year continued to be steered by our three strategic pillars:

- Foresight – taking a long-term view of technological and legal trends before they impact EU citizens,
- Action – taking proactive steps to ensure EU institutions have the tools they need to continue to be world leaders in data protection,
- and Solidarity – which means safeguarding privacy and fundamental rights according to our proudly held European values.

Allow me to share the key impacts and milestones from this past year.

Policy and Legislative Consultation

Traditionally I am starting our Report in this Committee presenting the long-standing role of the EDPS in providing advice to the EU co-legislators. I need to say – we broke new ground here. In 2025, we reached a record level of activity, responding to 145 requests for legislative consultations,¹ representing almost a 50% increase in comparison to 2024. These consultations covered several key policy areas of the Union.

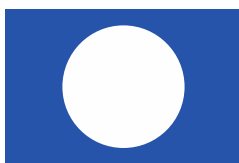
In the area of Justice and Home Affairs, we advised among others on

- the proposed regulation establishing common rules for the return of third-country nationals illegally staying in the EU;
- the negotiating mandate for a framework agreement between the European Union and the United States of America on the exchange of information for border security screenings and identity verifications; as well as
- the signing and conclusion of the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime.

In each case, our advice sought to ensure that legitimate security objectives do not come at the cost of individuals' fundamental rights.

In the area of digital regulation, we issued advice on, among other, the implementation of the European Digital Identity Wallet ecosystem, recommendations concerning international

¹ Resulting in 31 opinions, 78 formal comments and 36 informal comments.



agreements in the areas of Digital Trade and e-Commerce and the proposed targeted modifications to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

We also fostered high-level debates on competition and innovation to ensure the Digital Rulebook is implemented coherently across different regulatory sectors, so that citizens are protected in a holistic way.

We also published the final version (for now) of our Guidance for co-legislators on key elements of legislative proposals. This guidance offers practical advice to the European Parliament and Council on the main elements to consider with regards to legislative proposals and other acts that imply the processing of personal data.

Our goal is simple: we want to ensure that new regulations are not only legally sound, but also workable and aligned with European values, which means the highest standards of data protection.

Supervision and Enforcement

Our Supervision and Enforcement Unit doubled down on ensuring accountability within the EU administration in 2025, exceeding our performance targets for concluded enforcement activities in our own initiative investigations and complaint handling. We also carried out six data protection audits – one more than planned.

A major milestone was the closure, this year, of the enforcement proceedings following our landmark investigation into the European Commission's use of Microsoft 365. After examining the Commission's implementation of additional contractual, technical and organisational measures, we concluded that the infringements identified in our March 2024 decision had been remedied.

Crucially, the Commission's revised contractual arrangements are now available to other EU institutions, and we issued targeted guidance so that other EU institutions can use these services across a common and secure baseline.

We also concluded investigations into the dismissal of Data Protection Officers at the Committee of the Regions and the European Defence Agency. In both cases, we found breaches of the requirement to obtain prior consent from the EDPS before dismissing a DPO before the end of their term. Our conclusions send a clear signal: DPO independence is a cornerstone of effective data protection governance within the EU administration, and we will continue to defend it.

Our audit programme continued to prioritise areas of genuine risk:

- Audits of the Medical Services of Europol and the European Parliament identified gaps in transparency, data retention, and the lawfulness of processing sensitive health data.
- We also audited large-scale IT systems, such as the Visa Information System and Eurodac, to verify compliance at the heart of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.
- In addition, we followed up on audits of 21 EU institution websites, emphasising the need for accountable institutions to fully implement and document all outstanding recommendations.



We also defended our decisions and the fundamental right to privacy before the Court of Justice of the European Union, in cases touching on the definition of personal data and the EDPS's own legal standing.

More broadly, 2025 saw a 23% increase in the number of admissible complaints received. This reflects not a temporary fluctuation but a structural growth in incoming workload. To ensure that cases are resolved in a timely manner, we specifically prioritised older and more complex cases.

In application of the transparency rules, the EDPS received 72 requests for access to documents – the highest number in our history.

These developments reflect both growing public awareness of data protection rights within the EU administration as well as growing public interest in our activities more generally.

Artificial Intelligence

A defining feature of 2025 has been the rapid evolution of our capacities in artificial intelligence as we prepared for active governance in this area in our new role as market surveillance authority and notified body for the AI systems in the EU institutions.

Though this Annual Report is mainly done as the fulfilment of our privilege and duty described in Art. Of the EU DPR, there is no way to correctly assess the work of the EDPS omitting our role as the Market Surveillance Authority according to AI Act.

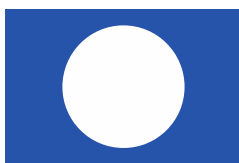
With the August 2026 deadline approaching – when high-risk AI provisions under the AI Act come into force – the work of our AI Unit moved decisively from strategic planning to concrete operational readiness.

A key step in this process was the voluntary mapping exercise of the use of high-risk AI systems across EU institutions, the results of which were published in December 2025. The exercise gave us a preliminary picture of how AI is actually being used across EU institutions. One of the most striking findings was that EU institutions tend not to develop in-house AI tools, and that there is a growing reliance on off-the-shelf tools and generative AI.

This only underscores the vital need for institutional accountability in the procurement and use of AI systems. This is particularly important in sensitive areas such as migration and law enforcement, where the strongest safeguards are needed.

Our role is not just to police AI's use, but to support innovation within safe boundaries. In 2025, two initiatives demonstrated this mission in action.

Firstly, we launched a pilot project for an AI regulatory sandbox. This provides a collaborative space for institutions to test and validate AI systems under regulatory guidance before they are deployed. Participation is voluntary, and the pilot is designed to help institutions identify and address compliance problems at an early stage, avoiding the need for costly adjustments once the systems are live. I must admit that the appetite shown by EU institutions for this pilot project has been overwhelming: 15 EU institutions requested participation in the pilot project, a number that translates into two messages: First, there are high expectations from EUIs for this initiative; Second, EUIs have broadly welcomed the message of support to trustworthy innovation conveyed by the EDPS with this initiative.



Secondly, we held two meetings of the AI Act Correspondents Network, a forum for capacity-building and knowledge exchange between EU institutions that we established in 2024 and continued to develop in 2025. The adoption by 100% of EU Institutions of this best-practice encouraged by the EDPS shows the commitment by the European public administration to support strong governance of AI systems. AI Act Correspondents have been appointed by Secretaries General and Boards of EU Institutions with the clear mission to leading by example in the AI Act implementation, guided and in partnership with the EDPS.

August 2026 is the deadline for our new role to take effect and for high-risk AI in EU institutions to meet the safeguards detailed in the AI Act. Ahead of that deadline, we prioritised, in 2025, a strict 'functional separation' between our new responsibilities as a market surveillance authority and our core data protection mandate. By investing in specialised expertise and closely monitoring the development of harmonised standards under the AI Act, we are also building the operational readiness we will need when our enforcement powers take full effect.

Coming back to EDPS core activity let me continue with actions connected with ...

Technology and Privacy

As we constantly prepare for an always-changing digital future, technological foresight remains a cornerstone of our mission. In 2025, our Technology and Privacy Unit we analysed the impact of six critical emerging technologies:

- Agentic AI
- AI companions
- AI-driven learning
- automated exam proctoring
- AI coding assistants
- and confidential computing.

These were covered in our annual TechSonar report, which I would encourage you to read. A further three tech-driven trends were analysed in our TechDispatch series:

- Digital identity wallets
- Human oversight of AI decision-making
- and federated learning.

This horizon-scanning work is fundamental to staying ahead of the data protection risks that Europe might face in the near future, and it informs both our supervisory activity and our legislative advice. This year, we will pursue our work in this respect by examining selected technology trends like age verification systems, post-quantum cryptography, the Internet of Bodies, or AI workplace monitoring.



Our Internet Privacy Engineering Network event focused on secure multi-party computation – a privacy-enhancing technology with significant potential for protecting personal data in collaborative data processing contexts.

And we launched the Website Evidence Collector as an online service, making one of our key monitoring tools more accessible to EU institutions.

Furthermore, the EDPS now plays a central role in strengthening the digital defences of the EU administration as a permanent member of the Inter-Institutional Cybersecurity Board. We improved institutional preparedness in 2025 through new maturity assessments and the development of EU institutions' capacity to respond to personal data breaches.

It is a clear reminder that privacy and cybersecurity reinforce each other.

Cooperation and Global Advocacy

Finally, our achievements demonstrate the power of collaboration – and this Committee knows better than most that data protection challenges cannot be addressed in isolation.

Through our close working relationship with the European Data Protection Board, we actively contributed to key guidance documents including joint guidelines on the interplay between the Digital Markets Act and the GDPR, guidelines on the Digital Services Act, and guidance on pseudonymisation and blockchain technologies. We also made substantial contributions to the EDPB opinions on the adequate level of protection from Brazil, the United Kingdom and the European Patent Office (which is the first international organisation recognised as adequate).

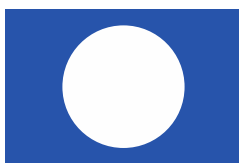
In June, we participated in the G7 Data Protection Authorities Roundtable in Ottawa, Canada, where participating authorities adopted a statement on promoting responsible innovation and protecting children's privacy online. We supported its clear message: privacy and innovation are not opposites. When privacy is built in from the start, it becomes a driver of trust, confidence and economic success. Another Virtual Roundtable was organised in December.

At the Global Privacy Assembly, held in South Korea in September, the EDPS made significant contributions in the discussions and co-sponsored two resolutions: one on meaningful human oversight of AI decision-making, and one on the collection and use of personal data to train AI models. These resolutions reflect our conviction that the governance of AI must be anchored in fundamental rights from the outset, not bolted on as an afterthought.

Also in September, we co-organised the 20th anniversary edition of our Annual Workshop with International Organisations, with UNESCO in Paris. 180 representatives from 86 organisations gathered to discuss privacy challenges in a rapidly evolving geopolitical context. Topics included data transfers between international organisations, and the risks and opportunities of AI.

We also continue our cooperation with the Council of Europe, the OECD and data protection authorities from the greater Europe. We also welcomed data protection authorities from the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership region to Brussels for a 'Day at the EDPS', continuing our work to promote high data protection standards beyond EU borders.

Through this international engagement, we continue to advocate for high privacy standards that transcend borders.



Conclusion

Dear Members of the LIBE committee, the digital future is here. Artificial intelligence is reshaping how public institutions work. Data flows faster and further than ever before. And the regulatory challenges have never been greater.

While we cannot eliminate every risk, the EDPS is now fully equipped to guide the EU administration through this transformation with expertise, independence, and an unwavering focus on the rights of the citizen.

Be assured that I will continue to stand ready to support your committee in ensuring that ongoing simplification does not come at the expense of fundamental rights. I will provide you with clear, timely and operational guidance on how proposed regulatory changes interact with EU data protection law and the AI Act, identifying risks of regulatory gaps, and offering concrete safeguards that preserve accountability, transparency and effective oversight.

I strongly believe that the EDPS can empower legislators to strike the right balance in fostering innovation while upholding the Union's core values and the protection of individuals' rights in the digital age.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERED

