

The CEDPO DPO Conference 2025 – 'Europe: On the Verge of Digital Transformation?'

The second edition of the CEDPO Conference, held on October 13–14, 2025, brought together data protection and compliance professionals, legislators, regulators, and legal experts to discuss Europe's digital transformation, focusing on the evolving regulatory landscape, especially around AI, GDPR, and new EU digital laws.

CEDPO is dedicated to serving as a deliberative body not only in matters of privacy and data protection, but also in providing crucial support to Data Protection Officers (DPOs) and data protection practitioners throughout the European Union. One of the organization's fundamental missions is to assist DPOs in their responsibilities to ensure organizational compliance with the GDPR and other related privacy and data oriented regulations across the EU as appropriate.

Amid the constantly evolving digital landscape, the DPO has become a central figure within organizations. DPOs play a vital role in ensuring the ethical management and protection of personal data, especially as technological advancements continue to accelerate. Their work is essential in upholding high standards of data privacy and integrity in this dynamic environment.

The Conference

In addition to the lineup of renowned and experienced industry speakers, the conference featured a number of distinguished speakers from the regulatory and legislative sectors, including EU Commissioner McGrath responsible for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection, Ms Karolina Mojzesowicz, Deputy Head of Data Protection Unit at the European Commission (DG Justice and Consumers), Mr Gwendal Le Grand, Deputy Head of the Secretariat at the European Data Protection Board, Mr Alan Herrmann, Commissioner at the Luxembourg DPA and Ulysse Spiropoulos, Deputy Head of the Digital Economy and Financial Sector Department at the CNIL. The expertise and insights that they shared were invaluable to the conference.

The conference consisted of several sessions including keynotes, panels and a fireside interview, with each session followed by an extended Q&A for engagement with participants. Some of the key takeaways from the conference as expressed by both speakers and delegates were as follows:

- The conference opened with a keynote by Jared Browne on the ethical challenges of AI and the use of personal data: His discussion examined several challenges that we are currently facing in an age where AI is becoming increasingly pervasive and easy to develop and deploy. The keynote addressed the tension between the need to use personal data within AI systems and the potential unethical and unforeseen consequences this can result in for individuals. The conference panel on AI went on to highlight the growing overlap between the EU AI Act and the GDPR, calling for a need for **clearer regulatory guidance** to help organizations, especially SMEs, navigate compliance with both frameworks.

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- The EU policy panel debated proposed changes to GDPR under the **Digital Omnibus initiative**, especially the reduction of RoPA obligations for SMEs. Other topics tackled were around the continuous challenges of fragmented interpretation and enforcement of GDPR by DPAs across EU territories, and the impact of CJEU case law on the GDPR. A further panel dedicated to the CJEU examined recent CJEU rulings on the definition and transfer of personal data, especially pseudonymised data.
- **GDPR certification** for companies figured prominently, with a panel devoted to the value, competitive advantage, and future of GDPR certification, with shared insights from various European projects and testimonials from certification holders and stakeholders.
- This was followed by a fireside chat focused on the **evolving role and nature of Data Protection Officers (DPOs)** in the digital age. The debate around the future role and impact of the DPO is one of increasing significance, highlighting the need for a more robust functional evolution, adaptation and collaboration within organisations: Data protection is key to innovate and develop the use of AI solutions.
- A key highlight of the conference was the address given **by Commissioner Michael McGrath**. He spoke to the **Digital Fairness Act** - expected midway through 2026 - and the need to fill legislative gaps around consumers safety, especially child safety. He discussed Dark Patterns employed by a large percentage of companies across the EU and the idea of unfair personalisation. He distinguished between acceptable personalisation which is often needed and desired by consumers to make their lives easier and unfair personalisation that exploits the vulnerabilities of consumers. The commissioner's talk was considered and thought provoking and set the stage for the final afternoon discussions of the conference. This was followed by a panel on the topic of dark patterns and addictive design outlining the existing gaps in current EU law and more specifically consumer protection law around dark patterns and unfair personalisation. The panel discussed the best approaches to fill these gaps and to deal with these challenges.
- The last panel of the conference was on the **Data Act**, which elaborated on the understanding of who actually owns personal and non-personal data at any given point of the data lifecycle. What was also clarified in the discussion was that the obligations to share data under the Data Act cannot be used as a legal basis for sharing personal data: Data Controllers still need to find a lawful basis under the GDPR to share personal data. It was highlighted that this has proven confusing for companies seeking to comply with the rules governed by both the GDPR and the data Act. Technical in nature, the panel also differentiated between inferred data and derived data. Inferred data being the data gathered from the raw data of a machine. The derived data the information gathered from the inferred data that can be used to make decisions about the data.



Paul Jordan, Senior Policy Advisor of CEDPO had this to say: *“The conference highlighted Europe’s shift into a new digital era, but also the challenges and complexity of over-regulation, especially for SMEs. There was a strong sense of collaboration and transparency among participants, with a call to balance innovation and accountability as Europe navigates its digital future”.*

CEDPO would like to thank all the speakers, sponsors, and delegates for making the conference a reality and a resounding success! We look forward to planning for next year’s edition and hope to see you all again soon!