

Data protection statement on the processing of personal data in the context of the European Inventor Award and the Young Inventors Prize

Protecting your privacy is of the utmost importance to the European Patent Office (EPO). We are committed to protecting your personal data and ensuring respect for data subjects' rights when performing our tasks and providing our services. All data of a personal nature that identify you directly or indirectly will be processed lawfully, fairly and with due care.

The processing operations described below are subject to the EPO Data Protection Rules ([DPR](#)).

The information in this statement is provided in accordance with Articles 16 and 17 DPR.

This data protection statement describes how the EPO processes the personal data collected for the purpose of conducting the [European Inventor Award](#) and the Young Inventors [Prize](#) (hereinafter "the Award" and "the Prize") and every two years each from 2025.

1. What is the nature and purpose of the processing operation?

This data protection statement explains how the EPO, with the support of external providers, processes your personal data for the purpose of conducting the Award and the Prize, i.e. organising the annual competitions and ceremonies and selecting the finalists of each edition of the Award and the winners of each edition of the Prize

Personal data are processed for the following purposes:

1.1 Nominating the candidates and finalists or winners

To participate in the competition, candidates who comply with the entry requirements and wish to participate must submit the online entry form. Candidates can also be nominated by a third party. The personal data collected in this nomination process are used to correctly identify the nominees, their invention or initiative and to contact them if further information is needed. For more information about the requirements, they can be found on the page of each competition.

If you are one of the finalists or winners, a jury member, a speaker or any other stakeholder who participates in the ceremony, the EPO may collect and use further personal data, such as video recordings or pictures of you, to promote the Award and the Prize before, during and after the event. Such multimedia material may be published online on the EPO's communication channels, including the EPO website and the EPO page on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, X, LinkedIn and Facebook. As these social media platforms have their own privacy policies, we invite you to read them:

[Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#).

The EPO will handle with the utmost care any children's personal data processed in the context of the prize or the ceremony, such as pictures, video recordings or related information used for the evaluation of their application and their possible participation in the event as a finalist or winner. The EPO ensures that all necessary steps are taken to protect children's interests, rights and freedoms when processing their personal data.

1.2 Holding the ceremony

The desired outcome is a hybrid ceremony: online and onsite.

You can watch the ceremony by streaming it from the EPO website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, X and LinkedIn pages or the social network pages – e.g. on Twitch, TikTok and Instagram – of several selected content creators and multipliers who support the Award and the Prize. Depending on the media partners involved each year, it may also be available to watch on other communication channels. As these social media platforms have their own privacy policies, we invite you to read them: [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitch](#), [TikTok](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#).

Depending on the year and circumstances, it may also be possible to attend the ceremony in person. For the purpose, every year the controller adapts the physical attending limitation on social gatherings or other force-majeure situations. In this case, it may be necessary to process personal data for logistical purposes before (e.g. for managing registrations, accommodation and catering), during and after the ceremony. This processing may include health-related data. If required, this data protection statement will be updated accordingly.

Both EPO employees and external stakeholders have the possibility to actively participate in the event in various ways. For example, they may feature in the video portraits of the finalists or winners, or any other videos that the EPO may create for the ceremony. For this purpose, the EPO may publish a call for volunteers or collaborate with public and private organisations and institutions, such as school, universities, etc. They can also interact via the various social media channels used by the EPO.

You can also take part in the vote for the winner of the Popular Prize (in the European Inventor Award) or the People's Choice (in the Young Inventors Prize) that the EPO launches several weeks before the ceremony takes place. To give you an overview of each year's finalists or winners, and to facilitate the vote, we publish information about each inventor on the EPO website(epo.org), where each competition has its page. The voting takes place on a dedicated and separate external platform.

The EPO uses cookies on its website to offer you the best possible experience. To learn more about the cookies installed, we recommend that you read the [cookies policy](#).

Please also be aware that if you use the social plug-in functions or watch one of our videos posted on YouTube and embedded on the event page, or if you participate in the Popular Prize (in the European Inventor Award) or the People's Choice (in the Young Inventors Prize), this information may also be transmitted directly from your browser to the social media provider concerned and may be stored by it.

The processing is not intended to be used for any automated decision-making, including profiling.

1.3 Promoting the European Inventor Award and Young Inventors Prize and the ceremonies

Personal data are processed for the purpose of sending information about an upcoming Award and Prize, such as event invitations and reminders. The EPO shares your email address with an external provider that supports us with the mailing lists. If you receive these emails, it is because your personal data are held in a database shared internally among EPO departments to help inform data subjects about future meetings or events. The EPO will also have obtained your data from your registration for past events or from other sources (e.g. publicly accessible sources or another meeting/event participant entitled to provide data on your behalf). To opt out from emails about the Award and the Prize, please click the "Unsubscribe" button on the mailing platform. For more information on how the EPO processes your personal data in this context or how to unsubscribe, please read the Data protection statement on the processing of personal data for the EPO's email newsletters and related subscription forms.

Personal data may also be part of a contact details database shared internally among EPO departments for them to contact data subjects in the event of similar future meetings/events. Additionally, the contact details of certain categories of data subjects, such as those working for the main stakeholders with whom the EPO collaborates and institutions and national IP offices, may also be part of a list that the delegated controller updates annually and uses to send invitations to relevant events or season's greetings.

The EPO also promotes the Award and the Prize externally and each year develops new ways of interacting with the public according to current trends on social media platforms and the latest technology. For the promotion of the ceremony through different social media and press media communication channels, the EPO collects additional and necessary data from the finalists and winners, jury members and any other participants that may appear in the audio-visual material shared with various multipliers such as – but not limited to – media agencies, content creators and European institutions. This audio-visual material is used to promote not only a specific year's edition but also the Award and the Prize as such and other EPO-related intellectual property activities and events.

As pointed out above, the EPO may organise voluntary activities among its employees and external stakeholders who participate directly (e.g. artists and content creators) or indirectly (e.g. viewers) in the event, and to promote both the Award or the Prize, and staff engagement. For example, they may be involved in the production of a promotional video or be part of the audience at the ceremony.

1.4 The European Inventor Network

The European Inventor Network (hereinafter referred to as "the "EIN") aims to awaken a lifelong passion for innovation and creativity among younger generations.

The Network's members are inventors and entrepreneurs of distinction, making them ideal role models to show school children and students that innovation, in all its form, is for everyone.

If you are a finalist of the Award or a winner of the Prize, you automatically join the EIN unless you indicate otherwise. In the event you want to exercise your right to object, please send an email to european-inventor@epo.org

For more information about the EIN, we invite you to visit the dedicated page [here](#).

2. What personal data do we process?

The following categories of personal data are processed:

2.1 Nominations (nominator and/or nominee)

- Title (Mr/Ms)
- First and last name
- Email address
- Country
- Company, university or organisation name
- Job position/title
- Information provided about the team (if applicable)
- Nominee's nationality
- Patent applicant (if applicable)
- Nominee's contact details: emails address and/or telephone number
- Date of birth
- Title, first and last name and contact details (email address and/or telephone number) of the parents or legal guardian of the nominated minor
- Name and short description of the invention/initiative
- Supporting documents, such as audio-visual material and IP documents

2.2 Attendees of the ceremony or users of the promotional kit provided by the EPO:

- cookies such as IP address, enter session time or interactions between speakers and inventors, etc. For more information about what kinds of cookies we have integrated and how to manage your settings, please see the cookies policy
- audio-visual content if you take up any of the EPO's calls to participate in promotional activities
- comments, opinions and your social media account name if you use the hashtags created for the ceremony, such as #InventorAward or #YoungInventors or tag any of the EPO social media accounts

In addition, if you are a finalist or winner, speaker, content creator or other type of participant in the ceremony, please note that additional data may be collected for the purpose of organising and broadcasting the ceremony before, during and after the event:

- audio-visual material
- information about you for promoting the nomination
- statements and opinions
- information needed to manage travel and accommodation
- any additional and voluntary information provided by the data subject

If you are attending the ceremony in person, health-related information may be processed if required under applicable health and safety regulations in the host country and at the EPO. Depending on the location, personal data may be processed either by the EPO or by the owner of the venue where the event or a competition-related activity takes place. Should any specific measures or actions be necessary, further information will be provided in due course.

2.3 Journalists:

- first and last name
- title
- affiliation name
- job position

- email address
- audio-visual material if you participate in a recorded interview that the EPO may have with an inventor

2.4 The following categories of personal data are processed by the external contractor when you participate in the **Popular Prize and People's Choice**:

- email address
- the origin of the user to provide anonymous statistics
- the inventor you voted for each day
- cookies
- language preferences

Only the number of times inventors are voted for each day is shared with the EPO. For more information about how the external platform processes your personal data, please read the dedicated data protection statement provided on its website.

2.5 Newsletter and event alerts mailing platform:

- email address
- title
- name, surname
- company name
- job position

2.6 The European Inventor Network

- email address
- title
- name, surname
- company name
- job position

3. Who is responsible for processing the data?

Personal data are processed under the responsibility of Principal Directorate (PD) Communication, acting as the EPO's delegated data controller.

Personal data are processed by EPO staff involved in managing the various initiatives, projects and activities relating to the Award and Prize which are referred to in this statement.

External contractors involved in creating the visual campaign, organising or promoting the event or providing an online platform may also process personal data, which may include accessing it.

4. Who has access to your personal data and to whom are they disclosed?

Personal data are disclosed on a need-to-know basis to the EPO staff working on the team in charge of the Award and the Prize and the audio-visual and online teams.

Personal data may be disclosed to third-party service providers for the purpose of organising the event, creating and promoting the campaign, maintaining and supporting the platforms created for the nominations and registration to attend the event, or to participate in the Popular Prize or People's Choice, and ensuring compliance with security and health-related standards. Additionally, the audio-visual material produced may be shared with other public entities for promotional purposes.

Personal data will only be shared with authorised persons responsible for the necessary processing operations. They will not be used for any other purposes or disclosed to any other recipients.

Personal data may be disclosed on a need-to-know basis to the staff member(s) of the unit(s) involved in the prevention and settlement of legal disputes (whether in internal, judicial or alternative redress mechanisms afforded by the EPO or any other legal processes involving the EPO), when this is necessary and proportional for them to perform tasks carried out in the exercise of their official activities, including representing the Office in litigation and prelitigation. Such processing will take place on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the DPR requirements and with the principles of confidentiality and accountability.

5. How do we protect and safeguard your personal data?

We take appropriate technical and organisational measures to safeguard and protect your personal data from accidental or unlawful destruction, loss or alteration and unauthorised disclosure or access.

All personal data are stored in secure IT applications in accordance with the EPO's security standards. Appropriate levels of access are granted individually only to the above-mentioned recipients.

For systems hosted on EPO premises, the following basic security measures generally apply:

- User authentication and access control (e.g., role-based access control to the systems and network, principles of need-to-know and least privilege)
- Logical security hardening of systems, equipment and network
- Physical protection: EPO access controls, additional access controls to datacentre, policies on locking offices
- Transmission and input controls (e.g., audit logging, systems and network monitoring)
- Security incident response: 24/7 monitoring for incidents, on-call security expert.

In principle, the EPO has adopted a paperless policy management system. However, if paper files containing personal data need to be stored on EPO premises, they are locked in a secure location with restricted access.

For personal data processed on systems not hosted on EPO premises, most of the external providers supporting the EPO generally commit in a binding agreement to comply with their data protection obligations under the applicable data protection legal frameworks. The EPO has carried out a privacy and security risk assessment. These systems are required to have implemented appropriate technical and organisational measures such as: physical security measures, access and storage control measures, securing data at rest (e.g., by encryption); user, transmission and input control measures (e.g., network firewalls, network intrusion detection system (IDS), network intrusion protection system (IPS), audit logging); conveyance control measures (e.g. securing data in transit by encryption).

6. How can you access, rectify and receive your data, request that your data be erased, or restrict/object to processing? Can your rights be restricted?

You have the right to access, rectify and receive your personal data, not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing, to have your data erased and to restrict and/or object to the processing of your data (Articles 18 to 24 DPR).

Please bear in mind that your right to rectification applies only to factual data processed as part of the nomination procedure or promotion of your nomination as a finalist or winner.

Additionally, if we have asked for your consent, please note that the withdrawal of your consent will not affect the lawfulness of any processing based on the consent prior to the withdrawal.

If you would like to exercise any of these rights, please write to the delegated data controller at pdcomm-dpl@epo.org. In order to enable us to respond more promptly and precisely, you always need to provide certain preliminary information with your request. We therefore encourage you to fill in this [form](#) and submit it with your request.

We will reply to your request without undue delay and in any event within one month of receipt of the request. However, Article 15(2) DPR provides that this period may be extended by two further months where necessary in view of the complexity and number of requests received. We will inform you of any such delay.

7. What is the legal basis for processing your data?

Personal data are processed on the basis of Article 5 DPR in conjunction with Article 11 DPR:

- a. processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the exercise of the official activities of the European Patent Organisation or in the legitimate exercise of the official authority vested in the controller, which includes the processing necessary for the Office's management and functioning
- d. the data subject has given explicit consent to the processing of his or her personal data for one or more specific purposes, such as dietary information
- e. processing is necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the data subject or of another natural person in situations of force-majeure, such as in the context of COVID-19.

8. How long do we keep your data?

Personal data will be kept only for the time needed to achieve the purposes for which it is processed.

Once each edition ends, the external providers processing personal data on behalf of the EPO will delete any personal data that they have collected from their files after having returned them to the EPO in accordance with the data protection agreements they have signed with the EPO.

An inventor or Tomorrow Shaper who is nominated one year may be selected as a finalist or winner in another year. To identify and encourage people to continue nominating candidates each year, and to be able to evaluate the development of an invention or an inventor's career, personal data of the person nominating and the nominee provided in the nomination form are kept for a maximum of five years.

If you have subscribed to any EPO newsletter, the privacy statement for the EPO's newsletters and related alerts applies.

The personal data associated with the organisation of the ceremony and its promotion in the form of staff and user engagement activities must be erased within two years of the last action related to the event. Nevertheless, some personal data may be kept for longer and only by PD Communication to achieve the purposes for which it is processed and then deleted from its databases. For example, personal data related to sound, video and audio-visual recordings/photographs of meetings and events are stored for educational, institutional, historical, informational and/or promotional purposes for a period of two, 10 or 25 years according to the retention categories reflected in PD Communication's audio-visual retention policy (available on request). Events that can fall in the specified retention categories are:

- recurrent events with a low level of newsworthiness (two years, renewable)
- non-recurrent events related to EPO core business, e.g. the promotion of patent knowledge activities (10 years, renewable)
- recurrent events with a high level of newsworthiness related to PD Communication's core activities at the EPO (e.g. European Inventor Award, Young Inventors Prize, Girls' Day) (25 years, renewable).

If you are a finalist for the European Inventor Award or a winner for the Young Inventors Prize, you will automatically also be part of the European Inventor Network and the EPO will keep and process your personal data to promote innovation, highlight the value of patents and foster co-operation between inventors. For this purpose, the EPO will retain details such as your biographical data and email address for as long as you agree to be part of that network. A dedicated [data protection statement](#) has been created to provide you with more information on how we process your personal data as a finalist or winner.

For personal data related to tracking information, personal data will be stored and deleted according to the relevant cookies policy.

In the event of a formal appeal/litigation, all data held at the time the formal appeal/litigation was initiated will be retained until the proceedings have been closed.

9. Contact information

If you have any questions about the processing of your personal data, please write to the delegated data controller at pdcomm-dpl@epo.org.

You can also contact our Data Protection Officer at dpo@epo.org.

Review and legal redress

If you consider that the processing infringes your rights as a data subject, you have the right to request review by the controller under Article 49 DPR and, if you disagree with the outcome of the review, the right to seek legal redress under Article 50 DPR.