

Data protection statement on the processing of personal data within the framework of external general tasks and activities of Principal Directorate Communication

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.

Principal Directorate Communication (PD Communication) is tasked with managing communication activities that target both internal stakeholders (e.g. EPO staff) and external data subjects (e.g. contractors, pensioners, general users or other stakeholders). These activities are vital to fulfilling the communication needs of the EPO while ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.

This data protection statement (DPS) covers various tasks and activities of a general nature carried out by PD Communication which are primarily executed by its teams specialising in visual communication, content creation, event management and promotion, implementation and performance.

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

The scope of activities performed by PD Communication is aligned with its organisational structure, and includes the following.

1.1. Creation and distribution of communication materials:

- A. drafting and creating written content such as news items, newsletters, landing pages and social media posts, etc., to communicate with both EPO staff and external stakeholders
- B. designing and producing multimedia content such as videos, graphics and presentations
- C. Collecting feedback to improve communication strategies and promote the image of the EPO as well as its activities and collaboration with institutions, IP organisations and other stakeholders

1.2. Management of communication channels:

Distributing EPO announcements and communiqués: based on approved business cases (e.g. site-specific emails) that are established at business-unit level, the statutory bodies of the European Patent Organisation, social bodies and other bodies or their employees have the option of requesting PD Communication to use the EPO Mail Service to address internal and/or external data subjects.

The processing activity may leverage the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in its applications and creation of content. More specifically we may use AI-powered systems and tools for content generation and content

support or improvement, such as but not limited to Copilot and Adobe FireFly to generate or support the creation of text, images or videos; assist with content editing and correction; analyse and compare search visibility; monitor brand presence in AI-generated responses; automate insights, and enhance productivity in digital communication. The deployment and use of AI in this processing activity adheres to stringent requirements in the processing of personal data.

The processing is not intended to be used for any automated decision-making, including profiling. Your personal data will not be transferred to recipients outside the EPO which are not covered by Article 8(1), (2) and (5) DPR unless an adequate level of protection is ensured. In the absence of an adequate level of protection, a transfer can only take place if appropriate safeguards have been put in place and enforceable data subject rights and effective legal remedies for data subjects are available, or if derogations for specific situations as per Article 10 DPR apply).

2. What personal data do we process?

The following categories of personal data are processed in most of the processing activities listed above:

- given name(s) and surname
- title (Mr/Ms/Other), to ensure that we are addressing data subjects by their correct gender
- work email address

In addition, depending on the nature and purposes of the processing activities, PD Communication may process additional categories of personal data:

- work mobile phone number
- organisational unit
- job title
- office location
- other information that data subjects may share at their own initiative and which may contain personal data
- audio-visual recordings of meetings (if applicable)
- private email addresses voluntarily provided by data subjects
- work affiliation
- statements, comments or opinions given as responses in interviews or public consultation

3. Who is responsible for processing the data?

Personal data are processed under the responsibility of PD Communication acting as the EPO's delegated data controller.

External contractors involved in providing and maintaining IT platforms, ensuring correct communication with data subjects or creating statistics may also process personal data, which may include accessing such data.

Your data are also processed by a third-party contractor who provides the EPO with technical tools for email newsletter management. The contractor may only access your data when instructed to do so by the EPO, for example in order to analyse statistical data or handle requests from subscribers.

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

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.

A limited number of EPO employees in various departments of the EPO (e.g. PD Communication, Principal Directorate People, Business Information Technology, Principal Directorate General Administration, the

President's Office and Vice-President DGs 1, 4 and 5, have access to the collected personal data on a need-to-know basis.

For instance, in reference to the mass notification service to manage crisis control, please be informed that, in actual emergency scenarios, such notifications will be sent by PD Communication under the supervision of the President or President's deputy.

As for surveys and consultations, any other data shared as part of the results of consultations will be displayed in anonymised form.

Personal data may be disclosed to third-party service providers for maintenance and support purposes. It may be also disclosed to third-party service providers for the purpose of providing a consultation platform and tools for the processing of results.

When publishing content on the internal and external channels of the EPO in order to carry out any of the activities noted in point 1 of this data protection statement that refers to the purpose of promoting or communicating the EPO image and activities, personal data may be shared with the public having access or using those channels.

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 networks, principles of need-to-know and least privilege)
- logical security hardening of systems, equipment and networks
- physical protection: EPO access controls, additional access controls to data centres
- security incident response: 24/7 monitoring for incidents, on-call security expert

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 also 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) and audit logging) and 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).

If you would like to exercise any of these rights, please write to the delegated data controller at pdcomm-dataprotectionliaison@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](#) (for externals), [form](#) (for internals) and/or [form](#) (for pensioners) 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 following legal basis of Article 5 of the EPO 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, or
- d. the data subject has given explicit consent to the processing of his or her personal data for one or more specific purposes.

8. How long do we keep your data?

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

Personal data collected through surveys and consultations will be deleted no later than three (3) years after the end of the data subject consultation.

Personal data used in the framework of the emailing service that PD Communication provides will be automatically deleted from the EPO Mail Service upon departure of the EPO employee from the EPO, or upon request by the data subject submitted to the relevant unit, if applicable. Personal data stored in the PD Communication's dedicated request register are deleted after 3 years upon receipt of the request.

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 DPOexternalusers@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.