

Personal Data and Privacy Impact Assessment in Research



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Author: Jeroen Melein

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As of May 2018 EU has one set of rules that protect personal data. General Data Protection Regulation Act (GDPR) sets up obligations for business and organisations and rights for individuals in order to protect their personal data. Significant portion of research activities involves dealing with personal data. Even though GDPR focuses primarily on business activities, its main principles are relevant and applicable on any research activity that involves personal data.

Does your research contain personal information?

"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ("data subject"); an identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that person.

Has the personal data been fully anonymized?

Some sets of data can be amended in such a way that no individuals can be identified from those data (whether directly or indirectly) by any means or by any person. The GDPR does not apply to data that are rendered anonymous in such a way that individuals cannot be identified from the data. This means that there is absolutely no way to de-anonymize the data, even with external data sources.

Does your data contain special or sensitive personal data?

"Sensitive Personal Data" are personal data, revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade-union membership; data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation; genetic data or biometric data.

Below is a decision tree for researchers to quickly and easily determine if specific action concerning privacy are needed for a research project.

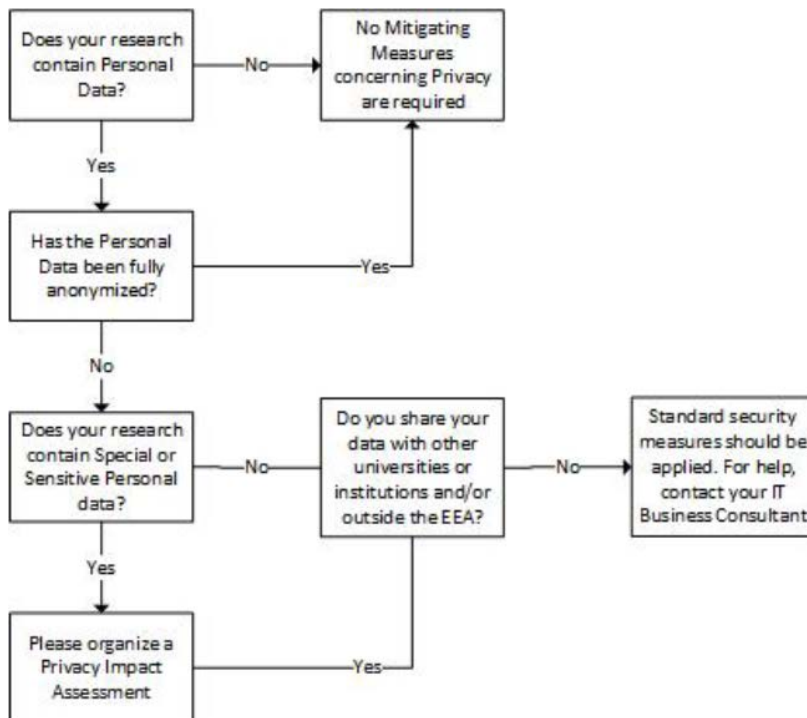


Figure 1 Decision tree for Privacy Assessment

Do you share your data with other universities and/or outside the European Economic Area?

EU data protection law restricts cross-border data transfers unless the transfer is to an adequate jurisdiction, a lawful transfer mechanism exists, or an exemption or derogation applies. Also, correct paperwork needs to be in place before sharing data outside of the Erasmus University.

Privacy Assessment needed?

The Privacy Impact Assessment is done by the Privacy Officer and/or the Data Protection Officer. See below contact details for RSM and ESE:

- RSM - Jeroen Melein and Silvija Prancane-Verhoef, privacy@rsm.nl
- ESE - Lishen Leijen, privacy@ese.eur.nl