



Activity Report

2024 - 2025



BRUSSELS
PRIVACY
HUB

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Message from the Executive Co-Directors

As we present the Brussels Privacy Hub's activities for this year, we do so at a meaningful milestone: the 10th anniversary of our founding. Over the past decade, the Hub has grown into a dynamic and globally engaged centre for research, education, and dialogue on privacy and data protection. This anniversary has offered us a chance to reflect not only on how far we have come, but also on the urgency of the road ahead.

Since 2014, the data protection landscape has undergone seismic shifts. The rise of artificial intelligence, the explosion of data-driven systems, and the embedding of connected technologies into every aspect of daily life have radically altered the way data is used and regulated. These developments continue to open new possibilities, but they also pose growing challenges to individual rights, democratic values, and institutional accountability. Social expectations around privacy remain high, while legal and policy frameworks struggle to keep pace with the velocity of technological change.

In this fast-moving and sometimes fragile global context, the mission of the Brussels Privacy Hub has never been more vital. The past year has demonstrated our continued commitment to critical reflection and constructive engagement, whether through high-level academic events like the Brussels Privacy Symposium and our Summer and Winter Academies and through closed-door working groups. Across all of these activities, we have aimed to bring clarity, foster exchange, and contribute meaningfully to emerging policy discussions.

We are deeply grateful to our team, our partners, and our broader network for their support and trust over the past ten years. As we look to the next decade, we remain committed to advancing rigorous, independent thinking on data protection and to shaping a digital future anchored in human rights, transparency, and ethical responsibility.



Prof. Sophie Stalla-Bourdillon



Prof. Gianclaudio Malgieri

Executive Summary

The Brussels Privacy Hub has had an eventful and impactful year, marked by significant achievements and proactive engagements in the field of data protection and privacy:

- **Summer Academy 2024:** Successfully hosted the 9th edition, focusing on the future of data protection across regulatory regimes, data spaces, and AI. The event brought together 26 speakers for a week of intensive lectures, workshops, and exchanges with highly engaged participants.
- **Brussels Privacy Symposium 2024:** Held in cooperation with the Future of Privacy Forum, this symposium addressed the integration of the AI Act within the EU digital rulebook, attracting over 100 high-level professionals.
- **Celebration 10 Years of BPH 2025:** Marked a decade of impact with a high-level event at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, featuring keynotes and panel discussions on past achievements and future challenges in data protection and AI, alongside intergenerational dialogues and a celebratory reception.
- **Winter Academy 2025:** The first edition of our fully online academy brought together legal and technical experts to explore the EU's digital rulebook and key challenges in AI governance, decision-making, and accountability.
- **Computers, Privacy & Data Protection 2025:** Contributed to this flagship conference by organising the Opening Night keynote and two expert panels, driving critical debates on AGI, legal resilience, and digital vulnerability.

The Brussels Privacy Hub will continue working in the next year, hoping to further improve the quality of its output and the reach of its activities.



About the Brussels Privacy Hub

The Brussels Privacy Hub (also BPH, “Hub”) was established in 2014 by Prof. Christopher Kuner and Prof. Paul De Hert as an academic research centre with a global outlook. Operating under the auspices of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), the BPH strategically leverages its location in Brussels, the capital of Europe, to engage with EU policymakers, data protection regulators, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This strategic positioning enables the BPH to generate innovative, forward-thinking research on pivotal matters concerning data protection and privacy law and policy. Given that Brussels serves as the epicentre for pivotal decisions regarding data protection within the European Union, the BPH plays a crucial role in shaping global standards for data protection and privacy law.

The BPH’s main goals are to produce privacy research of the highest quality, bring together leading thinkers from around the world, and foster an interchange of ideas among privacy stakeholders in a climate of intellectual openness.

The team at the BPH is guided by the following principles:

- We believe strongly in the relevance and importance of data protection and privacy law, particularly in light of the challenges posed by the rapid development of technology and globalisation.
- We believe fresh and innovative thinking based on multidisciplinary research is necessary to meet these challenges. Thus, we strive to bring together scholars from a wide array of disciplines who will engage with the private sector, policymakers, and NGOs to produce cutting-edge research.
- We operate in a manner that is neutral, transparent and guided by the highest ethical standards.
- We believe in network-building and have created a network of contacts with other leading privacy researchers inside and outside the EU with whom we will work.

Purpose of the report

This report serves as a comprehensive overview of the activities and accomplishments of the Brussels Privacy Hub over the past year. By looking into the initiatives, research endeavours, and engagements undertaken by the BPH, this report aims to provide stakeholders with valuable insights into the centre's contributions to the field of data protection and privacy law. Moreover, it seeks to highlight the BPH's commitment to fostering intellectual discourse, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, and driving meaningful progress in the realm of data protection.



Activities

Summer Academy 2024



Figure 1 – First lecture by Prof. González Fuster on day 1 of the Summer Academy

In July 2024, the Brussels Privacy Hub hosted the 9th edition of its Summer Academy for Global Privacy Law, titled “The Future of Data Protection: Navigating Between Data Regulations, Data Spaces and Data Dogmas.”¹ Held from 1 to 5 July, the Academy brought together legal scholars, regulators, practitioners, and civil society representatives to examine the shifting landscape of data protection and its entanglement with emerging regulatory frameworks. The Academy followed a structured program² with

daily keynote lectures, interactive sessions, and workshops, offering participants a unique opportunity to explore and apply complex legal questions in a dynamic and collaborative setting. Complementing the academic programme, the Academy also included side events and informal exchanges aimed at fostering international dialogue and peer learning.

The Summer Academy explored some of the most pressing developments in global data governance. Participants engaged in deep dives on the intersection between data protection and machine learning, with a particular focus on the AI Act and its practical implications. The challenges of international data transfers were unpacked through comparative discussions on the evolving frameworks in the US, UK, and BRICS countries. Sessions also addressed platform regulation and algorithmic accountability, with a critical look at the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA). Thematic panels on the European Health and Financial Data Spaces prompted debates on data reuse, sectoral governance, and the balance between

¹ <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/education-training/summer-academy-for-global-privacy-law-2024/>

² <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Summer-Academy-2024-programme.pdf>

innovation and individual rights. The programme concluded with lectures on biometric recognition and digital identity, including an examination of the EIDAS 2.0 regulation and its impact on fundamental rights.

Looking ahead, the 2024 Academy underscored the growing complexity of navigating data protection across increasingly fragmented legal and technological environments. As data spaces multiply and regulatory models diverge, participants reflected on the risks of entrenching dogmatic approaches to data governance. By offering a forum for critical discussion and practical training, the Brussels Privacy Hub continues to empower future leaders in the field and to contribute to a more coherent, rights-respecting global data protection framework.



*Figure 2 - The European Data Protection Supervisor
Wojciech Wiewiórowski*



Figure 3 – Participants and speakers at the end of day 5 of the Summer Academy 2024

Brussels Privacy Symposium 2024

On 8 October 2024, the Brussels Privacy Hub hosted the 8th edition of the Brussels Privacy Symposium in cooperation with the Future of Privacy Forum (FPF).³ Titled “Integrating the AI Act in the EU Data Governance Ecosystem: Bridging Regulatory Regimes”, this year’s symposium brought together leading voices from academia, policy, industry, and civil society to explore the practical interplay between the EU AI Act and existing digital laws.

Held in person at Les Ateliers des Tanneurs in Brussels, the event opened with remarks by the co-hosts, including the Hub's Co-Directors, Prof. Gianclaudio Malgieri and Prof. Sophie Stalla-Bourdillon. Both played key roles throughout the day, with one moderating the opening panel on risk assessments across the EU digital rulebook and the other delivering closing remarks that reflected on the symposium's discussions and their wider significance for European data governance. Just before the lunch break, Michaël Van den Poel moderated a panel on sensitive personal data, examining how the GDPR, DSA, and AI Act define and regulate such data and the challenges of aligning these obligations and prohibitions in practice.



Figure 4 – Prof. Malgieri moderating the first panel of the Brussels Privacy Symposium

A highlight of the programme, consultable online⁴, was the breakout workshop session, now a well-established symposium tradition. Several Brussels Privacy Hub members led or co-facilitated these dynamic discussions: Bárbara da Rosa Lazarotto and Pablo Trigo Kramcsák guided a session on consent in generative AI, while Vincenzo Tiani co-led a workshop on the right to explanation across the GDPR and AI Act.

With over 100 participants and a multidisciplinary agenda, the event successfully fostered rich discussion and networking. A detailed report is available, and the next edition is set for 14 October 2025.⁶

³ <https://fpf.org/>

⁴ <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/8-october-brussels-privacy-symposium-2024/>

⁶ <https://fpf.org/fpf-event/brussels-privacy-symposium-2025/>

Celebration 10 Years of BPH 2025

On 5 February, the Brussels Privacy Hub commemorated its 10-year anniversary with the event “Navigating Tomorrow: A Data Protection Decade and Future Challenges in the Algorithmic Era,” held at Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

The event commenced with opening remarks by the Hub’s Co-Directors, Prof. Sophie Stalla-Bourdillon and Prof. Gianclaudio Malgieri, setting the stage for a series of insightful discussions. A keynote session featured prominent figures including Kim Van Sparrentak, Brando Benifei, Isabelle Vereecken, and Wojciech Wiewiórowski. Subsequently, a panel comprising key partners like Marco Scialdone, Dr. Rob van Eijk, and Massimo Marelli, reflected on the Hub’s evolution and future challenges in data protection.

In the “teasing sessions,” founding members Prof. Christopher Kuner, Prof. Paul de Hert, and Prof. González Fuster engaged in dialogues with junior BPH members, sharing insights and experiences from the past decade. At the event, speakers were also invited to reflect on one crucial question: What are the biggest challenges for the next 10 years? Their answers, ranging from AI governance to enforcement, were recorded and later compiled into a video.⁷ The event concluded with a networking reception, celebrating the Hub’s decade-long commitment to advancing privacy and data protection in an increasingly digital world.



Figure 5 - Keynote session with Brando Benifei, Isabelle Vereecken, and Gianclaudio Malgieri

⁷ <https://youtu.be/7bMpbMu5SBw?si=FcedrgpfdAm1rEwC>

Winter Academy 2025

From 6 to 7 February 2025, the Brussels Privacy Hub successfully hosted its first-ever Winter Academy on AI & Law Crossroads, held entirely online.

The Academy brought together leading voices at the intersection of law, technology, and policy to explore the EU's evolving digital rulebook, covering the AI Act, GDPR, and AI Liability Directive, and to examine key challenges related to AI decision-making, fairness, compliance, and accountability.

With keynote interventions and expert lectures from both academic and professional spheres, the programme⁸ offered a dynamic mix of legal, technical, and ethical perspectives. This inaugural edition marked a major step in the Hub's ongoing efforts to foster critical reflection and capacity-building around responsible AI governance in Europe.



Figure 6 – BPH Team at the Celebration Event

⁸ <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Winter-Academy-2025-programme.pdf>

CPDP 2025

As is tradition, the Brussels Privacy Hub opened CPDP 2025 with a powerful and thought-provoking Opening Night.⁹ Following an engaging interview with James Bridle conducted by Privacy Salon, the evening featured a keynote by Mireille Hildebrandt. In her address, she offered a visionary reflection on the accelerating race toward Artificial General Intelligence, the broader impact of the GDPR and AI Act often referred to as the “Brussels Effect,” and the essential role of privacy in protecting the foundations of constitutional democracy.

The keynote was followed by a dynamic panel discussion moderated by Gianclaudio Malgieri. Together with Helen Nissenbaum, Cornelia Kutterer, Bart Jacobs, and Mireille Hildebrandt, the panel explored how legal frameworks can respond to the disruptive forces of emerging technologies while preserving fundamental rights and democratic values.



Figure 7 - Prof. Malgieri on Opening Night at CPDP 2025

⁹ <https://www.cdpconferences.org/opening-night-cdp-2025>

Later in the week, the Brussels Privacy Hub hosted two well-attended panels that further contributed to the CPDP 2025 programme.¹⁰ The first, titled “Reclaiming Personhood in the Age of Disruption,” was moderated by Sophie Stalla-Bourdillon and focused on how to embed fundamental protections into the digital environment, particularly in response to the growing influence of personalisation systems and online behavioural advertising. The discussion featured rich contributions from Romain Robert, Aleksandre Zardiashvili, Margaux Schaeffer, and Luca Nannini, each offering unique insights into the challenges of safeguarding individual autonomy in data-driven systems.

Immediately following, the panel “AI Vulnerability and Dependency on Social Media,” co-organised with the RESOCIAL¹¹ and VULNERA¹² projects, addressed issues of digital addiction, psychological harm, and systemic dependency on online platforms. Moderated by Gianclaudio Malgieri, the discussion brought together Kim van Sparrentak, Itxaso Domínguez de Olazábal, Damian Clifford, Adele Zeynep Walton, and Constanta Rosca, who collectively reflected on the responsibilities of regulators, platforms, and civil society in mitigating these growing risks.



Figure 8 - Prof. Stalla-Bourdillon at the “Reclaiming Personhood in the Age of Disruption” panel at CPDP 2025

¹⁰ <https://www.cdpconferences.org/schedule>

¹¹ <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/law/resocial>

¹² <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/vulnera/>

Webinars

In the past year, the Hub delivered 2 free webinars, hosting 8 speakers from academia, NGOs and public institutions. The recordings are also available on the official Brussels Privacy Hub YouTube channel.¹³

- From Standard Contractual Clauses to Data Free Flow with Trust: The Latest on Data Transfers (28 November 2024)¹⁴

This webinar explored recent developments in international data transfers, focusing on the evolving use of EU Standard Contractual Clauses (SCCs) and the emerging global framework of Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT). Experts discussed regulatory enforcement trends, such as fines for GDPR non-compliance, and examined how jurisdictions like Brazil are aligning with EU standards. The session provided insights into the future of global data governance and the role of multilateral initiatives involving the G20, G7, and OECD.

- Clearing the Hurdles: Toward a New Era in Social Media Regulation (4 March 2025)¹⁵

This webinar brought together leading voices from academia, civil society, and EU institutions to examine the societal harms linked to current social media design and explore the enforcement challenges of existing regulatory frameworks such as the GDPR and the Digital Services Act. Speakers addressed the gap between legal tools and practical outcomes, highlighting barriers to meaningful change and proposing steps toward a more transparent, accountable digital ecosystem.

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/@brusselsprivacyhub7496>

¹⁴ <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/28-november-from-standard-contractual-clauses-to-data-free-flow-with-trust-the-latest-on-data-transfers/>

¹⁵ <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/4-march-clearing-the-hurdles-toward-a-new-era-in-social-media-regulation/>

Working Group

In addition to its public webinars, the Brussels Privacy Hub convened a series of closed-door expert meetings dedicated to the practical implementation of the EU Data Act. These sessions brought together a select group of stakeholders from academia, regulatory bodies, and industry to engage in constructive, off-the-record discussions. The aim of the working group is to foster mutual understanding of the Act's challenges and implications, facilitate the exchange of perspectives, and identify key areas requiring clarification or guidance without any commercial agenda. These meetings are not intended to reach consensus or produce policy recommendations but rather to provide a trusted space for dialogue on complex data governance issues.

Publications

The Brussels Privacy Hub continues to play an important role in shaping the future of data protection and privacy through its two publication series: Reports, general publications on the hottest topics in data governance; and Working Papers, which present ongoing academic research, offering a platform scholars can use to discuss about their work with peers.

The last year, the Hub published five reports and four working papers.

Reports:¹⁶

- Web Scraping: Legal Grounds, Liubomir Nikiforov (May 2024).
- Case 80/23: A Quest for Clarity. Part II, the AG's Opinion and Commentary, Liubomir Nikiforov (June 2024).
- Digital Fairness Act: If and How?, Liubomir Nikiforov (October 2024).
- 10 Years of the Brussels Privacy Hub: A decade of Data Protection Leadership (February 2025).
- Are We Forcing Companies to Be "Fair"? , Liubomir Nikiforov (April 2025).

Working Papers:¹⁷

- Vol. 10, N° 7 Relational Trustworthiness for Cross-Border Data Flows: On Certification and Model Clauses (July 2024) by Prof. Sophie Stalla-Bourdillon - Version 1.0
- Vol. 10, N° 8 Shadowbanning Unveiled: The Landmark Belgian MEP Case and Its Implications for Digital Rights (November 2024) by Aimen Taimur, Max van Den Bosch and Prof. Paul De Hert - Version 1.0
- Vol. 10, N° 9 Law Enforcement Relevant Regulation, Attentive Criminal Courts and AI. American Songbook for European Listeners by Paul De Hert and Georgios Bouchagiar - Version 2.0
- Vol. 11, N° 1 Data Protection and Data Law in South America. An overview by Barbara Lazarotto - Version 2.0

¹⁶ <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/reports/>

¹⁷ <https://brusselsprivacyhub.com/working-papers/>

Conclusion

As we close this Activity Report for 2024–2025, we look back on a landmark year for the Brussels Privacy Hub, one defined by growth, reflection, and strategic engagement. Celebrating our 10th anniversary offered a moment to honour our roots while reaffirming our vision for the future: to remain a global leader in research, dialogue, and education on data protection and privacy.

Over the past year, we have responded to the shifting regulatory landscape with energy and purpose. Through high-level events like the Brussels Privacy Symposium, the Summer and Winter Academies, and our contributions to CPDP 2025, we have explored the legal, societal, and ethical dimensions of AI and data governance in greater depth than ever before. We've also strengthened our impact through practical training, targeted webinars, closed working group meetings, and a dynamic publication output.

Today's digital environment demands adaptable and forward-looking responses to increasingly complex challenges. As technologies like AI evolve and intersect with regulation, and as questions of enforcement, interoperability, and fairness rise to the forefront, our role as a convenor of expertise becomes more crucial. Our efforts this year reflect not just our continued relevance, but our growing responsibility to help shape a digital future that is rights-respecting, inclusive, and grounded in academic integrity. Looking ahead, we will continue to expand our reach through new research initiatives, thematic working groups, and enhanced educational offerings. We are committed to deepening collaboration with global partners and to supporting the next generation of privacy professionals.

The Brussels Privacy Hub remains steadfast in its mission to provide a space for critical thinking, cross-sector dialogue, and policy innovation. We look forward to building on this momentum and to meeting the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Acknowledgements

As we mark the Brussels Privacy Hub's 10th anniversary, we extend our sincere thanks to our dedicated team, partners, and broader network of supporters. Your continued collaboration has been essential to our work and impact over the past decade. In a time of accelerating technological change and growing global uncertainty, your engagement has helped us stay true to our mission: placing privacy and data protection at the heart of legal, ethical, and policy debates.

We look forward to building on this strong foundation as we enter our second decade, advancing thoughtful research, fostering meaningful dialogue, and shaping a digital future rooted in fundamental rights.

Our Team

Executive Co-Directors

Coordinate the Hub's activities and lead academic strategy and partnerships.

- **Prof. Gianclaudio Malgieri** – Executive Co-Director
- **Prof. Sophie Stalla-Bourdillon** – Executive Co-Director

Board of Directors

Set the strategic direction and research focus of the Hub.

- **Prof. Paul De Hert** – Board Member; Honorary Co-Director
- **Prof. Vagelis Papakonstantinou** – Board Member
- **Prof. Paul Quinn** – Board Member

Fellows & Executive Team

Researchers contributing to the Hub's academic work and supporting its operations.

- **Michaël Van den Poel** – Managing Director; Fellow (Data Protection in Legal Practice)
- **Bárbara da Rosa Lazarotto** – Summer & Winter Academy Managing Coordinator; Fellow (Data Governance)
- **Alessandro Ortalda** – Finance; Fellow (Digital ID)
- **Vincenzo Tiani** – External Relations; Fellow (AI, Deepfakes and Biometric Data);
- **Liubomir Nikiforov** – Newsletter & Website; Fellow (Group Privacy and AI Safety)
- **Michaël Valère Thomas** – Student Assistant
- **Dr. Monika Zalnieriute** – Senior Fellow (AI and Courts)
- **Dr. Dongshu Zhou** – Senior Fellow (Data Transfers)
- **Pablo Trigo Kramcsák** – Fellow (AI and Data Protection)
- **Anna Maria Totokotsi** – Executive Member; Fellow

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