

Responsible Research & Innovation and Data Protection



What is GDPR?

GDPR, or General Data Protection Regulation, "lays down rules relating to the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and rules relating to the free movement of personal data. This Regulation protects fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons and in particular their right to the protection of personal data." The GDPR legislation came into force in the European Union on 25 May 2018.

“Responsible Research and Innovation is a transparent, interactive process by which societal actors and innovators become mutually responsive to each other with a view to the (ethical) acceptability, sustainability and societal desirability of the innovation process and its marketable products.”

(Von Schomberg, 2013, P.19).

The ethics of the GDPR

The proper place for the GDPR within the framework of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is in the dimension of ethics. An important concept that relates the two fields is data ethics. Floridi and Taddeo (2016) use the term data ethics to describe:

1

The ethics of data

(generation, recording and sharing of data)

2

The ethics of algorithms

(interpretation of data by AI, machine learning and robots)

3

The ethics of practices

(designing responsible innovation and professional codes to guide data ethics)



The ethics of the GDPR

Ethics of practice addresses the issues of responsibilities and liabilities of people and organizations with regards to data processes and policies. The main goal is to define an ethical framework for responsible research and innovation, .

The dimension of ethics in RRI can be divided into the following subfields:



Research integrity and good research practices which mainly concerns scientific misconduct and questionable research practices.



Research ethics for the protection of the objects of research. The main goal is to protect the objects of the research.



Societal relevance and ethical acceptability of R&I outcomes.

The GDPR includes principles such as lawfulness, fairness and transparency, integrity and confidentiality, and accountability.

Data protection is a very important issue for research ethics and it is a fundamental human right. Data protection relates to autonomy and human dignity.

The GDPR therefore may be directly linked to the second RRI subfield of research ethics for the protection of the objects of research.

Main conclusion

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The study of RRI could benefit from the assimilation of the GDPR's ethical issues, including the development of indicators for GDPR compliance in general as well as specific indicators for ethics within the GDPR framework. Current ethics indicators do not include GDPR related issues.



Check other relevant insights related to the topic of Responsible Research and Innovation in ICT on the HubIT Metropolis at www.hubit-project.eu

¹ <https://gdpr-info.eu/art-1-gdpr/>

² Von Schomberg, R. (2013). A vision of responsible innovation. Owen, M. Heintz and Bossant (eds) Responsible Innovation. London: John Wiley

³ Floridi Luciano and Taddeo Mariarosaria, What is data ethics? Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences <http://doi.org/10.1098/rsta.2016.0360>.

⁴ D5.1 Monitoring and Assessment Plan, HubIT deliverable

⁵ Ethics and data protection, European Commission, 14 November 2018. http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/ethics/h2020_hi_ethics-data-protection_en.pdf