

ARCADES handbook: Never too young to start teaching about privacy

press release

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Under the framework of the ARCADES research project, for the past 18 months, three European Union (EU) data protection authorities (DPAs) – from Poland, Hungary and Slovenia – as well as the Research Group on Law, Science, Technology & Society (LSTS) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) have looked for best practices in teaching privacy and personal data protection at schools. This common endeavour has resulted in a series of academic reports and articles, three seminars for teachers, three national contests for the best lesson plan and a final conference in Barcelona. The most recent deed, ‘The European Handbook for Teaching Privacy and Data Protection at Schools’, edited by Prof. Dr. Gloria González Fuster (VUB-LSTS) and Dariusz Kloza, LLM (VUB-LSTS & PRIO), was released in July 2016 in four linguistic versions: [English](#), [Polish](#), [Hungarian](#) and [Slovenian](#).

The main ingredient of the Handbook is the ‘Teacher’s Manual’ – a practical and innovative tool for teachers wishing to educate children about privacy and personal data protection. Teachers will find therein not only key relevant notions thoroughly yet easily explained, but also ideas for discussion, specific exercises and tips adapted to different ages and school levels. The Manual focuses on the common core of privacy and personal data protection in Europe and thus it could be adjusted with ease to the reality and needs of any EU Member State. Three lessons plans that have won national contests, the ‘Mini-Bill of Privacy and Data Protection Rights’, a short glossary and suggestions for further readings follow the Manual.

The Handbook also offers explanatory chapters about the ARCADES project itself (by Urszula Góral and Paweł Makowski of GIODO) as well as the rationale for teaching privacy and personal data protection at schools and the state-of-the-art thereof (by Gloria González Fuster, Dariusz Kloza and Paul De Hert of VUB-LSTS). All these is preceded by a series of opening statements – striking a similar chord on the importance of privacy education – by Wojciech R. Wiewiórowski, Assistant European Data Protection Supervisor, by Pascale Raulin-Serrier and Sophie Vulliet-Tavernier, coordinators of the International Data Protection Working Group on Digital Education, as well as heads of all four project’s partner institutions. Flemish artist Femke Vanhellemont painted the picture on the cover, basing on a photo taken by one of the winners of the project’s contests.

The content of the Handbook is needs-driven and has been carefully prepared in consultation with a variety of stakeholders, e.g. teachers, education professionals, DPAs and civil society. Its innovative character rests predominantly in the Handbook building on a premise that children – i.e. those individuals who have not yet reached their maturity and thus are vulnerable – need to have their ‘digital nativity’ complemented and balanced with their ‘digital responsibility’. This is so because despite their seamless navigation in the digital world, children remain vastly unaware of the threats, their severity and seriousness. *“Children, just as their parents and teachers, can relatively successfully deal with many privacy problems if they possess sufficient knowledge about them”* – the editors initially observed. However, they further argue that mere knowledge about problems is not enough. Such knowledge should be supplemented by knowledge about rights and rules that would ultimately empower them. Such education, the editors argue, *“is a reminder of the fundamental rights dimension of privacy and of the fact that children need to know about privacy not just to keep them safe, but primarily to help them grow as free individuals”*.

The editors believe that the release of the present Handbook opens a path for further development of best practices for teaching privacy and personal data protection at schools. *“We have learnt a lot throughout the ARCADES project. It has shown the richness and quality of existing educational initiatives at various levels. It has confirmed not only the critical need for such common Handbook in Europe but also a great interest of teachers and data protection authorities therein. This Handbook is a direct response to these needs and interests, perhaps the first response of that type”* – says Paweł Makowski, coordinator of the ARCADES project.

The Handbook aims to be useful and applicable throughout the whole of the EU and such a need has influenced equally its contents and the inclusiveness of its preparation process. It also created a need for multiple linguistic versions that are addressed to the audience not necessarily familiar with privacy and personal data protection language. Prof. Dr. Paul De Hert, co-director of VUB-LSTS, says: “*We have already secured peer-reviewed translations to three European languages beyond English, in which the Handbook had been originally prepared. And, at the end of the day, this is a textbook and therefore readability and clarity of message is of utmost importance. All in all, this has been an exciting exercise*”.

De Hert further adds: “*We now have an ambition to have the Handbook translated into a few more languages and a couple of DPAs have already kindly offered their help to that end. We further wish to present this Handbook to various stakeholders inside and outside Europe and to hear their views*”. This innovative nature of the Handbook combined with its global ambition open a possibility to revisit it in the future. Therefore the editors welcome feedback that will be used in preparation of possible further editions.

The Handbook will be presented at the [38th International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners](#) to be held in Marrakesh, Morocco on 17-20 October 2016.

Background

The ARCADES research project (“Introducing dAta pRoteCtion AnD privacy issuEs at schoolS in the European Union”) was co-funded by the European Union’s Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme and was executed between 3 November 2014 and 2 May 2016 by a consortium led by the [Inspector-General for the Protection of Personal Data](#) (GIODO) and comprising the [Research Group on Law, Science, Technology & Society](#) at the [Vrije Universiteit Brussel](#) (VUB-LSTS), the [Hungarian Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information](#) (NAIH) and the [Information Commissioner of the Republic of Slovenia](#) (IR RS).

More information: <http://arcades-project.eu>

Disclaimer

The contents of the Handbook is the sole responsibility of the editors and does not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission.

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