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28 JANUARY 1981-2021  
**CONVENTION 108**  
ON DATA PROTECTION



Strasbourg, 25 January 2021

Data Protection Day is celebrated on 28 January every year throughout the world to recall the essential nature of the right to data protection and raise awareness on its importance for individuals and for modern societies.

This year is the 15<sup>th</sup> Edition. It will also mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention for the protection of individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data (most commonly known as “Convention 108”) as this special day was established by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2006 in reference to the opening for signature of Convention 108 on 28 January 1981.

Convention 108 remains, to date, the only legally binding international instrument on data protection universal in scope, making it the “Global data protection convention” as specialists and experts around the world now refer to it.

The Council of Europe was a precursor and has been at the forefront of the development of the right to data protection since the 70ies. Convention 108 may not be known by the broad public and the billion of individuals it protects (55 countries from Africa, Latin-America and Europe have ratified or acceded to Convention 108, implementing it on a daily basis) but its role has been instrumental in enhancing our protection.

This right is exposed today to unprecedented challenges, which prompted the Council of Europe to reinforce this landmark instrument in order to respond to new needs and emerging challenges. This work resulted in an amending Protocol opened for signature on 10 October 2018 which provides a robust instrument for our digital era, confirming its global dimension: Convention 108+.

To continue ensuring our effective protection for the next forty years, it is essential that all Parties to Convention 108 ratify the amending Protocol without delay for Convention 108+ to enter into force, for new countries to accede to it and for the right to data protection to be more universally and deeply protected.

As our lives are increasingly on line and our societies continue to seize the potential of the digital age, the Convention becomes ever more crucial for each and every one of us, securing human dignity and integrity in an age of artificial intelligence and algorithmic decision making, providing a common legal space at international level to facilitate data flows between countries.

28 January is the day to remember that new technologies must serve us in a way that respects human rights, notably the rights to the protection of privacy and personal data.

On the occasion of its 15<sup>th</sup> edition and marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Convention 108, join us and celebrate Data Protection Day with the attention and praise it deserves. A series of events and happenings are being organised on that special occasion, that you are invited to attend, follow, and publicise (see the [Council of Europe Data Protection website \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/convention108) for more information).

Alessandra Pierucci  
Chair of the Committee of Convention 108

Jean-Phillippe Walter  
Data Protection Commissioner, Council of Europe