

HELP
Human Rights **E**ducation for **L**egal **P**rofessionals
Council of Europe

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Data Protection and Privacy Rights

HELP ONLINE COURSE

Duration: 9 hours

Available for free on the CoE HELP e-learning platform

Statement of Accomplishment

START COURSE

Council of Europe
Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme
2026

Background and key concepts

As the volume, complexity, and scale of personal data processing continue to accelerate in an increasingly digital society, legal professionals require a nuanced understanding of core data protection principles and the broader international human rights framework.

The Council of Europe has pioneered regional standards, starting with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights , which protects private life, family life, home, and correspondence, and is applied by the European Court of Human Rights as a living instrument to cover data privacy issues. Building upon these principles, the Council of Europe adopted the landmark Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108), later modernised into Convention 108+. Convention 108+ establishes binding international safeguards, delineating key data protection principles and data subject rights applicable across public and private sectors.

At the European Union level, the right to data protection is recognised as an autonomous fundamental right under Article 8 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, distinct from the right to respect for private and family life under Article 7. To enforce these fundamental rights, the EU enacted the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR - Regulation (EU) 2016/679), which standardises data protection rules, establishes strict legal bases for processing, defines key roles such as controllers and processors, and outlines extraterritorial scope and accountability mechanisms. Complementing this, the Data Protection Law Enforcement Directive (DPLE Directive - Directive (EU) 2016/680) provides specific safeguards for personal data processing by competent authorities for criminal prevention, investigation, detection, or prosecution.

Together, these instruments establish robust standards governing lawful processing, data subject rights, international data transfers, and oversight by independent supervisory bodies.

About the HELP course

The HELP course on Data Protection and Privacy Rights is designed to guide you through the robust relevant standards developed at the Council of Europe and European Union level. Throughout our journey together, we will examine key international instruments and explore how they establish foundational legal concepts, essential principles underlying European data protection law, data subject rights and their enforcement mechanisms, rules governing international data transfers, challenges posed by emerging technologies, and bespoke safeguards applicable to specific categories of data.

This course is structured to illustrate the practical interplay of these primary instruments and to demonstrate their collective role in safeguarding the right to privacy within an increasingly data-driven society. Originally developed in 2016, the course underwent updates in 2019 and again in 2026 under the auspices of the Council of Europe's Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) Programme and the Council of Europe's Data Protection Unit. The most recent update was made possible through the framework of the EU-CoE HELP in the EU IV Project.

Target audience

This free online module is primarily addressed to **legal professionals**:

- judges
- prosecutors
- lawyers
- court staff

It will also be of particular value to **staff of national data protection authorities and other regulatory bodies**, alongside **professionals actively working in the field of data protection and privacy rights**.

Additionally, the course is suitable for members of **national human rights institutions**, **civil society organisations**, and university students aiming to broaden their expertise in this area. Finally, it is open to anyone with an interest in data protection and privacy rights.

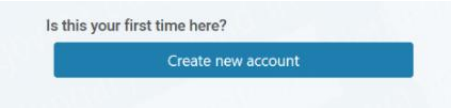
Course outline

The course has seven modules:

1	International Legal Framework • Introductory part • Learning objectives • Introduction • Council of Europe legal framework • European Union legal framework • The right to privacy and the right to data protection • Key points and knowledge check
2	Key Concepts and the Scope of Data Protection Law • Learning objectives • Introduction • Data protection terminology • Material scope of data protection law • Territorial scope of data protection law • Key points and knowledge check
3	The Key Principles and Rules of European Data Protection Law • Learning objectives • Introduction • Key principles • Key rules • Key points and knowledge check
4	Data Subjects' Rights and their Enforcement • Introduction • Data subjects' rights • Remedies and sanctions • Key points and knowledge check
5	International Data Flows and Cloud Computing • Introduction • What are international data flows? • Data flows between contracting parties or between member states • Data flows to third countries • Cloud computing • Key points and knowledge check

6	Data Protection, Privacy Rights and New Technologies • Introduction • Video surveillance • Internet of Things • Blockchain • Profiling • Artificial Intelligence • Key points and knowledge check
7	Specific Types of Data and Applicable Data Protection Rules • Introduction • Data Protection, Privacy Rights and E-communication • Data Protection, Privacy Rights and Health • Data Protection, Privacy Rights, Media and Freedom of Expression • Data Protection, Privacy Rights and the Workplace • Key points and knowledge check

How to access the HELP online module



This short course is freely available in self-learning format on the CoE HELP e-learning platform. It has a total length of **9 hours** and participants who complete it in self-learning format can obtain an electronic '**Statement of accomplishment**'. To access the course, you need to have a HELP account. If you haven't created one yet, you can sign up here - it only takes a few minutes.