

Strasbourg, 15 March 2021

T-PD-BUR(2021)3

**CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION
OF INDIVIDUALS WITH REGARD TO AUTOMATIC PROCESSING
OF PERSONAL DATA**

CONVENTION 108

Personal Data Processing by and for Political Campaigns

Draft Guidelines

Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law

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1. Introduction

Effective political communication is central to democratic forms of government. Voters need information about candidates and political parties, and about their future plans and policies. And political campaigns can more effectively engage with the electorate and mobilize voters if they have accurate information on voters' beliefs, preferences and intentions.

It is equally important that all organizations involved in political campaigning process personal data on voters in compliance with well-established data protection principles. As political campaigns have employed contemporary digital technologies and communications tools, they have been able to target voters with increasing sophistication. A "political influence industry" operates in many countries and now enables campaigns to profile the electorate with increasing accuracy, and to deliver "micro-targeted" messages through various means, to narrow segments of voters based on those profiles. Elections in most countries have become increasingly "data-driven."

Recent scandals have demonstrated graphically that trust and confidence in the integrity of elections can be undermined by the hidden practices that permit the manipulation of personal data on the electorate. The Guidelines recognize that the application of sound data protection principles can go a long way to addressing broader issues of election integrity, and restoring trust in democratic processes in the digital age.

Thus, familiar data protection questions are now at the center of a heated international debate about democratic integrity, and about the rights to free elections enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. International instruments for the protection of data, such as the modernised Council of Europe's Convention 108,¹ assume an increasing importance in the regulation of data-driven elections, and in the support of broad democratic principles of pluralism and individual autonomy.

In many countries in Europe and elsewhere, data protection law applies, and has always applied, to the personal data processed by the organizations involved in political campaigning – the political parties, their candidates, and the various companies that might process personal data on their behalf. Only relatively recently, however, have supervisory authorities grappled with the tricky questions of how to strike the appropriate balance between the rights of campaigns to communicate with the electorate, and the rights to privacy of individual voters.

These guidelines provide practical advice to supervisory authorities, regulators and to political organizations about how that balance should be struck. They demonstrate how the processing of personal data on political opinions for the purposes of political campaigning should comply with the Council of Europe's Modernized Convention for the Protection of Personal Data (Convention 108+), as interpreted through the Explanatory Report to Convention 108+.² They offer a framework through which individual data protection authorities, and other regulators, may provide more precise guidance tailored to the unique political, institutional and cultural conditions of their own democratic states.³

¹ Council of Europe (2018). Convention for the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data (2018) at: <https://rm.coe.int/convention-108-convention-for-the-protection-of-individuals-with-regar/16808b36f1> (hereafter Convention 108+)

² Council of Europe (2018). Explanatory Report to the Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to the Automatic Processing of Personal Data. CETS 223 at: <https://rm.coe.int/cets-223-explanatory-report-to-the-protocol-amending-the-convention-fo/16808ac91a>

³ These Guidelines build upon the background research paper: Colin J. Bennett, *Personal Data Processing by and for Political Campaigns: The Application of the Council of Europe's Modernised Convention 108*. Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, Strasbourg October 26, 2020 at: <https://rm.coe.int/t-pd-2020-02rev-political-campaigns-en-2-/1680a0bf4b>

2. Scope and Purpose

- 2.1. These Guidelines apply the data protection principles of Convention 108+ to the processing of personal data in political campaigns recognizing the increasing use of digital campaigning strategies via social media and the increasing sophistication of voter analytics.
- 2.2. These Guidelines recognize that the processing of personal data for the purposes of engaging the electorate entails a different set of interests than the processing of personal data by government agencies or by the private sector.
- 2.3. Political campaigns not only refer to “election campaigns.” Campaign organizations will be constituted during referendums, for example, and also capture and process personal data on voters and potential voters for the purposes of political influence. The guidelines also recognize the reality of “permanent campaigning” in modern democracies. Rules on the capture and processing of personal data by political campaigns do not just apply to the relatively brief period during which legislatures are dissolved and formal election campaigning occurs.
- 2.4. Political campaigns will collect personal data on: basic contact information from a national or local list of electors provided by the election regulatory body; on donations and financial contributions donors; on voters’ attitudes, affiliations and intentions; on employees and volunteers; and on candidates or potential candidates.
- 2.5. The Guidelines recognize that the extent and effect of data-driven practices in campaigning will be influenced by a range of legal and constitutional provisions in different states: provisions on freedom of communication, information and association; election law; campaign financing law; telemarketing rules; advertising codes and regulations; rules on unsolicited communications.
- 2.6. The Guidelines recognize that different administrative and institutional factors will shape the conduct of elections and the personal data processing practices in elections: the electoral system; the party system; the relationship between central and local party organizations; the existence of “primary elections”; the frequency of referendums; and others.
- 2.7. The Guidelines recognize that the processing of personal data on voters will be influenced by cultural factors, and historical legacies: trust in political elites; the level of participation in elections; and the general acceptability of direct candidate to voter communication (on the doorstep, over the phone, via text and email, through social media).
- 2.8. The Guidelines recognize that a range of different threats to democracy have been raised by the use of digital technologies in elections. The mass profiling of the electorate and the delivery of micro-targeted messages to increasingly narrow categories of voters can create: filter bubbles or echo chambers; voter discrimination and disenfranchisement; a possible chilling of political participation; increased polarization; the erosion of robust democratic debate; and election integrity.
- 2.9. The Guidelines therefore remain high-level. Supervisory authorities -- (data protection authorities (DPAs) and equivalent oversight agencies -- may wish to adapt these guidelines to the processing of personal data in their specific national political campaign contexts. Supervisory authorities may also wish to consider developing domestic codes of practice on political campaigning sensitive to their domestic political systems, such as those

developed by the Information Commissioner in the UK.⁴

- 2.10. Other guidelines published by the Council of Europe are also relevant to the processing or personal data in political campaigns. The Guidelines on artificial intelligence and data protection, for instance, should be followed to ensure that AI applications do not undermine the human dignity, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of voters either as individuals, or as communities.⁵

3. Definitions for the purposes of the Guidelines

In addition to the definitions stipulated in Article 2 of Convention 108+, the Guidelines use the following terms to ensure a uniformity of definition:

- 3.1. “Political campaign” refers to any organized effort which seeks to influence the political choices of registered voters: voting for candidates in national or local elections; making a choice on a specific issue in a referendum.
- 3.2. “Political party” refers to an organization that coordinates candidates to compete in a country's elections. Political parties in different countries may be structured in very different ways and may have complex constitutional and contractual relationships between national and local associations.
- 3.3. “Political opinions” are a sensitive category of information under Article 6 of the Convention, and may refer to: a political ideology or creed; a political affiliation or membership; an opinion about a policy preference; and/or a predicted or inferred score or political belief or attachment.
- 3.4. “Political communication” encompasses communication by: post, e-mail, text message, voicemail, phone or automated calls; and via social media platforms
- 3.5. “Data controllers in political campaigns” include: political parties; official candidates of political parties; campaign organizations established on a temporary basis to support nor oppose a referendum question
- 3.6. “Data processors in political campaigns” include: public opinion companies; voter analytics companies; political consultants; social media platforms; providers of campaigning tools and devices. The latter commercial actors may also be data controllers in their own right, where they alone or jointly with others determine the nature of the processing as defined in Article 2 of the Convention 108+. The obligations upon data controllers may not always fall solely on the political parties and their candidates.
- 3.7. “Election regulatory bodies” are those national administrators responsible for the regulation of the safe and efficient conduct of elections, the implementation of election finance provisions and (where applicable) the development and management of the national voter list. These guidelines do not apply to data that might be captured during voting process by these election regulatory bodies, including the data that might be captured during the voting process at the voting station, including those from contemporary electronic voting machines.

⁴ Information Commissioner’s Office, Guidance on Political Campaigning: Draft Framework Code for Consultation 08-2019) at: <https://ico.org.uk/media/about-the-ico/consultations/2615563/guidance-on-political-campaigning-draft-framework-code-for-consultation.pdf>

⁵ Council of Europe, Guidelines on Artificial Intelligence and Data Protection T-PD (2019)01 (Strasbourg, 25 January 2019).

- 3.8. “Voters list” refers to the national list of registered electors developed for the purposes of the verification and authentication of the legitimate voting eligible population both nationally and in local voting districts. In countries where these lists are shared with legitimate political parties and candidates for the purposes of communication with the electorate, these Guidelines apply.
- 3.9. A “voter profile” refers to a set of characteristics attributed to an individual, characterising a category of individuals or intended to be applied to an individual. “Profiling” refers to any form of automated processing of personal data including use of machine learning systems consisting of the use of personal or non-personal data to evaluate certain personal aspects relating to an individual, in particular to analyse or predict aspects concerning that person's political opinions and his/her likelihood to vote for one party or another.

4. Fundamental principles of personal data processing in political campaigns

- 4.1. The Guidelines recognize that Convention 108+ is explicitly rooted in a broad aim “to secure the human dignity and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every individual.” It speaks of “personal autonomy based on a person’s right to control of his or her personal data and the processing of such data.” It recognises that the “right to protection of personal data is to be considered in respect of its role in society and that it has to be reconciled with other human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression.”⁶ These Guidelines attempt that reconciliation.
- 4.2. These Guidelines recognize that the protection of the right to privacy in elections is crucial to the conduct of free and fair elections, as expressed in Article 3 of Protocol No. 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR): “Everyone has the right to elect the government of his/her country by secret vote. Without this right there can be no free and fair elections. It guarantees the citizens’ free expression, the proper representativeness of elected representatives and the legitimacy of the legislative and executive bodies, and by the same token enhances the people’s confidence in the institutions.”
- 4.3. The European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly held that the expression of political opinions has privileged status, as a basis for free expression and free elections. Further, the right to free elections enshrined in Article 3 of the ECHR entails a positive obligation on member states to establish the conditions under which individuals can freely form and express their opinions and choose their representatives without discrimination. Article 14 prohibits discrimination on grounds of “political or other opinions.”⁷
- 4.4. These Guidelines recognize the principles of free expression and robust public debate in both offline and online media, as expressed in Article 10 of the ECHR on freedom of expression: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.”
- 4.5. The illegitimate processing of personal data revealing political opinions can chill political speech, and adversely affect rights of free political communication protected by the ECHR.

⁶ Convention 108+, Preamble.

⁷ European Court of Human Rights, Guide on Article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights and on Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 to the Convention (August 31, 2020), p. 30 at: https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide_Art_14_Art_1_Protocol_12_ENG.pdf

- 4.6. The Guidelines build upon the prior work of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the “Venice Commission”) on the impact of digital technologies on elections and democracy.⁸ The Guidelines note the Venice Commission’s opinion that “personal data need to be effectively protected, particularly during the crucial period of elections” and its call for a specific “legal instrument to address the risks that the use of digital technologies in elections represents to personal data protection.”⁹
- 4.7. Article 4 of Convention 108+ obliges Parties to incorporate its provisions into their law, and to secure their effective implementation in practice. The Convention requires that the law be applied to all data controllers and processors within its jurisdiction, including political parties and other campaigning organizations.

5. The Application of Convention 108+ to Political Campaigns and Campaign Organizations

5.1. Legitimacy of data processing and quality of data (Article 5)

- 5.1.1. Data processing shall be proportionate in relation to the legitimate purposes of political campaigns. Those purposes should be clearly outlined in the privacy policies of political parties or other political organizations. The capture of personal data on the opinions and preferences of voters should be proportionate to that defined purpose, and should not lead to a disproportionate interference with the voter’s interests, rights and freedoms.
- 5.1.2. The legitimate purpose of a political organization is to communicate with voters, or potential voters, for purposes of political engagement. Personal data on voters should not be used for other purposes, and should not be further used for “undefined, imprecise or vague purposes.”¹⁰ These purposes should be stated as precisely as possible in campaign publicity materials
- 5.1.3. In most campaigning contexts, the processing of personal data on voters should be based on the basis of the free, specific, informed and unambiguous consent of the voter. Consent must be obtained within every context that political campaigns engage with voters – on the doorstep, over the telephone, via email or text, or via social media. Consent should not be inferred through “silence, inactivity or pre-validated forms or boxes.”¹¹
- 5.1.4. No undue influence or pressure should be exerted on a voter or potential voter to provide personal data by any political organization.¹²
- 5.1.5. The voter may withdraw his or her consent to process personal data at any time.¹³
- 5.1.6. When organizations campaign in person on the doorstep, campaigners must not record

⁸ Joint Report of the Venice Commission and of the Directorate of Information Society and Action against Crime of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI), on Digital Technologies and Elections, adopted by the Council of Democratic Elections at its 65th meeting (Venice, 20 June 2019) and by the Venice Commission at its 119th Plenary Session (Venice, 21-22 June 2019) at: [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2019\)016-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2019)016-e)

⁹ European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), *Principles for a Fundamental Rights-Compliant Use of Digital Technologies in Electoral Processes*, Council of Europe Opinion No 974/2019, p. 17.

¹⁰ Explanatory report, para 48.

¹¹ Explanatory report, para 42.

¹² Explanatory report, para. 42.

¹³ Explanatory report, para. 45.

any information about the household and its occupants beyond that freely and specifically provided by the voter about his/her political views and/or preferences. They should not be asking about other family members or residents. They should not be collecting information on the household or its possessions for purposes of drawing inferences about political preferences or interests.

- 5.1.7. In circumstances where political campaigns legally acquire the official voters list to assist their campaigns, the campaigns must only use those lists for the purposes of communication with the electorate and must obey all requirements laid down in law for the processing, disclosure and retention of those lists.
- 5.1.8. Political campaigns will be required to collect and report information on donors to the campaign under relevant election financing laws. These data should only be used for purposes stipulated in applicable legislation.
- 5.1.9. Political campaigns often obtain personal data, including inferred data, from third party data brokers for election or campaigning purposes to target messages to a particular audience. However, before using the data in this way, campaigns must carry out full due diligence to ensure the data has been obtained lawfully.
- 5.1.10. Political campaigns must ensure that personal data is accurate, and where necessary kept up-to-date.
- 5.1.11. Personal data on voters should not be further processed in a way that the voter might consider “unexpected, inappropriate or otherwise objectionable.”¹⁴ For instance, the political organization should not be transferring those data to other organizations, with similar political goals or ideological perspectives, without the express consent of the voter.
- 5.1.12. Political campaigns should not be “scraping” data from social media for the purposes of building profiles on the electorate. If a voter has affirmatively expressed a wish to follow a candidate or party on a social media platform, then the campaign might reasonably infer that he/she will wish to receive further communications. But that inference should not be assumed for individuals who maybe within the wider social network of that voter, and who have not affirmatively expressed a preference to be contacted.

5.2. The processing of the special category of data on political opinions (Article 6)

- 5.2.1. Under Convention 108+, “personal data for the information they reveal relating to racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, trade-union membership, religious or other beliefs, health or sexual life, shall only be allowed where appropriate safeguards are enshrined in law, complementing those of the Convention.” It goes on: “Such safeguards shall guard against the risks that the processing of sensitive data may present for the interests, rights and fundamental freedoms of the data subject, notably a risk of discrimination.”¹⁵
- 5.2.2. Political parties and other organizations collect large amounts of personal data that reveal political opinions: on their belief systems or ideologies; on their political affiliations and memberships; on their voting histories; and/or on policy preferences. Political organizations often profile or “score” voters on the basis of these data. These are all sensitive categories of data under Convention 108+.
- 5.2.3. The processing of personal data revealing political opinions entails risks of discrimination, and is particularly sensitive in countries with histories of authoritarian rule and voter

¹⁴ Explanatory report, para. 49.

¹⁵ Convention 108+, Article 6

suppression and intimidation.

- 5.2.4. The processing of sensitive categories of personal data needs to be accompanied by safeguards appropriate to the risks at stake and the interests, rights and freedoms protected. In the context of political campaigns, these safeguards almost always require the explicit consent of the voter.
- 5.2.5. If political parties and other campaign organizations process special category data on political opinions, they must identify both the lawful basis for processing and the condition for processing. Both must be documented.
- 5.2.6. If political parties and other campaigning organizations are relying on the lawful basis of consent to collect data on political opinions and to send political messaging through electronic communications, they must ensure that they have the appropriate records of consent from the individual.
- 5.2.7. Predictions about groups of voters with shared characteristics based on analysis of large sets of personal data, shall still be considered as processing personal data, even where there is no intention to communicate with an individual. The analysis and sorting of groups of voters on geographical and/or demographic factors, can have discriminatory impacts.
- 5.2.8. Convention 108+ defines special categories in terms of the “information they reveal relating to ...political opinions.”¹⁶ Information on political opinions might be revealed from a range of other sources of information, for example: magazines and newspapers read; policy beliefs and attitudes; membership in interest groups.
- 5.2.9. Controllers and processors shall not disclose personal data on voters’ political opinions collected in the course of a political campaign, for others to monetise, or reprocess for the purposes of selling anonymised or de-identified data (for example to data brokers) without the express consent of the voter.
- 5.2.10. Geolocation tracking in order to identify the location of a voter to target in-app functionality, or for profiling purposes, should be deployed only when necessary and according to an appropriate legal basis. Services should provide an indicator when the location tracking is active and allow easy disabling without loss of essential functionalities.
- 5.2.11. Political campaigns share personal data with social media companies for the purposes of digital advertising to groups of like-minded individuals (through instruments such as Facebook’s Lookalike or Customized Audiences). No personal data shall be shared with social media companies for the purposes of digital advertising without the express consent of the voter.

5.3. Data security in political campaigns (Article 7)

- 5.3.1. Political campaigns often involve the sharing of data on voters with large numbers of campaign volunteers during the intense period of an election campaign. Political campaigns should take appropriate security measures to ensure against accidental or unauthorized access to, destruction, loss, use, modification or disclosure of personal data.
- 5.3.2. Political campaigns should report to supervisory authorities as prescribed by Convention 108+ and to the data subjects themselves in the event of breaches which may seriously interfere with the rights and fundamental freedoms of voters in accordance with Article 7(2) of the Convention. Notification should include adequate and meaningful information about

¹⁶ Explanatory report, para 60.

possible measures to mitigate the adverse effects of the breach.¹⁷

- 5.3.3. Political campaigns can be involved in processing voters' data on a large-scale over several election cycles. Applying appropriate security measures to this data, and its processing environments both at rest and in transit, is vital to ensure voters' data are protected to the highest standards. Security measures should take into account the current state of the art data-security methods and techniques in the field of data processing. Their cost should be commensurate with the seriousness and probability of the potential risks.¹⁸
- 5.3.4. Where data is processed by third party service providers, political organizations must remain aware of their ongoing responsibilities as data controllers. Controllers must demonstrate due diligence to establish the third party's ability to protect personal data confidentiality.
- 5.3.5. Risk assessment prior to processing must assess whether data is protected against unauthorised access, modification and removal/destruction. Risk assessment should seek to achieve outcomes that embed high standards of security throughout the processing. Such an assessment must be informed by considerations of necessity and proportionality, and the fundamental data protection principles across the range of risks including physical accessibility, networked access to devices and data, and the backup and archiving of data.
- 5.3.6. Political organizations should train all workers on a political campaign, including employees and temporary volunteers, in the importance of privacy and security measures. Each employee or volunteer should sign confidentiality agreements.

5.4. The Transparency of processing of personal data in political campaigns (Article 8)

- 5.4.1. The personal data processed by political organizations shall be processed fairly and in a transparent manner.
- 5.4.2. At the time of collection (regardless of the method of political communication), representatives of political organizations shall inform voters that they are collecting personal data on behalf of the "x party/organization."
- 5.4.3. Political organizations must inform voters (in a privacy policy or its equivalent) of the legal name and address of the organization; the legal basis for collection of personal data for processing; the categories of personal data processed; any recipients of those data, and the reasons why they need to be shared; and how the voter might exercise his/her rights.
- 5.4.4. Privacy policies and other published terms and conditions, must be easily accessible, legible, understandable and adapted to the relevant individuals.¹⁹ Communication methods should not dilute the explanations that are necessary for fair processing, but should not be excessive. Layered privacy notices could help to combine the need of a complete but at the same time efficient information.
- 5.4.5. In a typical communication from a political campaign, the volunteer or employee will be expected to introduce himself/herself according to a standard script and be prepared to answer questions from the voter about why the information is being collected, how it will be used, with whom it will be shared, and about how the voter might remove his/her name from the campaign's lists.

¹⁷ Explanatory report, para 66.

¹⁸ Explanatory report, para 63.

¹⁹ Explanatory report, para. 12.

5.5. The Rights of Data Subjects (Article 9)

- 5.5.1. All voters shall have the right not to be subject to decision significantly affecting him or her based solely on an automated processing of data without having his or her views taken into consideration. In the context of the automated delivery of digital political advertising, the voter should have the right to know “why I am seeing this ad.”
- 5.5.2. Any voter should be able to obtain on request and without excessive delay or expense, confirmation of the processing of personal data relating to him or her, and access to those data in an intelligible form. In the case of political parties, this should include any “score” assigned to the voter which measures his/her ideological orientation.
- 5.5.3. Voters should be able to object to the processing of data on him or her with a political organization, and to request rectification if the data is inaccurate, obsolete or incomplete.²⁰
- 5.5.4. A voter who objects to data processing for political marketing purposes is entitled to the unconditional erasure or removal of the personal data covered by that objection.²¹
- 5.5.5. Voters are entitled to know about the reasoning underlying the processing of their personal data by political campaigns. In cases, for example, where they may be contacted by a political party with whom they have not had a prior relationship, they are entitled to be informed how their information was obtained.

5.6. Additional Obligations of Political Campaigns (Article 10)

- 5.6.1. The obligation rests with the data controller to ensure adequate data protection and to be able to demonstrate that data processing follows applicable laws. The accountability of data controllers and data processors must be clearly set out in any contractual arrangements, defined by the nature of the processing, in accordance with Article 10(1) of the Convention 108+.
- 5.6.2. Political parties and other campaigning organizations must be able to provide a full record of how personal data has been obtained and is being processed, as well as demonstrate compliance of any third-party organization that processes personal data on their behalf.
- 5.6.3. Political parties and other campaigning organizations must assess the likely impact of intended data processing on the rights and fundamental freedoms of the voter, prior to the commencement of data processing and shall design the data processing in such a manner as to prevent or minimise the risk of interference with those rights and fundamental freedoms.
- 5.6.4. Data protection and privacy impact assessments should not only assess the specific impact on an individual voter’s rights, but should also consider with the processing is in the best interests of broader democratic values and the integrity of democratic elections.
- 5.6.5. Data controllers should encourage a comprehensive and compliant data governance culture throughout the political organization, both during and between election cycles.

²⁰ Explanatory report, para. 72.

²¹ Explanatory report, para 79.

- 5.6.6. Political parties and other campaigning organizations should appoint an officer responsible for the verification and demonstration of compliance with the data protection principles enshrined within Convention 108+.²²

6. Recommendations for Supervisory Authorities (Article 15)

- 6.1. Supervisory authorities should strive to understand the complete campaigning network within their countries. Contemporary political campaigning is complex, opaque and involves a shifting ecosystem of actors and organisations, which can vary considerably from society to society. An important lesson from the investigations of political campaign practices in various countries is that supervisory authorities should acquire a broader understanding of that network in their respective countries.
- 6.2. Supervisory authorities need to understand the complete regulatory environment for elections. A diverse array of constitutional, statutory and self-regulatory rules can affect the processing of personal data in the electoral context in each country. It is important for supervisory authorities to have a comprehensive grasp of the regulatory conditions that permit, or prohibit, the processing of personal data for purposes of democratic engagement, including the rules for campaign financing.
- 6.3. It is equally important to cooperate with other relevant regulators including elections and telecommunications regulators. Elections regulators, in particular, have the long-standing expertise in elections law and the experience in administering the many facets of elections administration, including the distribution of voters lists. However, the regulation of personal data processing in the electoral context cannot be left to elections regulators alone. The larger context of “data-driven” elections is not something the typical elections regulator has the resources, or the competence, to regulate.
- 6.4. Recent proposals for ad transparency, including digital archiving, offer opportunities for regulators better to understand the nature of political micro-targeting in their respective societies, the level of granularity, and the source(s) of payment for the ads. In the world of political campaigning, data protection infractions can also be elections financing infractions, and vice versa. Ad transparency requirements provide an important source of leverage for supervisory authorities in enforcing data protection requirements.
- 6.5. Proactive guidance on best campaigning practices is of critical importance. The risks to fundamental rights from the processing of personal data in election campaigns cannot simply be understood in response to individual complaints to particular candidates and/or political parties at the time of elections.
- 6.6. Supervisory authorities can also assist political parties. They have valuable experience in the detailed and practical work of data protection implementation and privacy management, and can assist in the tailoring of rules to the electoral context. Supervisory authorities should therefore work with political parties, and their data processors, to develop tailored guidance in the form of codes of practice.
- 6.7. The implementation of these Guidelines requires the highest level of international collaboration between supervisory authorities, in Europe and beyond. The political “influence industry” knows no geographic boundaries. Its impact nationally and internationally will require the most vigilant and constant cross-national attention from supervisory authorities through their international and regional associations, as well as from the wider network of international privacy advocates and experts (Article 17).

²² Explanatory report, para. 87.

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