

## **Data protection statement on the processing of personal data in the context of the European Inventor Award and the Young Inventors Prize**

Protecting your privacy is of the utmost importance to the European Patent Office (EPO). We are committed to protecting your personal data and ensuring respect for data subjects' rights when performing our tasks and providing our services. All data of a personal nature that identify you directly or indirectly will be processed lawfully, fairly and with due care.

The processing operations described below are subject to the EPO Data Protection Rules ([DPR](#)).

The information in this statement is provided in accordance with Articles 16 and 17 DPR.

This data protection statement describes how the EPO processes the personal data collected for the purpose of organising the [European Inventor Award](#) and the [Young Inventors Prize](#) (referred to herein after as "the Award" and "the Prize", respectively), which are awarded alternately each year in a two-year cycle.

### **1. What is the nature and purpose of the processing operation?**

This data protection statement explains how the EPO, with the support of external providers, processes your personal data for the purpose of directing the Award and the Prize, i.e. organising the annual competitions and ceremonies, and selecting the finalists of each edition of the Award and the winners of each edition of the Prize

Personal data are processed for the following purposes:

#### **1.1 Nominating the candidates and finalists or winners**

To participate in the competition, candidates who comply with the entry requirements and wish to participate must complete and submit the online entry form. Candidates can also be nominated by a third party. The personal data collected in this nomination process are used to correctly identify the nominees and their invention or initiative, and to contact them if further information is needed. More information about the requirements can be found on the webpage of each competition.

If you are one of the finalists or winners, a jury member, a speaker or any other stakeholder who participates in the ceremony, the EPO may collect and use additional personal data such as video recordings or images you to promote the Award and the Prize before, during and after the event. Such multimedia material may be published online on the EPO's communication channels, including the EPO website and the EPO webpage on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, X, LinkedIn and Facebook. As these social media platforms have their own privacy policies, we invite you to read the privacy policies published by [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [X](#).

Jury members receive a separate, specific data protection statement describing the processing of their

personal data related to their tasks and the functioning of the jury. The EPO will handle with the utmost care any children's personal data processed in the context of the Prize or the ceremony, such as still images, video recordings or related information used for the evaluation of their application and their possible participation in the event as a finalist or winner. The EPO ensures that all the necessary steps will be taken to protect children's interests, rights and freedoms when processing their personal data.

## 1.2 Holding the ceremony

The desired outcome is a hybrid ceremony taking place both online and in person.

You can watch the ceremony by streaming it from the EPO's website, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, X or LinkedIn pages or from the social network pages of several selected content creators and multipliers, such as Twitch, TikTok and Instagram, who support the Award and the Prize. Depending on the media partners involved each year, the ceremony may also be available to watch on other communication channels.

Depending on the year and circumstances, it may also be possible to attend the ceremony in person. For that purpose, every year the EPO will determine the physical attendance limitation on social gatherings while taking into account force-majeure situations. In this case, it may be necessary to process personal data for logistical purposes before (e.g. for managing registration, accommodation and catering), during and after the ceremony. This may include processing health-related data.

Additionally, when you attend the Award or the Prize ceremony, please be aware that general photographs and video footage will be taken to document and promote the event. These may be published on internal or public-facing platforms (e.g. institutional websites, social media channels or newsletters). These recordings are meant to capture the atmosphere of the event and will not focus on individual audience members.

To ensure transparency and enable you to exercise your data protection rights, clearly visible signage will be displayed at the entrance and in key areas of the venue, and clear verbal announcements will be made to inform the participants that photography and live streaming are taking place. For those who prefer not to appear in photographs or video footage, designated photo-free seating areas will be available. Please contact the organiser upon arrival if you wish to be seated there. Sticker badges or some other similar system of notification will also be made available at the venue's accreditation area for you to wear so that photographers are made aware that you do not wish to appear in those photos, and staff can guide you to the photo-free zone easily.

Both EPO employees and external stakeholders have the possibility to actively participate in the event in various ways. For example, they may feature in the video portraits of the finalists or winners or in any other videos that the EPO may create for the ceremony. For that purpose, every year the EPO may publish a call for volunteers or decide to collaborate with public and private organisations and institutions such as schools and universities, etc. They can also interact via the various social media channels used by the EPO.

You can also take part in voting for the winner of the Popular Prize (of the European Inventor Award competition) or the People's Choice (of the Young Inventors Prize competition) which the EPO launches several weeks before the ceremony takes place. To give you an overview of each year's finalists or winners and facilitate the voting process, we publish information about each inventor on the EPO website (at [epo.org](http://epo.org)), where each competition has its own webpage. The voting takes place on a separate dedicated external platform.

The EPO uses cookies on its website to offer you the best possible experience. To learn more about the cookies installed, we recommend that you read the [cookies policy](#).

- Please also be aware that if you use the social plug-in functions or watch one of our videos posted on YouTube and embedded on the event page, or if you participate in the Popular Prize (of the European Inventor Award competition) or the People's Choice (of the Young Inventors Prize competition), this information may also be transmitted directly from your browser to the social media provider concerned, which may also store such information.

The processing is not intended to be used for any automated decision-making, including profiling.

### **1.3 Promoting the European Inventor Award, Young Inventors Prize and the ceremonies**

Personal data are processed for the purpose of sending information about the upcoming Award or Prize, such as event invitations and reminders. The EPO shares your email address with an external provider who supports us with the mailing lists. You receive these communications because your contact details are included in an EPO mailing list used to provide information about the Award and the Prize, and about events on related topics. Your data may originate from your registration for previous events or from other sources (e.g. publicly accessible sources or some other meeting/event participant entitled to provide data on your behalf). To opt out of emails about the Award and the Prize, please click the "Unsubscribe" button on the mailing platform. For more information on how the EPO processes your personal data in this context or how to unsubscribe, please read the "[General external tasks and activities of PD Communication data protection statement](#)".

Separately, contact details of representatives of key stakeholder organisations (e.g. institutions and national IP offices) are stored in the EPO Central Stakeholder Database, which is managed by the delegated controller. This database is used for stakeholder relationship management, including invitations to relevant meetings and events and institutional communications. For more information about this processing activity, please refer to the data protection statement entitled "[EPO Central Stakeholders Database](#)".

The EPO also promotes the Award and the Prize externally, and each year it develops new ways of interacting with the public according to current trends on social media platforms and the latest technology. To promote the ceremony through various social media and press media communication channels, the EPO collects additional necessary data from the finalists and winners, jury members and any other participants who may appear in the audio-visual material shared with various multipliers such as, but not limited to, media agencies, content creators, inventors' channels and European institutions. This audio-visual material is used to promote not only a specific year's edition, but also the Award and the Prize as such and other EPO-related intellectual property activities and events.

As pointed out above, the EPO may organise voluntary activities among its employees and external stakeholders who participate in the event either directly (e.g. artists and content creators) or indirectly (e.g. viewers), and to promote both the Award or the Prize and staff engagement. For example, they may be involved in the production of a promotional video, or be part of the audience at the ceremony.

### **1.4 The European Inventor Network**

The European Inventor Network (hereinafter referred to as "the EIN") aims to awaken a lifelong passion for innovation and creativity among younger generations. The EIN's members are inventors and entrepreneurs of distinction, making them ideal role models to show school children and students that innovation, in all its forms, is for everyone.

If you are a finalist of the Award or a winner of the Prize, you automatically join the EIN unless you indicate otherwise. In the event that you wish to exercise your right to object, please send an email stating your request to [european-inventor@epo.org](mailto:european-inventor@epo.org)

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For more information about the EIN, we invite you to visit the dedicated webpage [here](#).

The processing activity may leverage the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in its applications and services. More specifically, we may use AI-powered systems and tools such as, but not limited to, Copilot and Heygen for content generation and content support or improvement to generate or support the creation of text, images or videos, assist with content editing and correction, analyse and compare search visibility, monitor brand presence in AI-generated responses, automate insights and enhance productivity in digital communication. The deployment and use of AI in this processing activity adheres to stringent requirements governing the processing of personal data.

## 2 What personal data do we process?

Personal data from the following categories may be processed:

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### 2.1 Nominations (nominator and/or nominee)

- title (Mr/Ms)
- given name and surname
- email address
- country of residence
- company, university or organisation name
- job position/title
- information provided about the team (if applicable)
- nominee's nationality
- patent applicant (if applicable)
- nominee's contact details: email address and/or telephone number
- date of birth
- title, given name and surname and contact details (email address and/or telephone number) of the parents or legal guardian of a nominated minor
- name and short description of the invention/initiative in which personal data may be included
- supporting documents, such as audio-visual material and IP documents

### 2.2 Attendees of the ceremony or users of the promotional kit provided by the EPO:

- cookies storing information such as IP addresses, session start times or interactions between speakers and inventors, etc. For more information about what kinds of cookies we have integrated and how to manage your settings, please see the cookies policy
- audio-visual content if you volunteer in response to the EPO's calls to participate in promotional activities
- comments, opinions and your social media account name if you use the hashtags created for the ceremony, such as #InventorAward or #YoungInventors, or tag any of the EPO social media accounts

In addition, if you are a finalist or winner, speaker, content creator or other type of participant in the ceremony, please note that additional data may be collected for the purpose of organising and broadcasting the ceremony before, during and after the event:

- audio-visual material
- information about you for promoting the nomination

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- statements and opinions
- information needed to manage travel and accommodation
- any additional voluntary information provided by the data subject

If you are attending the ceremony in person, health-related information may be processed if required under the applicable health and safety regulations in the host country and at the EPO. Depending on the location, personal data may be processed either by the EPO or by the owner of the venue where the event or a competition-related activity takes place. Should any specific measures or actions be necessary, further information will be provided in due course.

### **2.3 Journalists:**

- given name and surname
- title
- affiliation name
- job position/title
- email address
- audio-visual material if you participate in a recorded interview that the EPO may have with an inventor

### **2.4 Personal data from the following categories are processed by the external contractor when you participate in the Popular Prize and People's Choice competitions:**

- email address
- the user's country of origin, to provide anonymous statistics
- the inventor you voted for each day
- language preferences

Only the number of times inventors are voted for each day is shared with the EPO. For more information about how the external platform processes your personal data, please read the dedicated data protection statement provided on the EPO website.

### **2.5 Newsletter and event alerts mailing platform:**

- email address
- title
- given name and surname
- company name
- job position/title

### **2.6 The European Inventor Network**

- email address
- title
- given name and surname
- company name
- job position/title

## **3 Who is responsible for processing the data?**

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Personal data are processed under the responsibility of Principal Directorate (PD) Communication acting as the EPO's delegated data controller.

Personal data are processed by the EPO staff involved in managing the various initiatives, projects and activities relating to the Award and the Prize referred to in this statement.

External contractors involved in creating the visual campaign, organising or promoting the event or providing an online platform may also process or have access to personal data.

#### **4 Who has access to your personal data and to whom are they disclosed?**

Personal data are disclosed on a need-to-know basis to the EPO staff working on the team in charge of the Award and the Prize and the audio-visual and online teams.

Personal data may be disclosed to third-party service providers for the purpose of organising the event, creating and promoting the campaign, maintaining and supporting the platforms created for nominations, registering to attend the event, participating in the Popular Prize or People's Choice or ensuring compliance with security and health-related standards. Additionally, the audio-visual material produced may be shared with other public entities for promotional purposes.

Personal data will only be shared with authorised persons responsible for the necessary processing operations. They will not be used for any other purposes or disclosed to any other recipients.

When necessary, personal data may be disclosed on a need-to-know basis to the staff member(s) of the unit(s) involved in the prevention and settlement of legal disputes (whether in internal, judicial or alternative redress mechanisms afforded by the EPO, or any other legal processes involving the EPO). Only the data required for them to perform the tasks carried out in the exercise of their official activities, including representing the EPO in litigation and prelitigation, will be provided. Such processing will take place on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the DPR and the principles of confidentiality and accountability.

#### **5 How do we protect and safeguard your personal data?**

We take the appropriate technical and organisational measures to safeguard and protect your personal data from accidental or unlawful destruction, loss or alteration, and unauthorised disclosure or access.

All personal data are stored in secure IT applications in accordance with the EPO's security standards. Appropriate levels of access are granted individually only to the above-mentioned recipients.

For systems hosted on EPO premises, the following basic security measures generally apply:

- user authentication and access control (e.g., role-based access control to the systems and network, principles of need-to-know and least privilege)
- logical security hardening of systems, equipment and network
- physical protection: EPO access controls, additional access controls to data centres, policies on locking offices
- transmission and input controls (e.g., audit logging, systems and network monitoring)
- security incident response: 24/7 monitoring for incidents, on-call security expert.

In principle, the EPO has adopted a paperless policy management system. However, if paper files containing

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personal data need to be stored on EPO premises, they are locked in a secure location with restricted access.

For personal data processed on systems not hosted on EPO premises, most of the external providers supporting the EPO generally commit in a binding agreement to comply with their data protection obligations under the applicable data protection legal frameworks. The EPO has also carried out a privacy and security risk assessment. These systems are required to implement appropriate technical and organisational measures such as physical security measures, access and storage control measures, securing data at rest (e.g., by encryption), user, transmission and input control measures (e.g., network firewalls, network intrusion detection system (IDS), network intrusion protection system (IPS), audit logging), and conveyance control measures (e.g. securing data in transit by encryption).

## **6 How can you access, rectify and receive your data, request that your data be erased, or restrict/object to processing? Can your rights be restricted?**

You have the right to access, rectify and receive your personal data and to not be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing. You also have the right to have your data erased and to restrict and/or object to the processing of your data (Articles 18 to 24 DPR).

Please bear in mind that your right to rectification applies only to factual data processed as part of the nomination procedure or promoting your nomination as a finalist or winner.

Additionally, if we have asked for your consent, please note that the withdrawal of your consent will not affect the lawfulness of any processing based on your consent prior to said withdrawal.

If you would like to exercise any of these rights, please write to the delegated data controller at [pdcomm-dataprotectionliaison@epo.org](mailto:pdcomm-dataprotectionliaison@epo.org) <mailto:pdcomm-dpl@epo.org>. To enable us to respond more promptly and precisely, you will always need to provide certain preliminary information with your request. We therefore encourage you to fill in this [form](#) and submit it with your request.

We will reply to your request without undue delay and in any event within one month of receipt of the request. However, Article 15(2) DPR provides that this period may be extended by two further months where necessary in view of the complexity and number of requests received. We will inform you of any delays.

## **7 What is the legal basis for processing your data?**

Personal data are processed on the basis of Article 5 DPR in conjunction with Article 11 DPR:

- a. processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the exercise of the official activities of the European Patent Organisation or in the legitimate exercise of the official authority vested in the controller, which includes the processing necessary for the Office's management and functioning, or
- b. processing is necessary for the performance of a contract to which the data subject is party or in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering a contract, or
- c. the data subject has given explicit consent to the processing of his or her personal data for one or more specific purposes, or
- d. processing is necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the data subject or of another natural person."

In relation to Article 5.e DPR, personal data are processed in accordance with Article 11(2)(a) and 11(2)(c) of the DPR:

"The data subject has given explicit consent to the processing of those data for one or more specified purposes." This includes, for instance, dietary requirements or special assistance.

c. "processing is necessary to protect the vital interests of the data subject or of another person where the data

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subject is physically or legally incapable of giving explicit consent."

This covers, for instance, situations where immediate processing of health data is required in an emergency (such as a severe allergic reaction during an EPO event or a medical emergency) and the data subject is unable to provide explicit consent at that moment.

## **8. How long do we keep your data?**

Personal data will be kept only for the time needed to achieve the purposes for which it is processed.

Once each edition ends, the external providers processing personal data on behalf of the EPO will delete any personal data that they have collected from their files after having returned them to the EPO in accordance with the data protection agreements they have signed with the EPO.

An inventor or Tomorrow Shaper who is nominated for one year may be selected as a finalist or winner in another year. To identify and encourage people to continue nominating candidates each year and be able to evaluate the development of an invention or an inventor's career, the personal data of the nominating person and the nominee indicated in the nomination form are kept for a maximum of five years.

If you have subscribed to any EPO newsletter, the privacy statement for the EPO's newsletters and related alerts applies.

The personal data associated with organising the ceremony and promoting it through staff and user engagement activities must be erased within two years of the last action related to the event. Nevertheless, some personal data may be kept for longer, but only by PD Communication to achieve the purposes for which it is processed, after which they will then be deleted from its databases. For example, personal data related to sound, video and audio-visual recordings/photographs of meetings and events are stored for educational, institutional, historical, informational and/or promotional purposes for a period of 2, 10 or 25 years according to the retention categories reflected in PD Communication's Multimedia Retention Policy (available on request). Events that can fall in the specified retention categories are:

- recurrent events with a low level of newsworthiness (two years, renewable)
- non-recurrent events related to EPO core business, e.g. promoting patent knowledge activities (10 years, renewable)
- recurrent events with a high level of newsworthiness related to PD Communication's core activities at the EPO (e.g. European Inventor Award, Young Inventors Prize, Girls' Day) (25 years, renewable).

If you are a finalist for the European Inventor Award or a winner in the Young Inventors Prize, you will also automatically be part of the European Inventor Network, and the EPO will keep and process your personal data to promote innovation, highlight the value of patents and foster co-operation between inventors. For this purpose, the EPO will retain details such as your biographical data and email address for as long as you agree to be part of that network. A dedicated [data protection statement](#) has been created to provide you with more information on how we process your personal data as a finalist or winner.

For personal data related to tracking information, personal data will be stored and deleted according to the relevant cookies policy.

In the event of a formal appeal/litigation, all data held at the time the formal appeal/litigation was initiated will be retained until the proceedings have been closed.

## 9. Contact information

If you have any questions about the processing of your personal data, please write to the delegated data controller at [pdcomm-dataprotectionliaison@epo.org](mailto:pdcomm-dataprotectionliaison@epo.org).

You can also contact our Data Protection Officer at [dpo@epo.org](mailto:dpo@epo.org).

External data subjects may write to the delegated data controller and/or the Data Protection Officer at [DPOexternalusers@epo.org](mailto:DPOexternalusers@epo.org).

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## Review and legal redress

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If you consider that the processing infringes on your rights as a data subject, you have the right to request review by the controller under Article 49 DPR and, if you disagree with the outcome of the review, the right to seek legal redress under Article 50 DPR.

In the event of a formal appeal/litigation by a volunteer, all personal data held at the time the formal appeal/litigation was initiated will be retained until the proceedings have been closed.