



SUPPORT SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES ON THE DATA PROTECTION REFORM II

Press releases

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Lina Jasmontaite-Zaniewicz
Alessandra Calvi

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Authors	
Name	Partner
Lina Jasmontaite-Zaniewicz	VUB-LSTS
Alessandra Calvi	VUB-LSTS

Contributors	
Name	Partner
Renata Nagy	NAIH

Internal Reviewers	
Name	Partner
Renata Nagy	NAIH

Institutional Members of the STAR Consortium		
Member	Role	Website
Nemzeti Adatvédelmi és Információszabadság Hatóság (NAIH)	Project Coordinator	naih.hu
Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) Research Group on Law, Science, Technology and Society (LSTS)	Partner	https://lsts.research.vub.be/
Trilateral Research Ltd. (TRI IE)	Partner	trilateralresearch.com

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1 Background to the STAR II project

The STAR II (Support small And medium enterprises on the data protection Reform II) project, running in the partnership of the National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (NAIH), the Research Group on Law, Science, Technology & Society (LSTS) of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), and the Trilateral Research Limited (TRILE) between 2018 and 2020, has the aim of enhancing compliance with the GDPR by assisting DPAs and SMEs in their reciprocal obligations.

2 Introduction

The present report provides an overview of press releases that have been published during the STAR II project. The announcements in press releases concerned the project launch, the publication of draft and final versions of the Handbook on EU data protection law for SMEs (Handbook) and the Guidance for DPAs on setting up a hotline for SMEs (Guidance).

Considering that press releases are no longer published in news outlets, the partners used multiple platforms to distribute announcements about the project. In particular, partners used the website of the project coordinator NAIH (Hungarian National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information); the website of the partner Trilateral Research (consultancy with extensive expertise in privacy and data protection); the website of VUB-LSTS, the Brussels Privacy Hub, (a platform for privacy related research of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and the STAR II project website (www.star-project-2.eu). By using multiple communication platforms the partners sought to share the relevant output with diverse stakeholders, including EU policymakers, data protection regulators, the private sector representatives, and NGOs. In addition to press releases, the partners prepared several blog posts that reflected ongoing developments in the project and allowed to share our perspective on the research results concerning interviews and the email hotline.

3 Project launch

To mark the launch of the project, the coordinator NAIH published the first press release in English and Hungarian on 28 September 2018. It summarized the objectives of the project, which included:

1. review of the state of the art in DPA awareness-raising activities (Deliverable D2.1 DPAs' efforts to raise awareness among SMEs);
2. analysis of SMEs' experience within first months of the functioning of the GDPR (D2.2 SMEs' experience with the GDPR);
3. an awareness raising campaign for SMEs about the hotline run by NAIH (D3.1 Report on the awareness-raising campaign);
4. the set-up of a hotline (12 months) to respond to SMEs' email queries; based on these queries a list of the most frequently asked questions was developed (D3.2 Report on the hotline & D3.3 Report on the statistics and efficiency of the hotline);
5. a digital guidance for DPAs on good practices in running an e-mail hotline and raising SME awareness (D4.3. A Finalised guidance for DPAs), and
6. an innovative, FAQ-based handbook (digital and printed) for SMEs on EU personal data protection law (D4.3.B Handbook for SMEs + a Hungarian version).

The communication in Hungarian and English was posted on the NAIH website: https://naih.hu/files/2018-10-05-STAR-II-FINAL_SIGNED.pdf

Additionally, NAIH and TRI created dedicated webpages within their websites in order to illustrate the objectives of STAR II project and make deliverables easily accessible. They are available here: <https://naih.hu/general-information-on-the-star-ii-project.html> and here: <https://www.trilateralresearch.com/work/star-ii/>

4 Announcement of draft Handbook and Guidance

In August 2020, in preparation for the second validation workshop, on the request of the VUB team, a notice was published about the draft [Guidance for DPAs on good practices to run hotlines for SMEs](#), containing recommendations for DPAs on how to set up and run a hotline and of the [Handbook on European data protection law for SMEs](#). The latter has been based on the most frequently asked questions by SMEs that were submitted to the hotline. The announcement is available here: <https://brusselsprivacyhub.eu/events/03092020.html>. Additionally, the announcement was published on the Brussels Privacy Hub's twitter account that has 3,140 followers.

It should be noted that the published documents included revisions of the earlier drafts that were subject to the written consultation procedure that took place in May – July 2020. This procedure has not been foreseen in the initial set up of the project. It was deemed to be an appropriate way to receive feedback in view of the ongoing pandemic.

5 Presenting project results

In July 2019, Leanne Cochrane, David Barnard-Wills and Filippo Marchetti (TRI) authored a blogpost entitled **How are small businesses managing the GDPR?** The blogpost was published on TRI website: <https://www.trilateralresearch.com/how-are-small-businesses-managing-the-gdpr/>

It summarised the findings of STAR II interviews with European SMEs, SME associations and data protection authorities that took place between January and July 2019. The STAR II project partners used these insights to establish the most appropriate content for the Guidance and the Handbook.

Based on STAR II findings, Leanne Cochrane and David Barnard-Wills (TRI) published also a blogpost on TRI website titled **The GDPR: A business imperative** <https://www.trilateralresearch.com/the-gdpr-a-business-imperative/> where they reflected on the meaning for SMEs to be GDPR compliant and the benefits of doing so, calling for a roadmap to GDPR compliance.

Alan Moore, Leanne Cochrane and David Barnard-Wills (TRI) authored a third blogpost published on TRI website titled **What are the challenges that SMEs are facing in complying with the GDPR? A view from the field** <https://www.trilateralresearch.com/challenges-facing-smes-in-complying-with-the-gdpr-a-view-from-the-field/> where they summarized the findings of **D2.2 Report on the SME experience of the GDPR**.

In September 2020, David Barnard-Wills (TRI) authored a blogpost titled **Helping SMEs better cope with the GDPR** that was published on Trilateral Research website: <https://www.trilateralresearch.com/helping-smes-better-cope-with-the-gdpr/>

Other than sharing STAR II findings of **D2.2 Report on the SME experience of the GDPR**, David Barnard-Wills announced that the Consortium had developed two tools.

- The first is a GDPR handbook for SMEs themselves, with the aim of pulling together practical guidance and interpretation of the law. He explained that the Handbook will be freely available and published by the project later in the year, whereas [the working draft of the handbook](#) is already available.
- The second is a report with guidance for data protection authorities on setting up dedicated contact hotlines for SMEs. This is based upon the experience of STAR II partners – NAIH – the Hungarian data protection authority in running such a hotline through the project. He added that [the draft copy of the DPA guidance](#) was available.

The email hotline received 148 inquiries between March 2019 and March 2020. During that period NAIH provided several updates on it in Hungarian and in English.

- https://www.naih.hu/files/2018-01-24-STAR_2_kozlemany.pdf
- <https://www.naih.hu/the-sme-hotline.html>
- Based on the submitted queries, NAIH prepared an info sheet with the most frequently asked questions: <https://naih.hu/files/SME-hotline-FAQs-I.pdf>

In November, an announcement about the STAR II academic publication titled: **Data Protection Authorities and their Awareness-raising Duties under the GDPR: The Case for Engaging Umbrella Organisations to Disseminate Guidance for Small and Medium-size Enterprises** was made on the VUB-LSTS website: <https://lsts.research.vub.be/en/20201110>. The announcement was also tweeted via the LSTS account that has nearly 1,500 followers.

6 Announcement of final versions of Handbook and Guidance

In December 2020, the Consortium partners are going to distribute the final press release announcing the publication of the Guidance and of the Handbook.

The VUB team will post the press release on the LSTS and the Brussels Privacy Hub websites.

The partners TRI and NAIH will publish the press release on their websites as well. The draft announcement is here:

The STAR II (*Support small And medium enterprises on the data protection Reform II*) Consortium is pleased to announce that its two main research outputs, namely the EU data protection Handbook for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the Guidance for data protection authorities (DPAs) on how to run hotlines for SMEs, are now available.

The STAR II project, co-funded by the European Union within the scope of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020 (REC-RDAT-TRAI-AG-2017), under Grant Agreement No. 814775, ran in the partnership of the National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (NAIH) (coordinator), the interdisciplinary Research Group on Law, Science, Technology & Society (LSTS) of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), and Trilateral Research Ltd (TRI IE) between August 2018 and December 2020.

The Handbook, titled "The GDPR made simple(r) for SMEs", published by VUBPRESS (imprint Academic & Scientific Publishers) and co-edited by Lina Jasmontaite (VUB-LSTS), Alessandra Calvi (VUB-LSTS), David Barnard-Wills (TRI) and Renata Nagy (NAIH), has been conceived as a tool make the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) more accessible for SMEs. Other than summarising the main requirements that SMEs have to abide by to lawfully process personal data in the EU, the Handbook clarifies theory and practice of the risk-based approach under the GDPR, addresses data protection concerns for SMEs when processing personal data of employees, and provides an overview of the main public and private actors in the European data protection landscape.

The Handbook is available here.

The Guidance, authored by Gábor Kulitsán (NAIH), Renáta Nagy (NAIH), Lina Jasmontaite (VUB-LSTS) and Leanne Cochrane (Trilateral Research), builds on the direct experience of NAIH, that operated an email hotline dedicated to SMEs between 15 March 2019 and 15 March 2020. The hotline addressed SMEs' questions and uncertainties concerning compliance with the GDPR. The Guidance provides a step-by-step guide and practical recommendations to DPAs as to how to set-up and run hotlines for SMEs.

The Guidance is available here.