

## Linked data, secure data

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In today's world there is something of a dichotomy emerging in the field of data. We want access to more information, more easily. Yet at the same time, we want to know that personal data held by an organisation is secure. Both of these considerations are high on the EPO's agenda at the moment with the spread of linked data and the entry into force today of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

### The next level of patent information

One of the defining features of the EPO is its ability to break down barriers to patent information. By working with patent offices in our member states and around the world, we've developed new tools that bring patent information to our users. The increasing use of linked data is therefore a highly appealing tool for an organisation that has always sought to make public information as accessible and useful as possible. In essence, linked data involves publishing data in a format that can be linked to other relevant or related information. Whilst the traditional web is tailored towards human users and documents, the web of data focuses on connecting information from different linked data sets. That applies even if the data is from disparate domains, such as patents, business, technical literature, and company registers.

[Linked data](#) is now applied by the EPO to bibliographic information for European Patents – and that will make it more reachable and more accessible through the web. The new 'patent data consumers', such as data scientists and web developers, will now have easy access to EP patent information which can be linked to other data sets, and without having to download it first. New datasets can be created or combined with our patent information to help reveal relationships between patents and information contained in other databases. Just as traditional patent information has helped businesses and other users to take strategic decisions, the knowledge that results from the EPO's linked patent data will also allow better-informed decisions to be taken.

### Keeping data secure

At the other end of the spectrum, the integrity of personal data held by organisations has been widely reported recently and that is sure to continue when the [EU GDPR enters into force today](#). The EPO holds personal data but the amount we have is kept to the minimum legally required under the European Patent Convention and its rules, and with strict adherence to the personal data minimisation principle.

The EPO is an organisation that strictly applies all resources necessary to ensure personal data remains secure – through IT investments in security or law. As one of the first international organisations, the EPO put in place its own data protection rules as far back as 1992. To keep them in line with current developments they were revised regularly and closely follow the evolution of data protection requirements at the EU level, through regular contact with the European Commission. We are therefore committed to ensuring the highest levels of data protection now and in the future.

While the EPO is an international organisation and is not bound by the GDPR, it respects the underlying important principles enshrined in the regulation and of other international data protection instruments. That includes any data published by the EPO when fulfilling its role and responsibilities as a patent office. As under the former EU data protection directive, the EPO continues to be entitled to receive data from EU member states or EU bodies under specific derogations of the GDPR. Personal data can also continue to be transmitted to the EPO, as the EPO is entitled to receive and process the data under its own regulatory framework. The EPO grants a high level of data protection for whatever personal data received and users of the patent system can safely provide their data to us.

The way organisations use and protect data is understandably of great concern. Whether advocating greater dissemination of public patent data or taking security precautions to protect personal data, both issues can be managed effectively with the right policy. As one of the first patent offices to use linked data, the EPO is pioneering new ways to responsibly exploit public patent information. And with a diligent and up-to-date data protection policy, the EPO is among those organisations carefully safeguarding personal data, to engender the trust of our users and fulfil our mission to support innovators everywhere.

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