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A data protection culture as the future business model for SMEs

In May 2021, the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union will already have reached its third year since its activation. During this period, companies, businesses, consultants, managers, personnel are experiencing how this new framework in doing business is influencing not only traditional practices when it comes to dealing with personal data, but their entire organizational culture.

The Mindthedata project and its partnership, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, has been so far closely following the trends in the business world, preparing for its main intervention, which is a free, online training provision for business consultants, so that they better support small enterprises to make this “culture” shift towards the new normal in doing business, where the protection of personal data stands right in the middle of it.

Right after the start of the project in late 2019, we have been and still are going through this unprecedented social and economic situation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We managed however to carry on with our activities, which lead us to the development of training material for the business consultants, drawing from our research results in Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, and Spain. We matched the needs of 120 SMEs and business consultants, obtained through online questionnaires and interviews, regarding needed support in GDPR compliance and application in every day working routines. The most urgent needs as identified by both SMEs and business consultants are the following:

- Understanding specific requirements of GDPR and personal data protection
- Ensuring staff awareness and training
- Promoting GDPR as a business priority in the SMEs agendas
- Establishing a data protection culture beyond the compliance-or-penalty aspect
- Understanding the benefits that entail the establishment of a corporate data protection culture.

During this period we are finalizing a modular training approach for business consultants, corresponding to these and more needs as identified. Our next step is to transform this material into an online training tool for business consultants, which in turn can be used by them when collaborating with SMEs in GDPR relevant issues. In the following months we will have the full provision available online in 5 languages (English, Bulgarian, Greek, Polish, and Spanish). We will proceed with testing it through small-scale pilot workshops in each country, and then add, change, optimize our material considering the feedback we will receive.

You can download and read the full research report (in English) [here](#)

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Mindthedata is coordinated by the Yambol Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bulgaria, and implemented together with Militos Consulting (Greece), the Business Support Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises – Ruse (Bulgaria), EQA HELLAS S.A. (Greece), Innovation Training Center (Spain), PAIZ Konsulting Sp. z o.o.(Poland) and RND0 (Cyprus).

