

In Memoriam: Giovanni Buttarelli*



The data protection community in Europe and all around the world has been deeply saddened by the loss of the European Data Protection Supervisor (the 'EDPS'), Giovanni Buttarelli. His untimely death, in August 2019, at the age of 62, a few months short from the end of his mandate, was an enormous shock for all staff at the EDPS. Assistant Supervisor Wojciech Wiewiorowski is replacing him until the end of his term.

Giovanni Buttarelli started his career as a clerk in the municipality of his hometown, Frascati, near Rome. Thanks to this job, he was able to pay his studies as a lawyer in Rome and first became a judge and later a public servant in the Ministry of Justice where he was personally involved in the drafting of anti-mafia legislation and other important files related to criminal justice. At the end of the eighties, he represented the Italian government in the negotiations that led to the EU Data Protection Directive (95/46/EC) and that was the beginning of his involvement on data protection matters for more than thirty years.

When the Italian Data Protection Authority, *Il Garante*, was set up, its first President, Stefano Rodotà, asked Giovanni to join him as Secretary General. From that privileged position he participated actively both in the development of the Italian legislation and in the

works of the Article 29 Working Party, precursor of the current European Data Protection Board (the 'EDPB').

In 2009, he joined the EDPS as Assistant Supervisor, and in December 2014, he was appointed to be the Supervisor. It would be an impossible task to summarize in a few words his achievements as the European Data Protection Supervisor during these crucial years. It would suffice to say that he was once called 'Mr General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)' to honour his contribution during the negotiations between the Commission, the Council, and the Parliament that led to the adoption of this landmark European Regulation that has become a de facto standard for the rest of the world.

Giovanni Buttarelli was a true visionary who, as the European Data Protection Supervisor, pioneered many strategic files for the international data protection community. For example, he set up a Digital Clearing House, to allow a better integration between data protection, competition and consumer law; his outstanding opinion on online manipulation anticipated the Cambridge Analytica scandal; and his proposals on digital ethics, including the setting up of an independent Ethics Advisory Group, became the central topic of the International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners hosted by the EDPS in Brussels in October 2018.

Giovanni Buttarelli is leaving behind not only an impressive personal legacy but a strong European institution, the EDPS that, thanks to his leadership and hard work, has become a powerful instrument of the European Union to ensure that data protection and digital rights remain central in Europe and in other parts of the world. He will be deeply missed by those who had the honour and privilege to work with him and for him and we will make sure that his vision and his legacy lives on for many years to come.

Leonardo Cervera Navas

Director of the European Data Protection Supervisor

Notes

* Photography courtesy of the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS).