

Prof. dr. Miguel De Jonckheere, Dean of the faculty Law and Criminology, kindly invites you to the public defence to obtain the academic degree of

DOCTOR OF LAWS

of Mr. Andrés Chomczyk Penedo

which will take place on

Wednesday 18 December 2024 at 11:30 am

In the Green Room of the U-Residence and [online](#)

At the VUB main campus, Pleinlaan 2 - 1050 Brussels

Entrance U-Residence: Generaal Jacqueslaan 271 - 1050 Brussels

MAKING CHOICES IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY: IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY TO ASSIST CONSENT

SUPERVISORS

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Prof. dr. Anne-Lise Sibony

Université Catholique de Louvain

Prof. dr. Edoardo Celeste

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You are warmly invited at the reception / small lunch afterwards.

Please register [here](#) for the reception not later than 12 December 2024.

Are you not able to come in person? You can watch the livestream [here](#).

A map of the campus and directions to reach the VUB can be found [here](#). If you are coming by car, please register your numberplate [here](#) in advance for easy parking access.



In today's digital economy, personal data can contribute to innovation, by enabling services and platforms that shape how we live, work, and interact. This vision is present at the heart of EU digital economy policy, with individuals' informed consent having a fundamental role in enabling this.

Yet, this process also exposes individuals to risks, from data and privacy violations to manipulative practices, particularly when it comes to adequately informing individuals about the intended data practices. The thesis explores how we can balance the promise of data-driven innovation with the need to protect fundamental rights, focusing on the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as a cornerstone of data protection.

At the heart of this research is the idea of empowering individuals to make meaningful, informed decisions about their data. Current practices often rely on lengthy, complex notices that few people read or understand. This approach has left many feeling overwhelmed and powerless in navigating the digital world. The thesis introduces the concept of a "duty of assistance"—a proactive obligation for organizations to guide individuals through data-related decisions, ensuring transparency and autonomy.

Drawing lessons from financial regulation, where similar duties have helped clients make informed choices, the thesis proposes ways to apply this approach to data protection. It explores how organizations can move beyond mere compliance to embrace user-centric practices, such as providing clear explanations, accessible tools, and trustworthy systems. It also examines the boundaries of such assistance, ensuring that helping does not become a means of manipulation.

By addressing the challenges of consent, transparency, and trust in the data economy, this research aims to contribute to a fairer digital environment where individuals are not only protected but empowered. The duty of assistance offers a path forward, bridging gaps in the GDPR framework and fostering a culture of accountability and respect for personal autonomy. Ultimately, this work seeks to inspire policymakers, regulators, and businesses to rethink how we engage with data, ensuring that innovation serves people—not the other way around.