

## LESSONS FROM THE WEBINAR:

### HOW TO GET YOUR SME ACCOUNTANTS GDPR READY?

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will start applying on 25 May 2018 to companies dealing with personal data. Professional accountants are directly impacted by these requirements as they deal with collecting, storing and processing personal data in relation to their clients, employees and subcontractors. These data protection requirements need to be considered seriously as fines could go up to tens of millions of Euro.

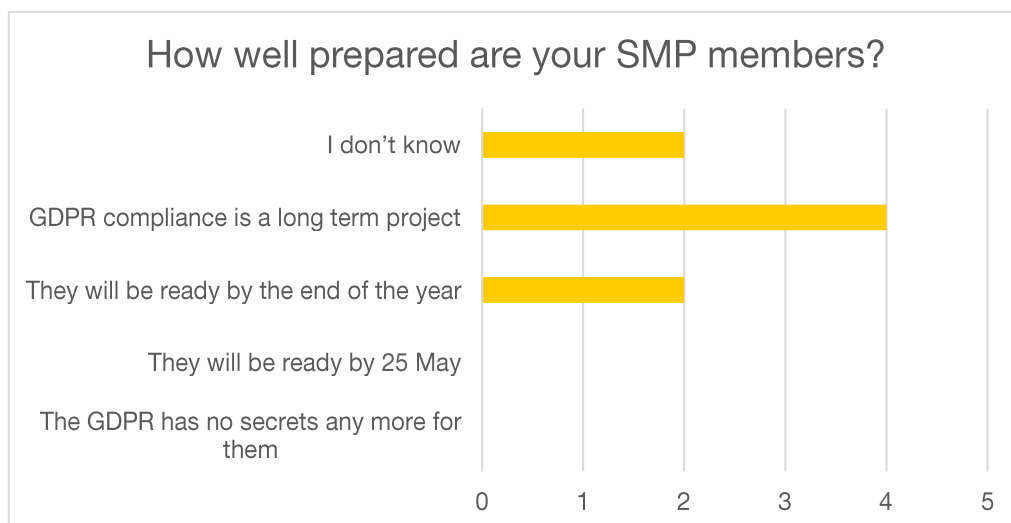
We organized on 16 March a webinar dedicated to our Member where we:

- informed them about the latest GDPR developments
- fostered the exchange of institute good-practices to raise awareness among Small- and Medium-sized Practitioners (SMPs)

The main topics we addressed were SMPs awareness, institute good-practices, and SMPs concerns.

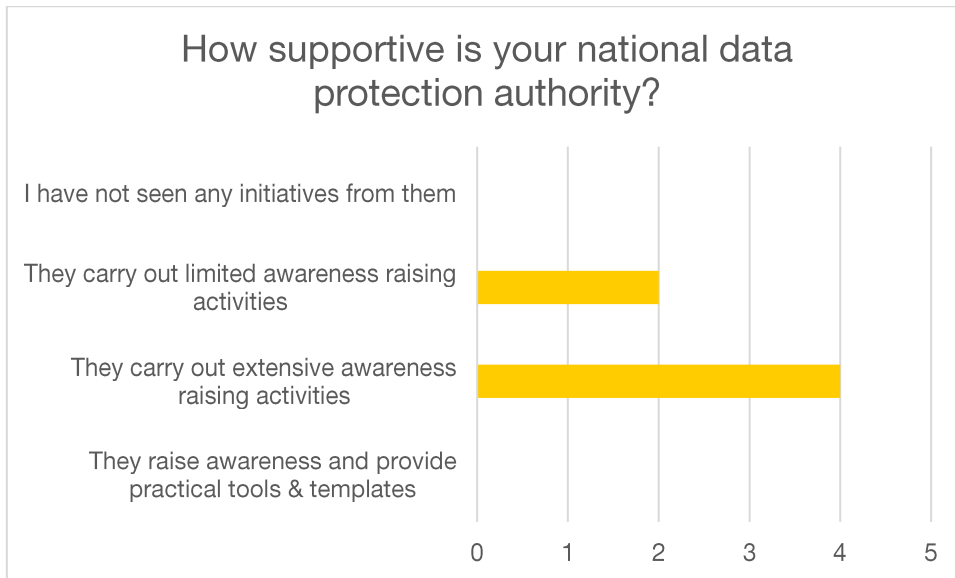
Below you can find the results of the interactive part of the webinar. This is based on the input of around 20 participants from professional accountancy institutes across Europe.

#### READY OR NOT?



These results are in line with the outcome of the European Commission's (Commission) [stock-taking exercise](#) of the GDPR implementation. The latter revealed that "there is still work to do" and "There is in particular a need to step up awareness and accompany compliance efforts for SMEs".

Moreover, the Commission underlined that "At national level, the task of raising awareness and being the first point of contact for controllers, processors and individuals lies primarily with the data protection authorities."



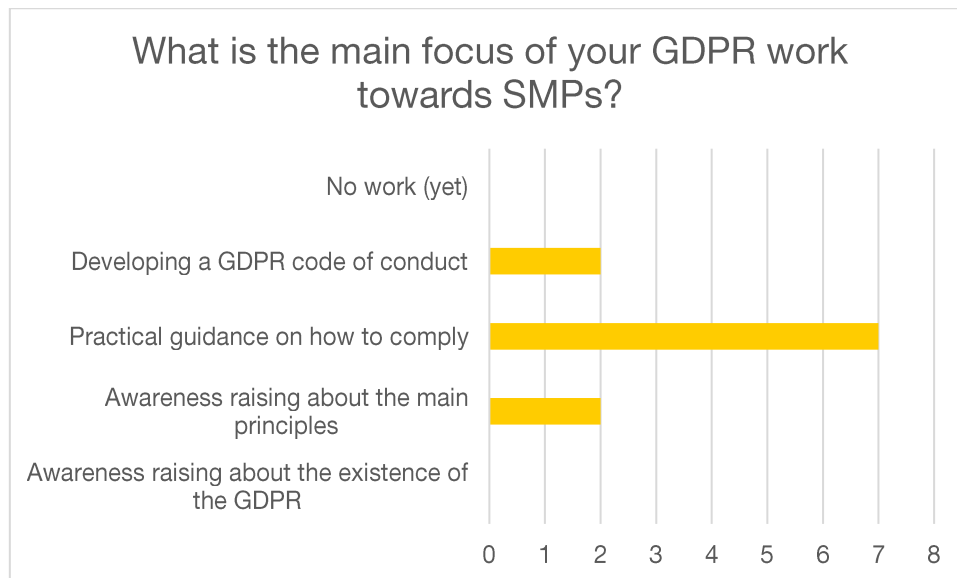
The poll's results confirm the Commission's finding that data protection authorities (DPA) are active in informing stakeholders about the GDPR. However, one participant noted that their DPA focused more on scaring businesses than helping them become compliant.

The Commission is currently supporting national awareness-raising and compliance efforts, for example by funding training for data protection authorities.

### INSTITUTE GOOD-PRACTICES



Professional institutes can play an important role to raise GDPR awareness. The input from the webinar demonstrates that the GDPR is on institutes' agenda.



Professional institutes do more than simply informing SMPs about the existence of the GDPR. Moreover, the Belgian and Norwegian institutes started work on developing a code of conduct. In Belgium, the national authorities stimulated this initiative.

The GDPR stipulates that associations and other bodies representing categories of controllers or processors may prepare codes of conduct. These can be used to demonstrate compliance. A code of conduct must be approved by the authorities and contain mechanisms to carry out monitoring of compliance.

Other initiatives included:

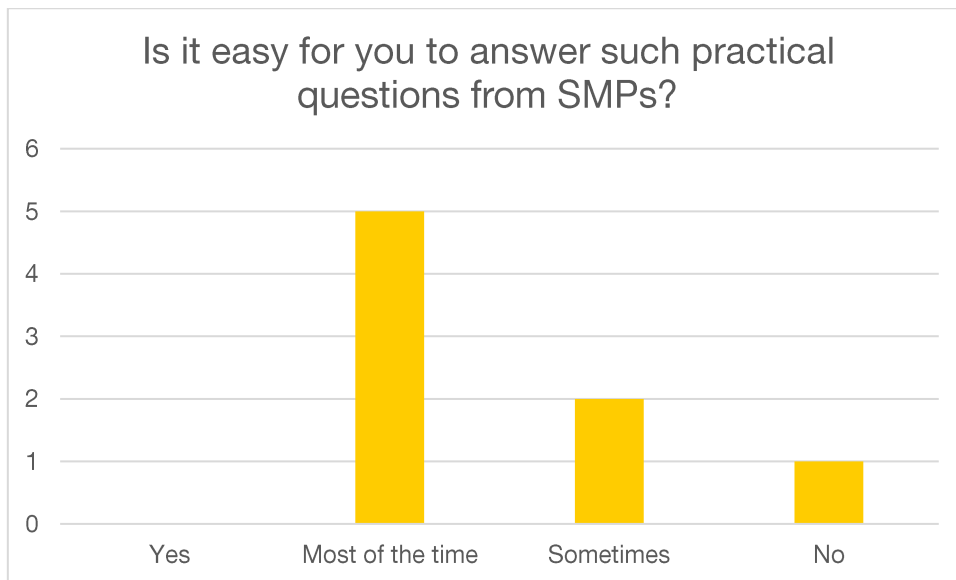
- working with a consultant to develop best practices
- organizing practical seminars
- providing information to explain the main GDPR concepts
- answering practical questions by developing FAQs & podcasts
- publishing books on the GDPR
- offering templates - e.g. for privacy notices or commercial clauses
- setting up a help desk to answer questions

### WHAT'S ON AN SMP'S MIND?

Participants shared the questions and concerns that they receive from their SMPs:

- Do we need to appoint a DPO?
- Can I still send 'cold' marketing emails to clients (consent)?
- Do emails have to be encrypted?
- How does the law apply in practice? What do we have to do? Where do we start from? Do we need to re-issue letters of engagement? Who can we market to?
- Are auditors considered controllers or processors?
- How long can they keep the material from the assignment?
- Is it mandatory to all SMEs to implement appropriate data protection policies prescribed by Art 24 (2)?
- What GDPR information or seminars are most reliable and useful?

Answering such questions can be challenging.



Many actors are working on GDPR guidance:

- EU level - our complimentary [GDPR Policy Update](#)
- national level - the DPAs can be a useful source of advice. Some DPAs are better resourced, so it might be worthwhile to look at the work of [other DPAs](#) than your national one.
- National institutes - their work can be helpful. Some of it you can find in our [Technology Hub](#)



As the trusted SME advisor, SMPs can play a role in helping SMEs become GDPR compliant. A discussion on this topic in our SME Forum revealed that:

- several SMP members receive GDPR-related questions from clients
- 2 SMP members developed a new GDPR advisory service for their SME clients

The discussion in the SME Forum also showed that it is not always easy for SMPs to respond to practical questions from their clients. During the webinar, one participant said therefore to be providing information to its SMP members to help them inform their SME clients about the GDPR.

## NEXT STEPS



Most participants want us to continue to inform them on the latest GDPR developments. Two participants would appreciate further sharing of experience, such as the GDPR webinar. We will take this feedback into account for our further work.