

Inria and the CNIL award the 2020 Privacy Protection prize

The CNIL (French Data Protection Authority) and Inria (French National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology) have awarded the 2020 Privacy Protection prize to a European research team during the 14th international conference Computers, Privacy and Data Protection (CPDP). The award was given to Márcio Silva, Lucas Santos de Oliveira, Athanasios Andreou, Pedro Olmo Vaz de Melo, Oana Goga and Fabrício Benevenuto for their article: "[Facebook Ads Monitor: An Independent Auditing System for Political Ads on Facebook](#)".



On 28th January, 2021 Bruno Sportisse, Chairman and CEO of Inria and François Pellegrini, Vice-president of the CNIL, presented the CNIL-Inria Prize at the CPDP conference which took place remotely. This European prize, created by the CNIL and Inria in 2016 as part of the partnership between the two institutions, aims to encourage research in the field of data protection and privacy. Papers were mainly selected on the two criteria of scientific excellence and societal impact, by a jury co-chaired by François Pellegrini for the CNIL, and Nataliia Bielova for Inria.

This prize is an opportunity to raise the scientific community's awareness of data protection issues and the need to develop research projects in this field, particularly in the light of developments brought by the European Regulation on the protection of personal data (GDPR), and in particular the new requirements for privacy by design and accountability.

The awarded paper, entitled [“Facebook Ads Monitor: An Independent Auditing System for Political Ads on Facebook”](#), by Márcio Silva, Lucas Santos de Oliveira, Athanasios Andreou, Pedro Olmo Vaz de Melo, Oana Goga et Fabrício Benevenuto, has been published at the World Wide Web Conference (WWW) 2020.

The article presents an independent auditing system for political advertisements on the social network Facebook. An experiment involving more than 2000 volunteers was conducted using a browser plugin in order to collect ads from the volunteer timeline. More than 240,000 examples of ads were collected which allowed the automation of the detection of political ads on Facebook. Deployed for the 2018 Brazilian elections, this audit system revealed that many political ads were not reported as such in the Facebook Ad Library, underscoring the importance of having independent auditing platforms for the dissemination of political advertisement. This work has drawn the attention of many civil society organizations and state administrations to the need to regulate political advertising and provided clues on how to do so.

The award jury has also highlighted two runner-up articles that were recognized by the jury as exceptional research in privacy protection, with very high impact on both society and industry:

- « [Automatically Detecting Bystanders in Photos to Reduce Privacy Risks](#) », by Rakibul Hasan, David Crandall, Mario Fritz and Apu Kapadia;
- « [No boundaries: data exfiltration by third parties embedded on web pages](#) », by Gunes Acar, Steven Englehardt and Arvind Narayanan.

The prize was awarded by the jury members, renowned researchers in the privacy field of computer science: Joe Calandrino (Federal Trade Commission – USA), Mathieu Cunche (INSA-Lyon – France), Josep Domingo-Ferrer (Universitat Rovira i Virgili, UNESCO – Spain), Simone Fischer-Hübner (Karlstad University – Sweden), Sébastien Gambs (Université du Québec à Montréal – Canada), Marit Hansen (Data Protection Commission of Land Schleswig-Holstein – Germany), Kévin Huguenin (University of Lausanne – Switzerland), Francesca Musiani (CNRS – France), Paul Syverson (Naval Research Laboratory – USA), Cristo Wilson (Northeastern University – USA) as well as two CNIL members: François Pellegrini (co-president) and Félicien Vallet (vice-president), and two Inria researchers: Nataliia Bielova (co-president) and Nicolas AnCIAUX (vice-president). More than fifty articles were submitted to the jury, which evidences the ever growing interest of the scientific community for this event.

Keywords: CNIL-Inria Award, Contest, Privacy, Research, Europe

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For more information:

- 2020 CNIL-Inria prize website: <https://www.cnil.fr/fr/lancement-de-la-5e-edition-du-prix-cnil-inria>
- The 2020 award winner article: [“Facebook Ads Monitor: An Independent Auditing System for Political Ads on Facebook”](#)
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