DATA CONFIDENTIALITY MATTERS

EXAMPLES FROM TIMSS 2019 IN DENMARK
TIMSS 2019: OUR FIRST IEA STUDY WITH GDPR

- We completed the Field Trial without parents consent, before the ‘new’ rules were in effect, but for the main study they were.

- Together with the legal department at the university, we realised that in our case the realization of GDPR in Denmark meant:

  1) that we would need signed consents from parents, for the 4th grade students to participate.

  2) that country-specific amendments of the law meant that just linking to the Data Protection Declaration, as proposed from IEA, was not sufficient when parents, teachers and school leaders answer the Early Learning Survey online. A check box as seen below was needed.
We'll a head of time, we supplied participating schools with information and materials to collect the signed consents.

We sent reminders, and did check-ups with school coordinators to secure as many as possible.

In a few cases, the need for consents meant that classes were not able to participate in the study (less than 50% participation rate within classes).
HOW DID IT GO?

Out of 5991 eligible students;

- 5140 participated = 85.8% (Including participation with special accommodation)
- 282 were absent of the day of testing = 4.8%
- 564 were excluded because of missing parental permission = 9.4%
During our data entry of the student questionnaires, one of our punchers noticed a handwritten message in the cover of a questionnaire. The student had written, that he/she was frequently having thoughts of suicide, and that we (the test administrators, ed.) should not tell it to anyone.

At the time we found this message, it had been weeks since the day of testing. We contacted our legal department right away to ask what our options to notify parents would be.

We found out that our only legal option was to contact the school, and get information on the parents from them.

The school decided not to give us this information. They would not be allowed to pass this information to us, because information about parents was not mentioned in the disclosure agreement between us and them.
PARTICIPATION WITHOUT CONSENT?

Interpretation of GDPR legislation is like a pendulum, now:

- Consent from parents may if we draw the ‘research card’ only be needed for students to participate in student questionnaire if no school lists etc. are kept anywhere.
- Students would be allowed to participate in the math and science test without consent.
- It raises questions: If the study is completed without the context questionnaire, the study would merely be relevant for estimating participating countries mean scores.
- I think that the test results, without the background information, cannot be used for much.
- On the positive side: Asking all parents, made us inform all well, and we have full support from the participating parents → a form of outreach activity.