

MyData Global Strategy

2024-2026

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Summary:

MyData Global is an international association constituted by and for its members to empower individuals by improving their right to self-determination regarding their personal data. Five years after its founding, this strategy seeks to leverage MyData’s early successes and lessons learned, to take advantage of a dynamic technological and policy environment, and to bolster the skills and dedication of its membership in pursuit of this mission. It outlines high-level objectives across four strategic pillars, as shown in the figure below.

Strategic Pillars	Operations	Community	Policy	Markets
High level objectives	The association is financially sustainable and resilient	Members value their MyData membership	Implementation of EU data policy puts people at its centre	MyData identifies problems and solutions
	Team processes are efficient and professional	The broad community is active and productive	Embed a human-centric approach in rules emerging globally	Business models are demonstrated
	MyData's values are curated and visible	Membership is diverse and representative	MyData is salient with the global data advocacy movement	Technical solutions are demonstrated

The first two strategic pillars emphasise an increased professionalisation of the association staff and leadership and continued empowerment of the MyData community. This is the essential core of MyData Global.

The second two pillars address areas that we believe are necessary to enable the emergence of human-centric ecosystems in the near term. The Policy window aims to shape how government actors set rules and regulations for data ecosystems, through direct engagement and coordination with other advocacy initiatives. The Markets window focuses on incentives for the private sector to adopt human-centric approaches, and to help MyData members to adopt sustainable business models so that they can reach and benefit more people.

This strategic focus on policies and markets leverages MyData’s strengths while focusing attention on concrete opportunities to advance our mission in the near term. This emphasis does not preclude other activities or engagement with other actors that can also contribute to realising MyData’s mission.

This strategy is aspirational and achieving these objectives will require doubling down on what MyData does well, while expanding the scope and impact of our work. The strategy will be implemented through annual work plans that prioritise the above objectives, and identify specific

activities through which to pursue them. An adaptive monitoring framework will be used to report progress towards achieving these objectives on an annual basis.

A. The MyData Mission

MyData is a global movement dedicated¹ to empowering individuals by improving their right to self-determination regarding their personal data. It does so by advancing a human-centric approach to data management that enables individuals to know and decide who uses their data, and ultimately be empowered by technical platforms and solutions in which they are the point of integration and control over their data. This includes the right and ability to access, hold, add, improve and use data generated about them through enabling tools and technologies, independent of the organisations that may initially gather, generate and hold this data.

Giving individuals access to and control of their data can help them better manage their lives online and offline, and improve a range of services and products provided by governments, companies, and organisations. Unlocking the free flow of information through human-centric tools and services balances the industry need for data with individual's digital rights, in order to protect people from exploitation and to empower them to create and access value, while creating value for society as a whole. We believe that this approach is key to enabling a fair, sustainable, and prosperous digital society, and that MyData will make an important contribution to this achieving vision by engaging and serving its global community as a recognised expertise connector².

MyData Global is an international association, mandated by its members to pursue the above vision as described in the MyData Declaration, which anticipates three major changes that need to take place in order to achieve this vision.

The MyData Shifts: what needs to change

1. From formal to actionable rights

In many countries, individuals have enjoyed legal data protection for decades, yet their rights have remained mostly formal: little known, hard to enforce, and often obscured by corporate practices. We want true transparency and truly informed consent to become the new normal for when people and organisations interact. We intend access and redress, portability, and the right to be forgotten, to become "one-click rights": rights that are as simple and efficient to use as today's and tomorrow's best online services.

2. From data protection to data empowerment

Data protection regulation and corporate ethics codes are designed to protect people from

¹ See MyData's bylaws, Article 2.1, at <https://mydataglobal.github.io/bylaws/>

² See MyData Global's identify statement, adopted in the 2022 Autumn General Meeting, https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1VgJyW4zJ846Y0Tn1iq1T9hxscbSvYQL3IKvM0ZmzPU4/edit#slide=id.g1596d2a9cf5_1_0

abuse and misuse of their personal data by organisations. While these will remain necessary, we intend to change common practices towards a situation where individuals are both protected and empowered to use the data that organisations hold about them. Examples of such uses include simplifying administrative paperwork, processing data from multiple sources to improve one's self-knowledge, personalised AI assistants, decision-making, and data sharing under the individual's own terms.

3. From closed to open ecosystems

Today's data economy creates network effects favoring a few platforms able to collect and process the largest masses of personal data. These platforms are locking up markets, not just for their competitors, but also for most businesses who risk losing direct access to their customers. By letting individuals control what happens to their data, we intend to create a truly free flow of data – freely decided by individuals, free from global choke points – and to create balance, fairness, diversity and competition in the digital economy.

These shifts represent MyData's vision for a future where higher-quality data moves more efficiently between individuals and organisations for the mutual benefit of all participants in any given data ecosystem. We believe that this can be achieved while improving rather than sacrificing our privacy, but also that we need to summon the best minds within the fields of business, legal, technology, and social expertise to be successful. Some will direct their efforts towards disruptive innovation while others may focus on incremental improvements to the status quo. MyData is an open and inclusive movement, dedicated to providing an enabling foundation for different perspectives and approaches to pursue this vision.

A.1. Situation analysis

This strategy is developed at a momentous time for the MyData mission, with rapid changes in ecosystems, awareness, norms, and expectations about personal data governance. There are several factors, both internal and external to MyData Global and the MyData community, that will shape our ability to achieve our mission over the next three years.

Internally, MyData Global is at an important inflection point. A concerted effort to professionalise the organisation is underway, including the development of this strategy, hiring of key staff, and a reform of the MyData's governance structure and financial and administrative processes. This professionalisation process is expected to begin yielding benefits as we enter 2024, and will be leveraged to support the continued growth and engagement of the MyData community. The perspectives, innovations, and dedication of this community remain MyData's most powerful asset and foundation. Activity and engagement has in some respects lagged, however. This is particularly evident in regard to local hubs and thematic groups, which have not received dedicated and continuous support from MyData Global due to resource and capacity constraints. There has also been a clear request from several members to strengthen the value that MyData membership conveys compared to other initiatives and networks.

Externally, there are several factors that bode well for MyData's mission. Most notably, there has been an explosion of interest in the responsible governance of personal data. This is driven in part by the rapid digitalisation of services in many markets, and the visible relevance of data for life events and everyday life for many consumers. It is also, driven in part by popular concerns related to emergent technologies, and significant advances in European regulatory frameworks. There is also a significant amount of activity in developing European data spaces, which has generated a flurry of attention and engagement, where MyData's advocacy and messaging has been influential.

Developments in European policy deserve special attention. The European data strategy's explicit reference to human-centricity and the MyData movement is an important achievement, but it remains uncertain how this will be translated into specific regulation or the implementation of existing regulation, and implementation of the Data Governance Act is emblematic. Though MyData has been able to provide ad hoc and informal support to member states struggling to understand and implement the Act's requirements in regard to personal data intermediaries, MyData has not yet managed to scale or structure this support. Similarly, MyData currently enjoys a profile and position in the EU discourse on data policy, but that position is not guaranteed to persist and must be continually earned by demonstrating relevance and adding value in a quickly changing policy environment. With the continued debate and adoption of new regulatory frameworks for personal data, and ongoing efforts by member states to interpret and adopt existing regulations, there is a tremendous potential for MyData to increase its impact by systematising support to these actors.

These developments also represent opportunities to support MyData organisation members. This can be direct support, by helping businesses to understand and access opportunities that emerge with new regulations. MyData can also support members indirectly, by shaping the expectations of regulators, customers, and competitors about the value and advantages of a human-centric business model. This is especially relevant as EU regulations such as the Digital Markets Act impose penalties for companies that manage personal data in a way contrary to the MyData mission.

There are also significant regulatory developments taking place outside of Europe, with rapid advances in national regulations of countries like Korea and Brazil, at the subnational level in the USA, and at the national and regional levels, such as the African Data Policy Framework. This offers a significant opportunity to facilitate practical and technical learning between policy-makers in Europe and abroad. Lessons and advances outside of Europe can directly inform stronger implementation of EU regulations in European markets, while MyData can play an important role to leverage European experiences for stronger regulation in developing markets. The latter is of particular importance if established gatekeepers like Apple and Google increase their efforts to dominate emerging markets in reaction to EU restrictions and penalties.

Increased popular attention to data governance issues is also visible in the rapid proliferation of civil society initiatives dedicated to strengthening the responsible governance of personal and

collective data. Several new advocacy organisations and projects have recently been launched, as well as several new funds and philanthropic initiatives. These initiatives tend to employ rhetoric of responsible data and digital rights, but are largely unconnected from MyData in terms of policy, networks, and practice. These initiatives are doing a good job of campaigning and lobbying to policy-makers, companies, and the general public around the world. MyData has an important opportunity to collaborate with this new community of advocates, to strengthen its messaging and contribute to shared objectives.

A.2. Implications for the MyData Global Strategy 2024-2026

The developments described above are all dynamic and fast moving. The implications of many of them remain uncertain. Several conclusions have nevertheless been drawn in the development of this strategy. It is necessary for MyData Global to simultaneously strengthen its internal processes and its external engagement in order to effectively pursue its mission.

Internally, there is a need to continue improving MyData Global's operational effectiveness and professionalism, while simultaneously strengthening its support to the MyData community. There is a clear opportunity to strengthen the value that MyData Global membership conveys to members, and to grow membership beyond Europe, in order to extend peer learning and exchange, while also scaling MyData Global's potential for achieving its mission globally. There is particular demand to strengthen our support to local hubs and thematic groups in order to enable this.

Externally, there is also a clear opportunity to strengthen and systematise the contributions that MyData community has demonstrated in the EU context. Support to policy-makers and the designers of services can be strengthened and systematised for improved impact within and outside of Europe. Simultaneously, the dynamic and uncertain development of market structures and ecosystems in Europe and beyond provides MyData Global with an opportunity to lead in understanding and promoting how small and medium businesses can thrive in these emergent ecosystems. Showing how businesses can benefit from a human-centric approach will strengthen emergent ecosystems, markets, and regulations, while also directly supporting and providing value to MyData Global's organisation members.

B. Implementation, monitoring and reporting

This strategy will be implemented through adaptive work planning on an annual basis. Annual work plans will prioritise specific objectives outlined in this strategy, based on an analysis of resources and opportunities, and will identify specific activities through which to pursue those objectives.

Annual work plans will be accompanied by a monitoring framework that sets multiple SMART indicators for each strategic objective, and targets to be pursued for that year.

Annual work plans and strategic monitoring frameworks will be approved by the MyData Global board and membership at the beginning of each year, and reviewed at the end of each year.

C. Strategic areas and objectives

For the 2024-2026 strategy period, MyData Global’s activities will be focused on achieving strategic objectives grouped into four priority strategic areas, presented and described below.

The strategic pillars of operations and community focus on strengthening the efficiency, vitality, and impact of MyData as an organisation and a community.

The strategic pillars of policy and markets focus MyData Global’s external attention on enabling the development of human-centric ecosystems, with necessary tools and services.

These goals rely fundamentally on understanding the needs of the people who will use these tools and services, and contribute indirectly to building users’ awareness and digital rights literacy.

Each strategic pillar and high-level goal is described in detail below, and will be pursued by specific, time-bound, and measurable activities that are described in annual work plans.

Challenges to address	We lack resources and capacity to achieve impact	Community commitment is strong, but growth and activity have faltered	Regulation is emerging, but can reinforce the status quo	Human-centric solutions not yet proven, scaled or financially sustainable
Strategic Pillars	Operations	Community	Policy	Markets
High level objectives	The association is financially sustainable and resilient	Members value their MyData membership	Implementation of EU data policy puts people at its centre	MyData identifies problems and solutions
	Team processes are efficient and professional	The broad community is active and productive	Embed a human-centric approach in rules emerging globally	Business models are demonstrated
	MyData’s values are curated and visible	Membership is diverse and representative	MyData is salient with the global data advocacy movement	Technical solutions are demonstrated

C.1. Operations

A well-functioning and efficient organisation is essential to MyData Global's success and impact. For this 3-year strategy period, the strategic focus for management and operations will be on organisational development towards improved efficiency and alignment with our values.

This will be pursued through the following strategic objectives:

C.1.1. The association is financially sustainable and resilient

In order to sustain its work, the association will balance and diversify sustainable revenue streams to ensure that it is not dependent on, or vulnerable to, any single revenue source, and so that all activities remain aligned with MyData's core principles and the association's strategic priorities.

C.1.2. Team processes are efficient and professional

The organisation is structured so as to facilitate clear prioritisation and decision-making and to maximise the efficient use of human and financial resources, through appropriate staffing and agile processes.

C.1.3. MyData's values are curated and visible

MyData values should be maintained and curated in the MyData Declaration and other documents as a social anchor for the MyData community. These values should also be manifest in the way MyData Global operates, through its use of tools, processes, and staff activities.

C.2. Community

The MyData community will always be at the core of all MyData Global's activities as an organisation in service of the community. For years 2024-2026, the emphasis will be on consolidating the growth and development of prior years: to ensure that membership in the association is valued by members, that the broad community facilitates meaningful and independent activity and collaboration by participants, and that our membership is representative of the MyData Declaration's scope and ambition.

This will be pursued through the following strategic objectives:

C.2.1. Members value their MyData Global membership

MyData Global membership should grow and develop based on a clear sense among members that membership helps them and adds value to what they do and represent. Individual and organisation members feel that their needs and perspectives are appropriately represented in global discussions and policy fora. This sense of value should be visible to members and non-members alike.

C.2.2. The broad MyData community is active and productive

Community activities should be supported and revitalised within and beyond MyData Global members through established mechanisms such as thematic groups and local hubs as well as new and independent activities, projects, and consortia where MyData Global is active. These activities should be productive, generating new knowledge, collaborations, and impact (including contribution to the real and perceived value of membership as well as the diversity and representativeness of MyData Global's membership).

C.2.3. Membership is diverse and representative

In order to live up to the scope and ambition of the MyData Declaration, the association's membership needs to include the active participation by individuals and organisations from all sectors and from all parts of the world.

C.3. Policy

Influencing and shaping the European rules that regulate personal data governance has been central to MyData Global's activities, successes, and potential for impact. In the coming strategy period, the goal will be to strengthen and extend this work to the implementation of established regulatory frameworks, and to embed the human-centric approach in emerging rules and advocacy initiatives within and beyond the EU.

This will be pursued through the following strategic objectives:

C.3.1. Implementation of EU data policy puts people at its centre

Inclusion of a human-centric approach in the EU data strategy is an important milestone for MyData, but it is not certain how this will be practically manifest in European frameworks as new EU Acts are adopted and member states resolve the ambiguities inherent in existing legislation. MyData Global should engage with policymakers at the regional and national levels in the EU to ensure that the interpretation and implementation of legislation adhere to the principles of human-centricity articulated in the EU data strategy and the MyData Declaration.

C.3.2. Embed a human-centric approach in rules emerging globally

Regulatory frameworks are developing and emerging beyond Europe at both the regional and national levels. MyData Global should engage with policymakers beyond the EU to embed the human-centric approach into how these frameworks are articulated, implemented, and understood. Simultaneously, MyData Global should engage with the public servants and front-line bureaucrats whose hiring, procurement, and administrative decisions define the rules for how data is managed in public services at the national or subnational levels.

C.3.3. MyData is salient with the global data advocacy movement

There is currently a thriving, but highly fragmented, global community of civil society organisations, researchers, and public intellectuals advocating for better rules and legislation to govern personal and collective data. MyData's mission and rhetoric currently have very limited currency with this broad community, which often focuses on punishing malevolent actors, preventing potential harms, and collective governance mechanisms. Early work to conceptualise the linkages between "MyData" and collective and aggregate data dynamics ("OurData") should be extended and reinforced to improve salience, complementarity, and potential collaborations within this wider advocacy community in order to better advance MyData's mission through the advocacy of other groups.

C.4. Markets

Data markets and ecosystems are consolidating and emerging without a clear incentive for open interoperability or clear business models for how companies and organisations can thrive and grow without tracking and exploiting people's data. We believe that this is due to a failure of the market to identify and align market incentives with human and societal well-being. We believe that significant effort should be made to strengthen the openness and human-centricity in more mature and established systems, while also supporting and facilitating the emergence and scaling of ecosystems that are open and human-centric by design. We believe MyData can best contribute to this by a combination of thought leadership and practical work to facilitate the development and demonstration of real solutions, collaborating with the myriad stakeholders that are already building, designing, regulating, and preparing to enter these ecosystems.

This will be pursued through the following strategic objectives:

C.4.1. MyData identifies problems and solutions

MyData's thought leadership should anticipate and clearly articulate challenges related to a new data economy, and propose opportunities, innovations, and responses that can help to address those challenges. Conceptual and applied research can help to focus attention and action among regulators and designers, while providing opportunities and strengthening the credibility of MyData members that are developing solutions.

C.4.2. Business models are demonstrated

Work with MyData operators and with European data space initiatives has consistently highlighted the importance and absence of viable business models for a human-centric approach to data governance in the private sector. MyData Global can help to identify, test, and promote viable and human-centric business models by facilitating and encouraging debate and research into new economic models for the collection and use of personal data, by creating spaces for dialogue and experimentation, by coordinating complementary efforts, by helping members to understand their users' needs and market

landscape, to access the networks and resources they need to succeed, and by actively documenting and promoting successful business models.

C.4.3. Technical solutions are demonstrated

The strong technical innovations produced by the MyData community are inhibited by a lack of scale, visibility and interoperability. MyData Global can help to overcome these limits by creating spaces for dialogue and experimentation, by coordinating complementary efforts, by helping members to access the networks and resources they need to succeed, and by actively documenting and promoting cutting edge technical solutions.