There are pressing needs to (1) assist European Union’s (EU) data protection authorities (DPAs) in raising awareness among businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), about the new EU legal framework for personal data protection, particularly the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and (2) assist these SMEs in ensuring compliance therewith. The new law and all its novelties create for many stakeholders confusion and uncertainty as to its practical application, magnified by its upcoming applicability (May 2018). Some 22 million European SMEs, who are the focal point of the EU enterprise policy, are particularly vulnerable as personal data protection law affects them as any other business, yet SMEs rarely can afford professional legal advice. Thus they merit special support from public authorities.

The STAR II project will directly address these needs and it will: (1) review the state of the art in awareness-raising, (2) analyse SMEs’ experience with first months of the functioning of the GDPR, (3) run an awareness-raising campaign for SMEs and (4) a trial hotline (12 months) to respond to SMEs’ questions, measuring its performance, and – on that basis – (5) prepare a digital manual for DPAs on awareness-raising for SMEs, and (6) a printed handbook for SMEs on EU personal data protection law. These results will be prepared in constant consultation with stakeholders (especially via validation workshops and the External Advisory Board) and widely disseminated. STAR II will present some dozen of detailed deliverables from each implementation stage and all its outputs will be freely available, open accessible and copyright-unrestricted, thus easily reusable and adaptable.

STAR II is addressed to 28 EU DPAs and millions of EU SMEs. It will deliver tangible and long-terms results to SMEs, assisting them in compliance with the GDPR (by a hotline and a handbook) and – indirectly – to DPAs, to fulfil their awareness-raising mission (by a manual).