SmartSuite

Framework / Privacy / Global Privacy Regulations

UAE PDPL (Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021)

The UAE Personal Data Protection Law (Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021) governs processing of personal data of people in the UAE; in force since January 2, 2022.



What it is

The UAE Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL), Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021 on the Protection of Personal Data, is the federal data protection law of the United Arab Emirates: it binds controllers and processors that process the personal data of people in the UAE, including those established abroad, it has applied since January 2, 2022, and the UAE Data Office supervises it. Article 31 fixes the effective date.

The President of the UAE issued the law in Abu Dhabi on September 20, 2021, and Federal Decree-Law No. 44 of 2021 created the UAE Data Office. Article 2 excludes government data and government bodies, security and judicial data, personal use, health data and banking and credit data that have their own legislation, and free-zone companies that have their own data protection law, such as the DIFC. Article 28 required the Cabinet to issue Executive Regulations within six months, and Article 29 gives controllers and processors six months from their issue to comply; the official portal page does not list them, and administrative penalties await a Cabinet decision under Article 26.

At a glance

PUBLISHER President of the United Arab Emirates (Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021); regulator: the UAE Data Office (Federal Decree-Law No. 44 of 2021)	TYPE Regulation	VERSION Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021 on the Protection of Personal Data; Executive Regulations under Articles 28 and 29 not listed on the official portal
EFFECTIVE January 2, 2022 (Article 31)	DOMAIN Privacy	FAMILY Global Privacy Regulations
REGION United Arab Emirates	ADOPTION MODEL Regulatory Compliance	IMPLEMENTATION COMPLEXITY High

Source: u.ae/en/about-the-uae/digital-uae/data/data-protection-laws

Why it matters

- **Defined processing grounds** Article 4 forbids processing without the owner's consent except for listed cases, including public interest, legal claims, contract performance and the data subject's interests.
- **Provable consent** Article 6 requires the controller to prove consent, in clear, simple and accessible form, with an easy way to withdraw at any time.
- **A record and a processor contract** Article 7 requires a record of personal data and a processor with sufficient guarantees; Article 8 requires processors to keep their own record.
- **Breach reporting to the Data Office** Article 9 requires the controller to report a breach that affects privacy, confidentiality or security, with nature, causes, impact and measures, and to inform the data subject.

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How SmartSuite supports UAE PDPL

Article 7 Record of Personal Data

Keep controller and processor records with categories, authorized persons, processing periods, purposes, cross-border movement and security measures.

Consent and Processing Grounds

Record the Article 4 ground or the Article 6 consent evidence, including how withdrawal is offered and honored.

Data Subject Request Queue

Track information, portability, correction, erasure, restriction, stopping and automated-decision requests under Articles 13 to 18 with owners and evidence.

Assessments and DPO Triggers

Run Article 21 assessments and test each processing activity against the Article 10 data protection officer conditions.

Breach Reports to the Data Office

Log each breach with the Article 9 details, notice to the data subject and processor notice to the controller.

Processors and Cross-Border Transfers

Record each processor and the Article 22 adequacy basis or Article 23 safeguard for every transfer abroad.

Common framework mappings

APEC PF | CCPA/CPRA | GDPR | ISO 27001:2022 | ISO 27701 | NIST Privacy Framework v1.0 | OECD Privacy Guidelines

Official resources

UAE Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) Overview

Provides a comprehensive overview of the UAE's data protection regulations and key requirements.

u.ae/en/about-the-uae/digital-uae/data/data-protection-laws

UAE PDPL Official Text

Defines the legal text of the UAE Personal Data Protection Law as published by the UAE Government.

u.ae/en/about-the-uae/digital-uae/data/data-protection-laws

UAE PDPL Compliance Guidelines

Outlines guidance for organizations to ensure compliance with the UAE PDPL requirements.

u.ae/en/about-the-uae/digital-uae/data/data-protection-laws

UAE PDPL FAQs

Provides answers to frequently asked questions about implementing the UAE PDPL.

u.ae/en/about-the-uae/digital-uae/data/data-protection-laws

Frequently asked questions

Does the UAE PDPL apply to companies outside the UAE?

Yes. Article 2 applies the law to any controller or processor outside the UAE that processes the personal data of data subjects in the UAE, as well as to controllers and processors in the UAE and to data subjects who reside or work there. It excludes government data and bodies, security and judicial data, personal-use processing, health and banking and credit data that have their own legislation, and free-zone companies with their own data protection law.

Does the PDPL always require consent to process personal data?

Article 4 prohibits processing without the data subject's consent but lists cases where processing is lawful without it, including public interest, legal claims, data the person made public, contract performance, legal obligations under other UAE laws and protecting the data subject's interests. Where consent is the ground, Article 6 requires the controller to be able to prove it, to present it clearly, and to let the person withdraw it easily at any time.

What must be reported to the UAE Data Office after a breach?

Under Article 9 a controller that learns of a breach affecting the privacy, confidentiality or security of personal data must report it to the Data Office, within the period the Executive Regulations set, with the nature, form, causes and approximate number of records, the officer's details, likely impact, measures taken and documentation. The controller must also inform the data subject, and a processor must tell the controller immediately.

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When does the PDPL require a data protection officer?

Article 10 requires a controller and processor to appoint a data protection officer where processing is likely to create a high risk to privacy through new technologies or data volume, involves systematic and comprehensive evaluation of sensitive data including profiling and automated processing, or covers a large volume of sensitive data. The officer may be an employee or an authorized person inside or outside the UAE, and the contact address must be given to the Data Office.

Are the PDPL's penalties and Executive Regulations in force?

The law is in force, but Article 26 leaves the list of violations and administrative penalties to a Cabinet decision proposed by the Data Office's Director General, and Article 28 provides for Executive Regulations. Article 29 gives controllers and processors six months from the Regulations' issue to comply, extendable by the Cabinet. The official portal page for the law does not list either instrument, so confirm the current position with the Data Office.

License included / downloadable: Yes The Federal Decree-Law is published by the UAE Government: the official portal u.ae links the text, which it notes is available in Arabic only, and the UAE Legislation portal carries an English translation. The Arabic text is authoritative. The platform links to the official source.

Full framework page and mappings: smartsuite.com/frameworks/uae-personal-data-protection-law-pdpl

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