



FIZnews

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Award for master's thesis on privacy and AI

Karlsruhe, 17 December 2025 — At the end of November, Stephanie von Maltzan from the Intellectual Property Rights research unit was honored at the graduation ceremony at Maastricht University. She received the first-ever Leena Kuusniemi Memorial Award for her master's thesis in the Advanced Master's Program in Cybersecurity, Privacy, and Data Management, which she wrote while conducting research at FIZ.

The award commemorates Leena Kuusniemi, who was a Visiting Fellow at the European Centre on Privacy and Cybersecurity from the very beginning and passed away far too early at the beginning of this year. With this award, the ECPC honors her professional excellence and the values she stood for: curiosity, integrity, and a strong interest in building bridges between disciplines, people, and social issues.

The European Centre on Privacy and Cybersecurity was founded by the Faculty of Law at Maastricht University. It provides a platform for interdisciplinary research on legal issues relating to fundamental rights, data protection, transparency, confidentiality, IT, and data security. In addition, the ECPC is strongly committed to continuing education and offers high-quality training programs for professionals in the field of data protection and cybersecurity.

Stephanie von Maltzan was honored for her master's thesis entitled "Enforcement of the Right to Erasure under Article 17 GDPR in Large Language Models: The Role of Machine Unlearning." The thesis addresses a central question of data protection law in the context of AI: How can the right to be forgotten be enforced in practice when large language models are involved? The jury particularly emphasized how convincingly the thesis combines theoretical approaches from

privacy and cybersecurity with very concrete challenges at the interface of data protection and AI.

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The award was presented by Leena Kuusniemi's daughters Verna and Silva, and by her grandson Milo.

We congratulate Stephanie von Maltzan on this special award.

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