

# PLATO'S EU

Philosophical Learning  
Applied To Online  
Surroundings  
in EU

Draft and example  
for PRP2 workshop:

**„What is my digital  
trace?“**



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## WORKSHOP:



# What's my digital trace, and can I really delete it? Can I keep track of my tracks?

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Dealing with the problem of digital footprint or digital trace is nowadays very important. Regardless of the awareness of an individual it is likely that his/her activity leaves certain traceable digital footprint. That means we can not just actively make digital world aware of us (eg. intentionally posting our pictures and data) but also passively for instance through so-called cookies monitoring our online activity. The issue of digital footprint has technological but also ethical dimension. Technological aspect is presented eg. by questions like - What's my digital trace, and can I really delete it? Can I keep track of my tracks? Ethical (often related to legal) dimension would deal with questions regarding rightness or wrongness of such activities eg. – Is it right to collect data regarding the online activity of internet users? Who should have right for such data? Under which conditions it is right to monitor my online activity? Which data about me are to be collected? What are the risks of digital trace? Ethical (as well as legal) aspects often deal with the right for privacy and its potential violation.

## 2. LESSON OVERVIEW

The lesson will deal primarily with ethical aspect of the digital trace but will partly touch also the technological issues. The workshops addresses the problem of low awareness



of individuals regarding their impact and development of a trace in the digital world. At the same time it will deal with the analysis of positive and negative aspects of such digital trace and evaluation of posting as well as collecting information regarding digital footprint.

The duration of the workshop can be around 90-120 minutes.

**Materials that should be issued include:** Computer, projector, bigger papers at least A3, regular papers A4, pen for the students, color markers, pencils, blackboard, printed materials. If it's not possible to gain access to a computer and projector, teacher may use a paper template, blackboard

**Learning outcomes that will be attained through workshop:**

- Understanding of the digital trace and digital footprint and its technological aspects
- Being able to identify risks and benefits of digital trace
- Ability to analyze the issue of digital footprint from ethical point of view ● Ability to create rules of conduct regarding digital footprint



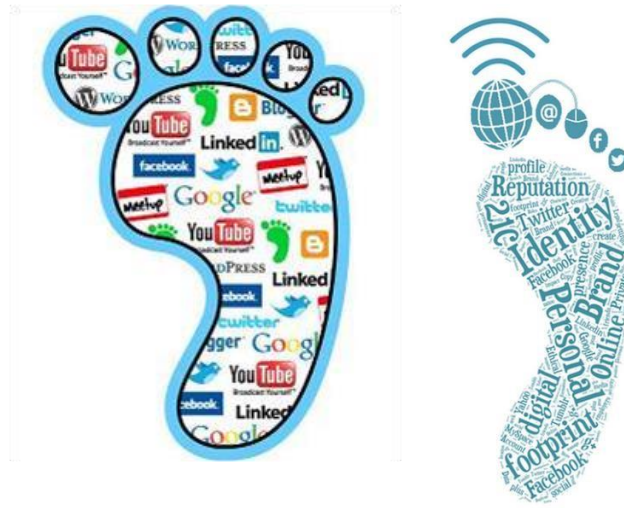
### 3. LESSON BREAKDOWN – WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Start with the group activity divide students/participants into smaller groups and give them papers with a footprint (example 1). Their task is to write inside the foot words or pictures that come into their mind when they hear the word digital footprint. They can also use internet for finding the definitions and more information. After they complete the task they will show the pictures to the other participants and explain why they choose what they did and with what they had difficulties etc. The participant can discuss their understanding of digital footprint. They can also look at the other filled out digital footprints examples (below example 2) and discuss what they think about it. We will then summarize and try to create a common working definition of digital footprint and write in on blackboard or presentation etc.



**Example 1.** Footprint drawing





**Example 2:** Filled out footprint

After being sure that we have common understanding of digital footprint will then proceed to technological and ethical aspects of digital footprint.

We will discuss the questions in the heading of the workshop:

- What's my digital trace?
- What are cookies?
- Can I delete my digital trace?
- Can I keep track of my tracks?

Teacher than can help students to summarize a broad characteristic of digital footprint or a digital shadow or an electronic footprint or digital trace and it refers to the trail of data that users leave when using the internet for instance websites visited, emails sent, information submitted online, goods purchased etc.



- **What's my digital trace?**

The task is to find out what is the digital trace of each individual for themselves. They should think and write down where they deliberately post content or share data, they can also search in the browser and present examples where they could find information about themselves (eg. social media – own profile or someone else's profile, news, pictures,...).

- **What are cookies?**



We will divide students into smaller groups and give each group a short text. The task is to read in groups information regarding cookies and summarize in own words what they learned:

“Computer cookies are small files, often including unique identifiers that web servers send to browsers. These cookies then can be sent back to the server each time your browser requests a new page. It's a way for a website to remember you, your preferences, and your habits online” [Computer Cookies: What They Are and How They Work \(Infographic\) \(hp.com\)](#)



“It's a good idea to decline third-party cookies. If you don't decline, the website could sell your browsing data to third parties. Sharing your personal information with third parties without giving you any control over it could also leave you vulnerable.” [Should you accept cookies? 5 times you definitely shouldn't | Norton](#)

“Tracking cookies are cookies that are either set on a user's web browser by the website they are on or by a third party. These cookies track the user's online behaviour i.e. collect their data, such as clicks, shopping preferences, device specifications, location, and search history.” [What are Tracking Cookies & How to Block Them - CookieYes](#)

“Since the data in cookies doesn't change, cookies themselves aren't harmful. They can't infect computers with viruses or other malware. However, some cyberattacks can hijack cookies and enable access to your browsing sessions.”  
[What is a Cookie? How it works and ways to stay safe \(kaspersky.com\)](#)

“Google's new cookie banners give clear, balanced choices: “reject all,” “accept all,” or “more options” (to exercise more granular control). The new menu will appear on Google Search and YouTube if users are not signed in to an account. (If you are signed in, you can adjust tracking options through Google's data and privacy menu.)” [Google gives Europe a 'reject all' button for tracking cookies after fines from watchdogs - The Verge](#)

Then the class will write a short summary “a recipe for digital cookies” on the blackboard considering following questions:



- what are cookies?
- what we need for them?
- how can I refuse them?
- what they are good for?
- what are their risks?

Afterwards we will discuss the answers that the groups find out and discuss possible additional questions.

**Is it problematic to post certain type of information for my future career?**



Example 3: motivational picture- party



Think of following careers:

- Teacher
- Police(wo)man
- Politician
- Judge
- Doctor
- Actor/actress
- Writer

Could (and should) they be negatively affected by digital footprint such as following?:

- information who are my closest friends,
- information who is my family,
- information what is my home address
- video from a party,
- my picture in swimwear,
- nude picture
- picture in a funny carnival costume
- information about my phone number
- information about my current location
- information about my browsing history
- information about my shopping
- information about my hobbies
- information about my previous work
- information about my studies



- Discuss the options, possible answers and arguments - When the shared data are problematic and why? Could the shared data be sometimes beneficial? Consider for instance possible criminal cases, kidnapping someone, blackmailing someone, making someone feeling embarrassed, less trustworthy, problem of bias and expectations of certain professions and professionals, problematic clash between private life and job etc. Discuss eg. also whether a video of partying politician, teacher, lawyer etc. make them less trustworthy or competent and why.
- What should be the general rules or recommendation for this? As a group create recommendations regarding publishing content online as well as regarding assessing content/digital trace of others.
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- **Can I delete my digital trace and can I keep track of my tracks?**
- Can our digital footprint be removed? Print the following informations and give them to students to read and then discuss whether it is possible to completely delete the digital trace and how:



“Once your data has been made public on the internet it is virtually impossible to remove it completely, especially when you consider that every site you have interacted with has collected some form of information about your online activities.”

- To manage and limit your footprint you can deactivate or delete all your social media profiles, subscriptions, web services and shopping accounts as well as various apps.
- You can also search in a browser your first and last name eg. in Google to change or delete all the information available to you.
- You can also create search alerts with your name to know your mentions and manage them quickly.
- You can delete cookies from your browser to prevent websites from continuing to collect data about your activity.

Although this will probably not guarantee that your digital footprint will be clean, they give you more control over how your footprint is being generated and the contents of your footprint. [How to erase our digital footprint? - Telefónica \(telefonica.com\)](#)

Discuss whether you are managing your footprint and why.

#### 4. DISCUSSION CHECK

The workshop is partly built on a discussion, next questions can be used to expand on the topics explored through the course of the workshop:

Ethical aspects of digital footprint:



- Who is benefiting from digital footprint? Some other groups than just marketing and sales companies?
- Is monitoring my digital footprint violating my privacy and autonomy? If so why? In which cases yes and which not? Think of examples.
- Is it right to collect digital footprint? If so why and under which conditions? Think of examples.
- Is it wrong to collect digital footprint? If so why and under which conditions? Think of example.

## 5. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[My Digital Footprint – booklet without branding \(2\).pdf \(cpni.gov.uk\)](#)

[How to erase our digital footprint? - Telefónica \(telefonica.com\)](#)

[Google gives Europe a 'reject all' button for tracking cookies after fines from watchdogs - The Verge](#)

[Computer Cookies: What They Are and How They Work \(Infographic\) \(hp.com\)](#)

[Should you accept cookies? 5 times you definitely shouldn't | Norton What are Tracking Cookies & How to Block Them - CookieYes](#)

[What is a Cookie? How it works and ways to stay safe \(kaspersky.com\)](#)

[Sanna Marin: Finland PM partying video causes backlash - BBC News](#)





## 6. ANNEX

Probably most of the digital traces are traces we are not aware of. We leave digital traces as soon as we use any digital device. A phone call, a use of GPS, paying with a bank card, using Google search - all our activities are always recorded and therefore traceable due to the nature of information technology. This aspect raises many issues as we should be more aware of what activities can be monitored online and how to have control over it.

Also the main problem with leaking traces is the possibility of invasion of privacy. In the digital environment, we cannot move at all without leaving traces of our activities, which reveal a lot about us. Big corporations (Google, Facebook) have access to a lot of personal data, such as what videos we watch online, what we buy, who and what we talk to, etc.



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