

This thesis deals with the fundamental right to the protection of personal data as enshrined in Article 8 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ('the Charter'). An analysis of the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) on Article 8 of the Charter reveals an intriguing paradox: although this provision has been repeatedly invoked in order to enhance protection of personal data and has featured prominently in several far-reaching judgments (*Digital Rights Ireland*, *Google Spain* or *Schrems*), there is considerable uncertainty as to the substantive scope of the right to the protection of personal data. The relationship between the right to privacy and the right to data protection has proved difficult to untangle, and the autonomous nature of Article 8 of the Charter has not always been respected. The aim of the thesis is to analyse the purpose and content of this fundamental right with reference to the CJEU's case law and recent academic debate. This thesis is divided into four chapters. *Chapter 1* provides an overview of the European legal framework for data protection and demonstrates the limited value of the 'Explanations relating to the Charter' in interpreting Article 8. *Chapter 2* analyses the CJEU's approach to interpreting and applying Article 8, while *Chapter 3* is devoted to the conceptualisation of the fundamental right to the protection of personal data in relation to its purpose and protected interests. Finally, *Chapter 4* deals with several interpretive issues related to the substantive scope of Article 8. This chapter discusses the extent to which data protection rules in secondary legislation have been granted fundamental rights status. It is also submitted that the 'ornamental' application of Article 8 of the Charter, without sufficiently specifying its purpose and content, has posed an obstacle to ensuring that the fundamental right to the protection of personal data is given full effect.