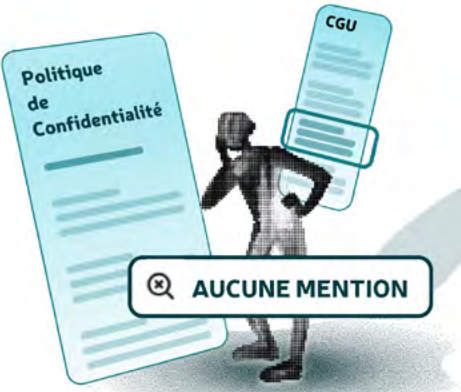


Managing data after death in 2025 : a user journey mapping

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO ALL USERS

Being informed about possible procedures



1 Legal notices

CENTRE D'AIDE

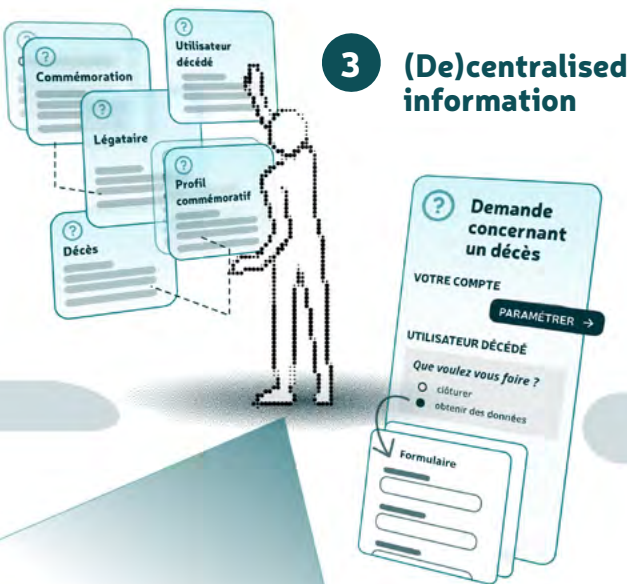
Compte après décès



2 Dedicated help pages



5 Unresolved questions



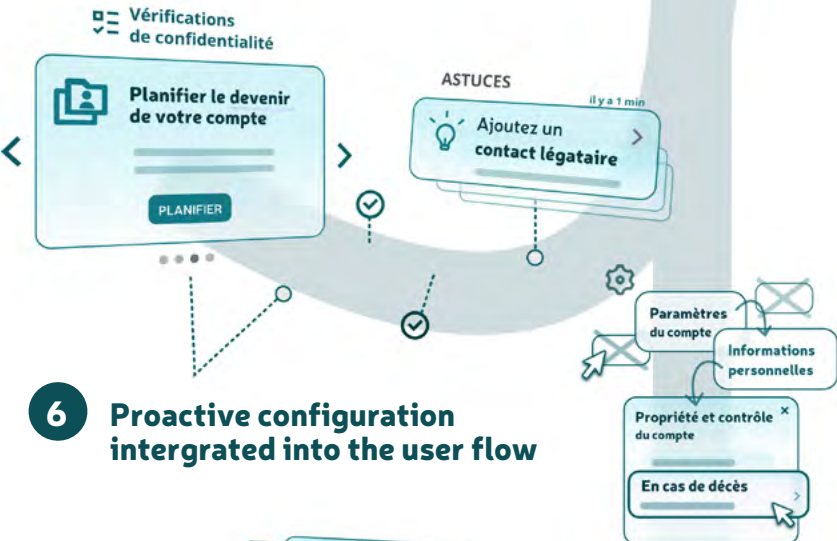
3 (De)centralised information



4 Tone & semantics

ANTE-MORTEM PLANNING USER-INITIATED ACTIONS

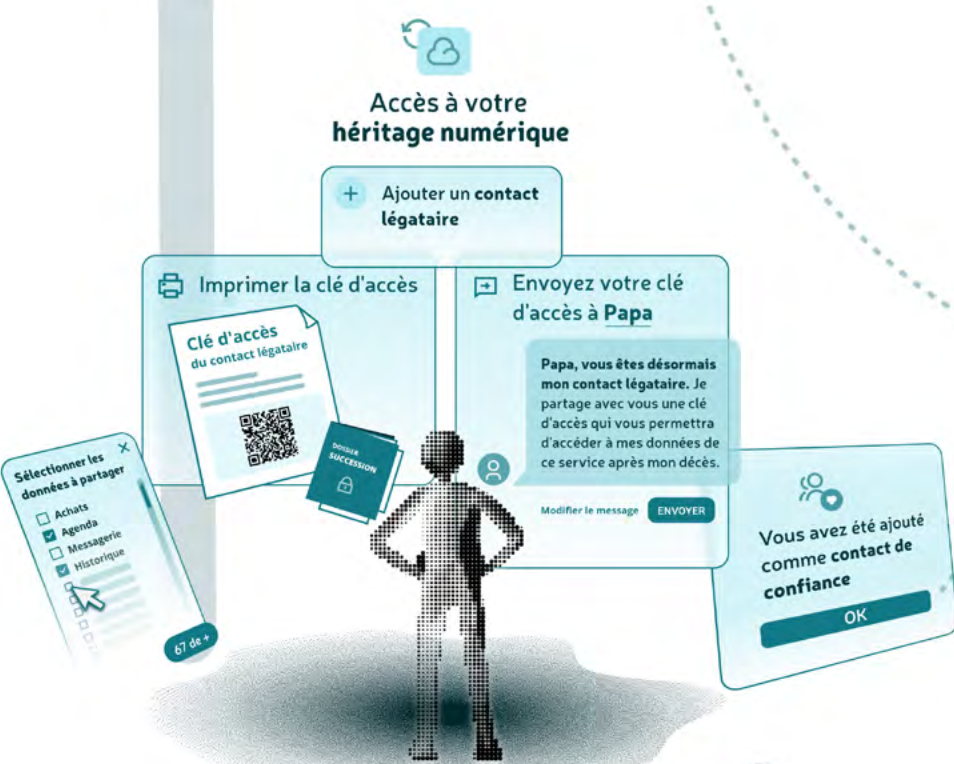
Configuring the future of one's own data



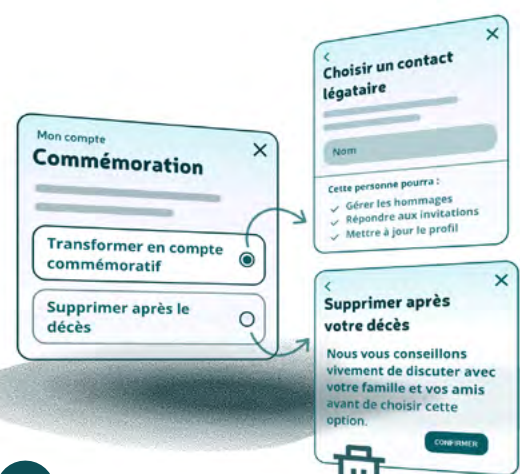
6 Proactive configuration intergrated into the user flow



7 Inactivity management



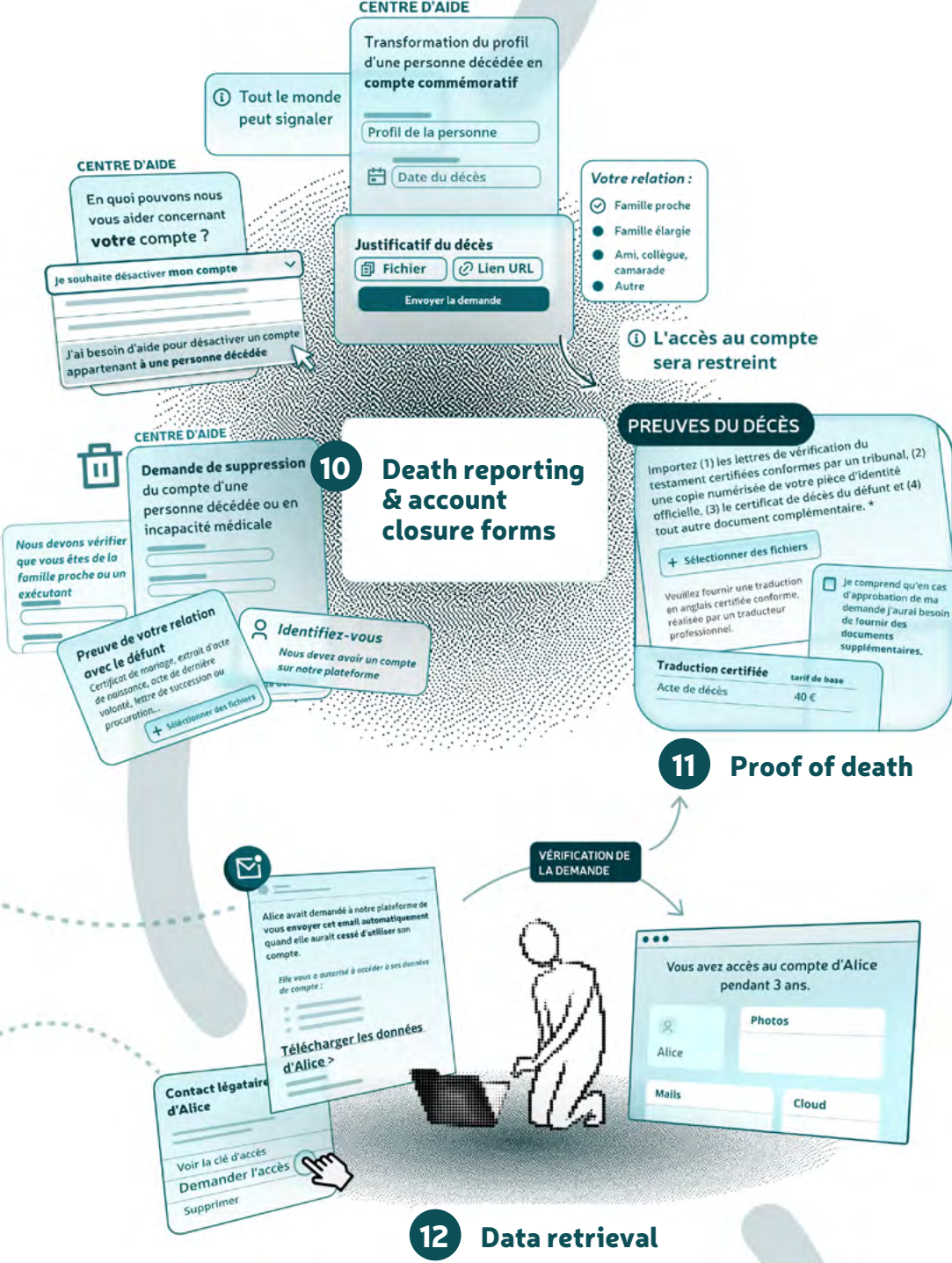
8 Designation of legacy contact(s)



9 Planning for a memorial account

POST-MORTEM ACTION BY THE RIGHTHOLDERS

Managing a deceased person's data



12 Data retrieval

LA GESTION DES MOTS DE PASSE



13 Password management

POST-MORTEM INTERACTIONS BY OTHER USERS

Interacting with the digital traces of a deceased



14 Reporting and moderation



15 Commemoration



16 Ghost interactions



[IP 10] Our data after us

This poster is an excerpt from Issue No. 10 of the **Innovation & Prospective Report from CNIL** : « Our data after us ».

Available on LINC website : linc.cnil.fr/cahier-ip10-nos-donnees-apres-nous

read here

Managing data after death in 2025 : a user journey mapping

In France, Article 85 of the Data Protection Act allows individuals to register specific directives about the fate of their personal data directly with the services processing them. Some platforms, and in particular the main social networks, did not wait for this legal framework to introduce such options to their users, having faced situations early on that prompted them to adapt.



“Reverse-design“ of three typical user journeys

Features related to *post-mortem* data management vary widely between services and are not always well known or activated. LINC analyzed the user journeys of 20 digital services to identify trends in user experience and the types of procedures available in 2025. This study **reconstructed three archetypal user journeys, synthesized here in a collage of illustrated examples.**

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PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

AVAILABLE TO ALL USERS

Being informed about possible procedures

The first step for users is to find out about the options and processes offered by each service, whether for managing their own data or that of a deceased person.

In 2025, little information is available in the legal notices of most services, even though two-thirds of those studied provide dedicated help-center pages.

1 Legal notices

In some cases, there is almost no direct reference to the possible death of the user in the privacy policies and terms and conditions of use.

2 Dedicated help pages

When the service provides specific information, it is mainly found in dedicated pages of the Help Center or in FAQs. However, one-third of the services observed either simply do not mention this topic, or has irrelevant content in their pages.

3 (De)centralised information

When approaches are proposed, some services create several separate help pages for each type of user, while others gather information for all audiences in one space with multiple choices.

4 Tone & semantics

These information pages vary in content and tone, between pathos and administrative neutrality, sometimes in the same page. Condolences are often expressed, even if the page could be read by someone anticipating the fate of their own data.

5 Unresolved questions

The forums or comments on the help pages reveal recurring questions from users and unresolved edge cases.

ANTE-MORTEM PLANNING

USER-INITIATED ACTIONS

Configuring the future of one’s own data

The user may have different goals: to plan the transmission of information or media to others, to decide on their deletion, or on the contrary to try to ensure their long-term preservation. They will have to check for each service whether one or more of these actions are supported.

In 2025, only a few large platforms offer these planning features, which remain optional and user-initiated. Three main types of functionality stand out: inactivity management, designation of legacy contacts, and memorial account setup.

6 Proactive configuration intergrated into the user flow

Some rare services encourage users to anticipate the future of their data, through suggested in-product tips or security-review check-up. However, it remains difficult for a person to locate these settings on their own.

7 Inactivity management

The question of death can be foreseen indirectly, while anticipating the future of an account in the event of inactivity. Some services provide for a simple automatic deletion by default if the person no longer logs in, while others allow users to finely tune the conditions under which an account is deemed inactive.

8 Designation of legacy contact(s)

Some services allow users to nominate one or more «legacy contacts», who may gain partial access to the account after the user's death, or may be able to retrieve certain data.

9 Planning for a memorial account

Certain social networks allow a user to choose, during their lifetime, to have their account transformed into a “memorial” account, visible after their death, and to appoint a person to manage it. Even without this planning, rightholders can choose to activate this feature unless the deceased has scheduled an automatic account deletion.

POST-MORTEM ACTION

BY THE RIGHTHOLDERS

Managing a deceased person’s data

Platforms allow different possibilities for heirs, legal representatives, or legacy contacts, even if no prior action was taken by the deceased.They may access account-closure or memorial-activation forms..

The security of these steps is conditioned by the provision of supporting documents. However, in the absence of a dedicated procedure, the possibilities of action are limited to the possession of the account credentials.

10 Death reporting & account closure forms

When a profile is public, the first step is to report the death: the account may then be memorialized, and the platform restricts access to prevent identity misuse or theft. The closure of the account by third parties is conditional on the provision of proof of death, and documentation establishing the requester's legitimacy. However, forms are sometimes hard to find or require having an active account on the same service.

11 Proof of death

Applicants must submit proof of death (the link to an obituary may be sufficient for simple applications), and documents attesting to the applicant's legitimacy. A certified English translation of these documents is sometimes requested.

12 Data retrieval

If legacy contact(s) were appointed prior to death, they may request access to a read-only reduced version of the account, or directly download a copy of some data. Without such designation, data retrieval is generally unavailable or requires a court order.

13 Password management

Most platforms emphasize protecting the confidentiality of deceased users. However, sometimes the only way to close a deceased person's account is still to know the user's login credentials.

POST-MORTEM INTERACTIONS

BY OTHER USERS

Interacting with the digital traces of a deceased

Without being a legacy contact or a rightholder, other users of a service may still interact, intentionally or not, with the digital traces of deceased individuals.

Even if some social networks put measures in place to limit unwanted interactions, bursts of digital traces of a deceased person remain frequent in user journeys.

14 Reporting and moderation

Some observed platforms provide a process for reporting content involving a deceased person, whether by family members or any user in sensitive cases, enabling partial moderation.

15 Commemoration

The purpose of memorial accounts is to inform about the death, but also to aprevent unwanted interactions such as friend suggestions or birthday reminders. However, this profile transformation only takes place if the death is reported, and many profiles remain visible with the appearance of an active account.

16 Ghost interactions

Unintentional interactions with the accounts of the deceased can take strange forms. For instance, automatic account deletion after inactivity may leave ghost traces in conversation histories, whether linked to death or simply to inactivity.