

09.03.2021

One year of corona pandemic - Kugelmann: More digitization needs more efficient data protection A year ago, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified the spread of the Sars-CoV-2 coronavirus as a pandemic. With the far-reaching restrictions and changes that took place as a result, digitization has also picked up speed, and a wide range of data protection issues have consequently been raised Freedom of Information (LfDI) Rhineland-Palatinate, Professor Dieter Kugelmann: "The corona pandemic has driven digitization. As a result, more and more personal data has been collected and citizens' right to informational self-determination is under increasing pressure. One thing is clear: More digitization requires more efficient data protection. A central task in these digital times is to defend civil liberties. Data protection must not fall victim to the virus. Data protection must be inoculated with trust. It must continue to be possible, even in the crisis, to make a balanced decision as to whether and in which cases it is necessary to restrict one fundamental right in favor of another. This applies to the general freedom of action, the freedom of assembly and occupation, the practice of religion and also the right to informational self-determination."

Kugelmann says: "The corona pandemic has strongly raised public awareness of the importance of data protection and at the same time intensified the debate about its role in the digitized society. Many citizens are becoming more alert and sensitive to data protection issues. There is increasing critical scrutiny as to which company or government agency collects or stores or wants to store data, on what basis and for what purpose. If omissions are found or suspected, many citizens ask the responsible persons or contact the supervisory authorities. As the data protection authority, we will continue to do our part to ensure that every citizen can exercise their right to privacy."

In the pandemic period so far, numerous related topics have been dealt with at the LfDI. Many public and private institutions, associations, companies and citizens have turned and still turn to the LfDI with questions about data protection in the home office, contact recording in the catering trade or in other service providers, exemption from the mask requirement, the use of video conference systems and vaccinations and privacy. Other topics included discussions on body temperature measurements, the transfer of data from infected people and possible access by the police to restaurant guest lists. A larger social discussion was sparked by the Corona warning app from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI).

In the past twelve months, the LfDI has received hundreds of oral and written inquiries about data protection in times of the

pandemic. The LfDI received 80 inquiries and complaints on the subject of exemption from the obligation to wear masks in schools alone. The LfDI recorded around 150 inquiries and complaints about the use of video conferencing systems in schools. With a view to recording contacts in restaurants, hairdressers and other establishments, well over 100 people contacted the LfDI verbally and in writing.

Kugelmann says: "The pandemic has put our society in an exceptional situation and has triggered some serious changes. We must be able to trust that the constitutional principles of social coexistence will endure. This includes trust in state action that is always fundamental rights-oriented and thus data protection-compliant."

With the beginning of the pandemic, the LfDI set up a comprehensive question and answer area on its website on "Corona & Data Protection", which is continuously updated and expanded. The questions and answers relate to: Corona vaccinations
Various data protection issues
Rights to access information
A new episode of the LfDI podcast series "Datenfunk" also deals with the pandemic. The episode "One year of corona pandemic... and data protection?" can be found [here](#).

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