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Apple starts environment detection in Germany©

zhang kaiyv / unsplash.com On July 29, 2019, the US company Apple started Germany-wide trips in which vehicles equipped with special cameras and sensors drive down public roads in Germany and use cameras and sensors to record the vehicle's surroundings. The data should be used to improve Apple's own map service.

The associated data protection issues were first discussed ten years ago in connection with the Google Streetview service. In order to take account of the concerns of those affected and to meet the demands of the data protection officer, a number of mechanisms have been introduced: prior notification of tracking shots automatic pixelation of faces and license plates the possibility of objecting to the processing of the personal data recorded and against publication the company's own opinion and a possibility of appeal if the above points were not taken into account. The same requirements were made for comparable projects in subsequent years (e.g. by Microsoft with the "Streetside" service or Nokia with the "Here" service). This is also the benchmark for the current tracking shots for Apple's "Look around" service and the associated "Look around" map service function.

According to the information available to the state commissioner so far, Apple is taking this into account. The tracking shots planned in Germany can be accessed online. In Rhineland-Palatinate, trips are therefore planned for August and September. From the point of view of the state representative, an up-to-date representation would be desirable so that those affected can prepare for the corresponding journeys in a plannable manner. However, there are always postponements that deviate from the plan (e.g. due to weather or technical reasons). As a result, the announcement therefore covers a manageable period of time and corresponds to the announcements of other map services (e.g. Google).

Apple camera vehicles are labeled to show where a capture is occurring at a specific time and place. The state representative recommends noting the place and time when sighting such a vehicle so that data can be requested to be deleted from the recorded raw material if necessary. In the event that you do not agree to the processing of your data, those affected should object to this.

Part of the data protection concept for tracking shots is automatic pixelation of faces and license plates ("image blurring"). Experiences with the corresponding functions indicate that this is done with a comparatively high level of reliability, but to a

certain extent there are also incomplete or faulty pixelation.

In these cases, Apple offers a contact option. Furthermore, a corresponding "report" function in the Apple map service should enable a corresponding application.

As a result, from the point of view of the state commissioner, Apple fulfills the requirements that were placed on comparable projects by other map service providers in the past. Incidentally, the concept of the current tracking shots was coordinated with the data protection supervisory authority responsible in Germany, the Bavarian State Office for Data Protection Supervision. According to Apple, the so-called "look-around" feature, i.e. the 3D display of the recordings that can be accessed via the Internet, is currently not planned in Germany. According to Apple, it is still unclear to what extent this will be offered in the future. In this case, Apple would then have to provide information about the use of this service in good time and implement further measures for data protection-compliant design, e.g. suitable objection options.

The state representative assumes that Apple will keep the promises made and will process any requests for deletion/pixelation properly and quickly. Otherwise, supervisory action may be required.

Further information: Data protection information from Apple on the camera movements Answers to frequently asked questions in this context

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