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Can environmental information advance climate and environmental protection? Kugelmann: Democratic processes are based on freely accessible knowledgeThe International Day for Universal Access to Information takes place on September 28th every year. The State Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (LfDI) Rhineland-Palatinate, Professor Dieter Kugelmann, declares on today's Freedom of Information Day: ©

LfDI "Years ago, a promise was made in Rhineland-Palatinate to make state action more transparent and to proactively publish information on the state's transparency platform. That promise is now being fulfilled. The country's transparency platform will be fully available from January 1, 2021. Bodies subject to transparency, such as municipalities, will then have to publish a range of environmental information. It will be exciting to see whether the publications can advance environmental and climate protection and what benefits they bring to environmentalists."Kugelmann emphasizes: "Freedom of information is an important building block so that the trust of citizens in government action can grow In a democracy, the success of measures depends on citizens feeling informed and being able to understand the actions of the government administration.Especially in times of uncertainty and in times of misleading reports, for example from deniers of the climate crisis, it is of It is of great importance that reliable information becomes widely public. Freedom of information serves to objectify the debate. Democratic processes are based on freely accessible knowledge."On Freedom of Information Day, September 28, 2020, the LfDI organized an online discussion forum. The focus was on the following questions, among others: How can access to environmental information advance environmental protection? What challenges do public authorities face? What new opportunities are opening up for journalists? The discussion was moderated by Professor Kugelmann. Among others, the following took part: Dr. Thomas Griesse, State Secretary in the Ministry for the Environment, Energy, Food and Forestry of the State of Rhineland-Palatinate; Sabine Yacoub, State Chairwoman BUND Rhineland-Palatinate; Mathilda Kähler, representative of the "Fridays for Future Germany" movement, and Dr. Felix Zimmermann, ZDF legal department. Sabine Yacoub said environmental information of all kinds plays an important role in the work of environmental and nature conservation organizations. The publication of the data without having to be asked means that both experienced environmentalists can save time and effort and that it is easier for new activists to get started. However, the transparency platform is often not yet known even among active environmentalists.Dr. Felix Zimmermann said that transparency platforms,

in which authorities actively published information, were an important step towards greater freedom of information for citizens. However, it depends on the design. "Experience with such platforms in Hamburg, for example, indicates that finding information is often not easy," said Zimmermann. There is also the question of legal remedies and consequences if information is not posted on the portal despite the transparency obligation. In general, there is always a risk of apparent transparency if, because of the existence of the transparency portal, citizens assume that the publication is complete, but important information is being withheld - for example because of reference to company and business secrets. Posting on a transparency portal can also lead to an illusion of transparency if important information is "hidden" there, but the respective ministries themselves do not go public with it offensively, for example in press releases. The International Day of Freedom of Information ("International Day for Universal Access to Information") takes place every year on September 28th. It was launched by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2015 and officially recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in October 2019.

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