

Farewell from the office of the HmbBfDI

Photo by Miguel Ferraz

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tenure

End of the second and last term of office of Prof. Dr. John Caspar

After two terms of office, Prof. Dr. Johannes Caspar as Hamburg Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information. He was appointed by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg in May 2009 and re-elected for a second term in 2015. According to its own announcement, the city council will decide on his successor in August. Until then, the authority will be headed by his deputy Ulrich Kühn on an interim basis.

Central developments in the field of data protection occurred during Caspar's tenure: During this period, the final transition from the analog to the digital world took place, combined with rapid technological progress and an economization of personal data. Special highlights of a far-reaching change were the introduction of the GDPR as a uniform data protection standard in the EU, but also Edward Snowden's revelations about mass surveillance of news services without cause, and the events surrounding the companies Cambridge Analytica and Facebook.

Parallel to these developments, since 2012 the Hamburg Transparency Act has become a key impetus for the further development of freedom of information outside of Hamburg. The idea of a transparent state that not only opens up to its citizens upon request, but also actively provides information in the transparency portal, has since found many imitators. Transparency has become an essential feature of the digital democratic constitutional state.

Johannes Caspar on his tenure: "How we deal with information determines what our future will look like. This concerns information about people, but also access to information for people. Fake news, hate speech and a general distrust of government and politics can be reduced with general, unconditional access to official information, and abusive use of personal data, in particular for manipulating people, can be prevented through effective enforcement of data protection law.

The central challenge of ensuring informational integrity in times of digital upheaval can only be achieved together. To this end,

the independent control bodies must work together efficiently and unbureaucratically in both the national and European context. In political processes, it is important to recognize the opportunities that an independent way of dealing with information technology offers. Digital sovereignty and self-determination are more than just buzzwords. They must stand as guiding principles for an open, digital and humane Europe, which also requires a rethinking in the local area. Privacy and transparency are an integral part of the solution, not the problem. It is important to raise awareness of this.

I would like to thank all employees who have accompanied the team along the way with their incredible commitment, their creativity and their competence, for their great work. The last 12 years have been an exciting time in which we have achieved a lot together. All the best for the future and for all the important tasks that still lie ahead of us and will certainly not get any easier.”

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