

Thiel: Data protection must not fall behind when it comes to digitization

## Activity Report 2019

The State Commissioner for Data Protection (LfD) Lower Saxony, Barbara Thiel, calls in view of the increasing digitization in business, schools and administration not to lose sight of data protection. "The Corona crisis shows very clearly how much our society depends on a functioning digital infrastructure," said Thiel on Thursday at the presentation of her 2019 activity report in Hanover.

"In the future, mobile working and digital learning will take up more space in professional, school and university life than ever before. It will be all the more important to take due account of data protection," said Thiel. "Data protection does not prevent digitization. Rather, it makes digitization possible that not only takes into account what is technically feasible and economic gains, but also the interests of the citizens concerned."

Data protection is often at a disadvantage when it comes to consideration

Again and again, however, data protection is merely seen as an obstacle that needs to be removed. "If informational self-determination is weighed against another good, data protection is far too often at a disadvantage," criticizes Thiel. This was expressed particularly clearly in 2019 in the refusal of the Lower Saxony state government to deactivate its Facebook fan pages, although they could not currently be operated in accordance with the law.

"Data protection is not a luxury good, but a fundamental right that must be respected and defended," said the state data protection officer. This must be taken into account, among other things, when new laws and regulations are passed – even in times of crisis. "During the corona pandemic, my authority was often insufficiently or not at all involved in legislation, although this was urgently needed," says Thiel. "This is an extremely unsatisfactory state of affairs, which must by no means become permanent."

Ready for constructive and open exchange

The fact that data protection requirements can be reconciled with rapid and efficient legislation was shown in 2019, for example, in the procedures for amending or changing the Lower Saxony Prison Act and the School Act. "We are always ready for an open and constructive exchange," says the data protection officer. "In order for this to succeed, however, legislators and executives must also take data protection seriously and include it from the outset."

The full activity report 2019 as a PDF document.

