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Debate about video conferencing systems in schools - Big Blue Button has great advantages - use of US products is justifiable under certain conditions until the end of the school year A debate has flared up again these days about which video conferencing systems can and should be used in schools. The State Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (LfDI) Rhineland-Palatinate, Professor Dieter Kugelmann, comments on this Mainz is hosted, great advantages", says Kugelmann. "BBB is an open source solution, which allows it to be run under full, own control and on own systems. The transmission of usage data to third parties or their use for advertising purposes can be excluded."

When schools use non-European video conferencing software, on the other hand, various data protection problems arise. As a rule, transmission of telemetry and usage data cannot be avoided; it cannot be ruled out that data about who participated in a video conference, from where, for how long, with which device and in what way and which IP address was used, is used inappropriately.

Kugelmann says: "For data protection reasons, work should be done to ensure that all schools can access BBB from the start of the 2021/2022 school year. In view of the current exceptional situation and existing technical problems, it is justifiable for schools to use non-European video conferencing software in the current school year in order to fulfill the educational mandate. In view of the high-performance expansion of the Big Blue Button platform promised by the end of the school year, in order to give schools the option of distance teaching in the difficult pandemic situation, there are concerns about continued use by schools of MS teams and comparable solutions from the US Provider on hold for the time being."

The temporary use of American video conferencing systems is acceptable if the following points are observed:

- Solutions from US providers that are already in use must be operated on the school's own systems, or if a service provider is used as part of order processing in accordance with Article 28 of the General Data Protection Regulation, the conference data must be processed on systems from German or European providers. In addition, the solutions must be configured in a data-saving manner and used with pseudonymised access data assigned by the school. The use of usage data for advertising purposes is contractually excluded (§103 General School Rules).
- Users must be informed in accordance with Article 13 GDPR.
- The option provided for in Section 1, Paragraph 6 of the Schools Act to provide for the mandatory use of digital teaching and

learning materials has been waived. If parents, students or students expressly object to the use of American software products, equivalent courses will be made available.

More information:

- Orientation guide for video conferencing systems of the data protection conference of the federal and state governments
- PM of the LfDI RLP from 17.11.2020

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