

# The German foundation for privacy and data protection - A new approach

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## A. Motivation

Personal data is valuable. But today, still a majority does not have a clear picture of the worth of information on their personal life. We want to change that. We believe that informed data subjects should – and can – act in a sovereign and confident way when it comes to divulge details of private life.

At the same time some recent views on how to protect privacy the best bear a perspective that is too narrow. Some classic dogma show deficits in practice and seem to lose compatibility with digital natives' way of life. The foundation's policy shall be open; we want to think further. Questions are: How should data protection be designed in order to become both more attractive and effective? What can bring privacy issues closer to everyday life?

It is just too often, that discussions end in confrontation and in mere exchange of views. Discourse on privacy and its future has to step forward and concentrate on efficient and pragmatic solutions. Even more it has to reflect social reality. In order to bring forward privacy and its legitimate and indispensable protection people have to be won over for it.

## B. Background

The STIFTUNG DATENSCHUTZ (Foundation for Data Protection) was founded by the Federal Republic of Germany in 2013 as a non-profit/charitable incorporated foundation, based in Leipzig, Saxony. Acting independently and neutrally in the field of data protection information, the federal foundation acts as a hub between politics and public, researchers and enterprises.

STIFTUNG DATENSCHUTZ shall promote self-data protection and the continuous education of individuals to actively protect their personal information. We support and supplement the existing organizations and initiatives and also liaise closely with the German data protection authorities on state and federal level.

The Foundation is managed by its president and overseen by an honorary supervisory board. A majority of the five board members are independent scientists holding chairs in German and Austrian universities. The foundation's structure is complemented by the honorary advisory board which members represent a wide range of public institutions and trade associations, as well as the parties in the German Federal Parliament.

### **C. Basic Research and Discourse**

- How can privacy be protected under future challenges ?
- How can Big Data be utilized without compromising individual privacy ?
- How can supply and demand concerning data protective/privacy-friendly products and services be increased ?

There is no shortage of open questions with regard to the future and implementation of informational self-determination. The age of Big Data is giving rise to tremendous challenges. Technological progress leads to changes in peoples' lives and communication. There is a constant and growing demand for effective and sustainable measures of privacy protection. We want to address upcoming privacy themes with a tight focus.

As an open platform STIFTUNG DATENSCHUTZ wants to expedite the essential discourse on privacy between politics, the public, researchers and businesses. The aim of this think tank-work is to find measures for the protection of privacy which are as future-proof as possible. We will also support scientific research and interdisciplinary projects in the field of privacy protection. Result should be a better practical implementation of data protection theories. The Foundation will develop viable proposals and practical recommendations.

### **D. Education and Sensitization**

To raise needful awareness on the value of privacy and personal information is of utmost concern for STIFTUNG DATENSCHUTZ. Self-protection of data gains more and more importance in the face of rapidly developing technical means to collect and combine personal data. Citizens also shall be aware of their rights and shall be able to exercise them as well.

The legal principle of data austerity and minimization gains importance for individuals' online behavior. It can be practiced by a simple method: Everyone wanting to reveal details of his private life should do so – but always in a moderate way and never uninformed. Acting circumspectly in the digital environment lays in the hands of each user.

Doubtlessly the state has to carry out its duty to establish an effective and enforceable legal framework. But public authorities will never be able to substitute personal responsibility in daily digital life. They cannot simply order data subjects to act cautious concerning their data. Proper protection of personal rights therefore requires joint public and private efforts.