

FIZ Karlsruhe
Leibniz Institute for Information Infrastructure

FIZnews

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When are data truly anonymous?

Karlsruhe, November 23, 2026 — How can one determine whether a dataset allows for the identification of specific individuals? This question is addressed in the draft guidelines on anonymization, which the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) adopted on July 7, 2026, and released for public consultation.

On October 29, 2026, researchers from various disciplines and institutions in Germany submitted a joint statement. Stephanie von Maltzan, Thilo Gottschalk, and Patrick Brunner from FIZ Karlsruhe were also involved.

The researchers welcome the explanations regarding anonymization in compliance with data protection regulations and suggest clarifying the draft in several places. One suggestion concerns the technical review: In their view, the decisive factor should be whether information about individual persons can be derived from the data. The group also recommends describing in greater detail how the risk of identification should be assessed and what methods could realistically be used for this purpose. When it comes to handling scientific data, the researchers suggest taking into account established anonymization procedures in research data management.

The statement is available at: Response to the Public Consultation on the EDPB Guidelines 02/2026 on Anonymisation | Zenodo

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