

Data protection and ethical concept for surveys with i-konf

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Please note: This document is an English translation of the German document "Datenschutz- und Ethikkonzept für die Befragungen mit i-konf". It describes the situation for Germany and might need to be adapted for other participating countries.

Relevant documents

This concept refers to the following basic documents and handouts:

1) EU General Data Protection Regulation of 2018

The GDPR can be found, for example, at: <https://gdpr.eu/>

2) RatSWD 2020: Council for Social and Economic Data (2020, 2nd edition): Handreichung Datenschutz. 2nd completely revised edition. RatSWD Output 8 (6). Berlin, German Data Forum (RatSWD). Online: <https://doi.org/10.17620/02671.50>

(Note: An English version can also be found at the given Internet address).

The RatSWD was set up by the BMBF and advises the Federal Government and the governments of the Länder on research issues relating to data use.

3) ADM 2021: Arbeitskreis Deutscher Markt- und Sozialforschungsinstitute ADM e.V. (2021): Guideline for the interviewing of infants. Online:

<https://www.adm-ev.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RL-Minderjaehrigen-neu-2021.pdf>

4) Vote of the Ethics Committee of the EH Ludwigsburg of 21.01.2021 and 08.03.2021

Background

In the research project "i-konf – feedback-supported quality development of confirmation work", the feedback tool "i-konf" is being developed with which congregations can obtain feedback (via smartphone) from the confirmands. For this purpose, a questionnaire will be developed and tested according to scientific criteria. In a basic study in 2021/2022, it will be used in about 700 congregations in Germany as well as in congregations in the 9 European partner countries. After the development phase, the tool will be available for self-evaluation of confirmation work: Those responsible in the congregations use the standardised questionnaire and give it (for example via QR code) to the young people to answer, who then complete the questionnaire on their smartphones. The results are directly available to the local congregations for feedback-supported quality development. In addition, the data from the basic study will be evaluated by the research team in 2021/2022 and published as the third international study on confirmation work in Europe.

The project builds on the first empirical studies on confirmation work which have been conducted nationwide and internationally since 2007, and is jointly coordinated by Prof. Dr Wolfgang Ilg (EH Ludwigsburg) and Prof. Dr Henrik Simojoki (HU Berlin). The project is advised by GESIS, the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (also on data protection issues and item formulations). The online tool "i-konf" is developed by the company Cosmoblond (Berlin, Germany), together with "i-EVAL", a similar tool for youth camps and international youth encounters (which is why the funding for the online tool is shared with the BMFSFJ). The i-konf project is financed by all the regional churches of the EKD as well as the 9 European partner countries. The Comenius Institute Münster and the representatives for confirmation work of all regional churches (ALPIKA KA) support the project. It is accompanied by an advisory board. Further information can be found at www.konfirmandenarbeit.eu.

As in previous studies on confirmation work, the respondents are full-time and voluntary staff on the one hand and confirmands on the other. There are two survey periods: t1 at the beginning of the confirmation (in autumn before confirmation), t2 shortly before confirmation, i.e. in spring or early summer. The confirmands are 13 or 14 years old at the time of the survey.

The ethics committee of the EH Ludwigsburg has examined the concept presented here and on 8 March 2021 informed in a statement that it considers the "implementation to be ethically unobjectionable".

This assessment is based on the following regulations:

1) No personal data will be collected

The collection of data must always be carried out with a high degree of sensitivity. This is particularly the case when personal data is involved. Therefore, personal data will not be collected in the surveys with i-konf.

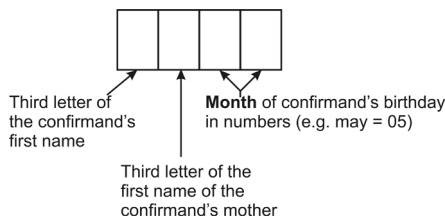
According to Art. 4 No. 1 GDPR, "'personal data' means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person".

Data are therefore always considered personal if they can be assigned to a natural person (possibly also with a certain amount of effort). If such an assignment is made impossible due to the anonymisation of the data, it is not personal data (cf. RatSWD 2020, 9). The GDPR does not apply to non-personal data.

In the studies on confirmation work, neither the name nor the contact details of the respondents are collected. The IP address of the end device used is also not stored. However, certain socio-demographic questions are included, the combination of which could lead to conclusions about certain people. These are the following questions (the indication CM... denotes the respective item code):

- CM01: Gender
- CM02: Age
- CM05: Are you baptised?
- CM07: Type of school
- CM32: Were both your parents born in Germany?
- CM13: Are you attending religious education classes this school year?

In addition, the 2021/2022 survey asks for an anonymous code (CM14) as shown. The purpose of the anonymous code is solely to establish an allocation of questionnaires between the surveys t1 and t2. Such a code will not be included in the i-konf tool after the study has been carried out, as the tool does not allow a direct allocation of questionnaires between t1 and t2.



With the conception of the project presented here, it is achieved that no personal data is available at any point. For this purpose, different levels have to be distinguished: The level of the locally responsible persons (1) and the level of the overall research-based evaluation (2).

1) The survey is carried out with the tool i-konf. This tool enables those responsible for the local confirmation group (and, if used, the umbrella organisations created by them, for example a local association of church congregations) to directly evaluate the data collected. The online tool i-konf is programmed in such a way that the above-mentioned data is only evaluated univariately, but cannot be assigned to specific answers. If you have a group with 15 boys and one girl, you will receive statistics

on the gender distribution, but no allocation of the answers to the gender of the respondents. It is therefore impossible to identify the questionnaire answers of the one girl.

2) For the research-based evaluation, the total data collected will be made available to the research team in the form of a csv file, which also contains the socio-demographic data. This data will be analysed in a data set with probably about 10,000 interviewed confirmands. Even by combining all the above-mentioned data, it is not possible to draw conclusions about a specific person, especially as the scientific management only has the contact details of the responsible group leaders, but at no time the names of the individual confirmands (the young people are only approached via the group leaders and not directly).

Technical and organisational measures are taken to ensure that the congregations cannot be linked with the returned answers of the respondents from the congregations, or only with excessive effort. In particular, the names and contact details of the participating parishes will not be made available to anyone outside the context of the project.

This approach to anonymising the data is in line with the considerations of the GDPR as set out in recital 26 GDPR, sentences 5+6:

"The principles of data protection should therefore not apply to anonymous information, namely information which does not relate to an identified or identifiable natural person or to personal data rendered anonymous in such a manner that the data subject is not or no longer identifiable. This Regulation does not therefore concern the processing of such anonymous information, including for statistical or research purposes."

2) Active consent from the parents is obtained

The GDPR stipulates the need for consent only for the case that personal data are processed. Since the project does not involve personal data in the sense of the GDPR, the GDPR provisions do not apply. Therefore, from a data protection perspective, consent to the processing of personal data is not initially required.

However, it is sensible and necessary that the principle of "informed consent" is nevertheless applied in the surveys. At the beginning of the survey, respondents are informed that participation is voluntary. In addition, detailed information is given about the framework in which the survey takes place, how it is evaluated and what purpose it serves. For this purpose, extensive information about the research project, the use of data and the complete questionnaires are provided at <https://konfirmandenarbeit.eu/informationen-fuer-befragte/> before the survey begins. Confirmands and parents can therefore obtain comprehensive information here at any time. Parents in Germany will receive the following information:

In order to ensure and improve the quality of confirmation work, the confirmands should have the opportunity to give feedback at the beginning and end of their confirmation time. The online tool "i-konf" is used for this purpose, where questions are answered via a mobile internet page, for example about the experience of the confirmation time, but also about the life background of the young people (age, type of school, family, etc.). Those responsible for the local groups of confirmands can call up the group results directly; in addition, the overall data is evaluated nationwide and internationally. It is not personal data, because no answer can be assigned to a specific person. The data is stored on a German server and all legal requirements are observed. The project leaders Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Ilg (Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg) and Prof. Dr. Henrik Simojoki (Humboldt University Berlin) are jointly responsible for the data collection. Contact details, questionnaires and further information are available at www.konfirmandenarbeit.eu. No one is obliged to complete the survey. If you do not agree to your child taking part in the survey, you can tell the person in charge of the confirmation group (if necessary also after giving consent) or you can tell your child that he or she will simply not take part in the survey - filling in the questionnaire is optional at any time.

The consent of the respondents is collected at the beginning and can be terminated at any time. However, it is not technically possible to subsequently delete data that has already been sent, as once sent there is no longer any possibility of attributing it to the respondent.

Since the confirmands are mostly under 14 years of age, at least at the time of the survey t1, the consent of the parents or legal guardians is also obtained for the survey. The participating parishes can either

integrate this consent into the registration form or a parent information letter with a feedback option, or they can use a form provided by the project management. The parishes archive the consent forms on site so that the project management does not know the names of the participants (which are included on the forms) in the interest of data economy.

In the i-konf project, in addition to the confirmands, employees are also interviewed, some of whom are not yet adults. Here too, no personal data is collected. Since all staff members are trained to work as staff members in confirmation work, it can be assumed that they have the capacity to consent to the extent that information to the parents of the staff members can be omitted.

3) Common data controllers for are designated

As mentioned above, the survey itself does not generate any personal data. However, a different situation arises for those responsible for the groups (mostly pastors). To access i-konf, valid email addresses must be provided. In addition, contact data such as names, addresses or telephone numbers are collected for contacting the persons in charge, whereby this is publicly accessible data of the pastors of the parishes. With regard to these group leaders, personal data is therefore stored, so that the GDPR applies here. All requirements of the GDPR are met here, and detailed information concerning the data from German parishes is also provided for this group of persons at <https://konfirmandenarbeit.eu/informationen-fuer-befragte/>.

For data processing according to the GDPR, data controllers must be named. Article 4 No. 7 of the GDPR states: "'controller' means the natural or legal person, public authority, agency or other body which, alone or jointly with others, determines the purposes and means of the processing of personal data" (cf. RatSWD 2020, 20).

The jointly responsible persons in this sense for i-konf are the two project leaders, namely:

- Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Ilg, Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg.
- Prof. Dr. Henrik Simojoki, Humboldt University Berlin.

They decide on the purpose and means of data processing, which includes the commissioning and cooperation of auxiliary persons (e.g. academic staff) or external processors (e.g. IT service providers involved).

According to Art. 26 of the GDPR, joint responsibility is possible, provided that it is specified in a transparent manner how the obligations of the GDPR will be fulfilled. In the i-konf project, all obligations are fulfilled jointly by the two named responsible parties. The joint responsibility is communicated to the respondents in accordance with Art. 13 GDPR by providing the following information:

The project leaders, who can be contacted as follows, are jointly responsible for the data collection of data in the German project:

- Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Ilg, Protestant University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg, Paulusweg 6, 71638 Ludwigsburg, email: w.ilg@eh-ludwigsburg.de
- Prof. Dr. Henrik Simojoki, Humboldt University Berlin, Burgstraße 26, 10178 Berlin, email: henrik.simojoki@hu-berlin.de

General information on data protection and the address of the data protection officer at EH Ludwigsburg can be found here: <https://www.eh-ludwigsburg.de/links/datenschutz/>.

Information on the storage of data from the i-konf system and data protection information on i-konf are available at www.i-konf.de.