

Declaration of Cooperation

Participation in the knowledge of public entities is a civil right of the information society. Without discrimination, any person must be allowed access to the documents of public agencies. A transparent public administration, open to citizen participation in its decisions, is a prerequisite of a modern democratic society.

The Information Commissioners and Ombudsmen who secure freedom of information in their home countries are obligated to preserve and respect these basic principles.

In order to foster a broader, worldwide public awareness of freedom of information, to further analyse and define its vital elements, and to benefit from an exchange of experience, the undersigned agree to a continuous cooperation in the

International Conference of Information Commissioners.

Berlin, 7 April 2003

**International Conference of Information Commissioners
Founding Session on 7 April 2003, Berlin – Germany**

- Minutes -

On invitation of the Commissioners for Data Protection and Freedom of Information of the States of Berlin and Brandenburg, Professor Dr. Hansjürgen Garstka and Dr. Alexander Dix information commissioners from all over the world met for the first time on 7 April 2003 in Berlin, Germany. They represented 16 institutions from 11 nations (see list of participants in the attachment).

Under the chair of Professor Garstka the commissioners shared their experiences in the implementation and exercise of freedom of information regulations. Each institution as well as their corresponding legal framework were presented. The presentations illustrated the different approaches due to historical and political circumstances as well as legal traditions in the participating countries.

The participants agreed to form a continuous cooperation. For this purpose, a *Declaration of Cooperation* was signed in the afternoon session. The wording of this declaration is as follows.

“Participation in the knowledge of public entities is a legal right of the information society. Without discrimination, any person must be allowed access to the documents of public agencies. A transparent public administration, open to citizen participation in its decisions, is a prerequisite of a modern democratic society.

The Information Commissioners and Ombudsmen who secure freedom of information in their home countries are obligated to preserve and respect these basic principles.

In order to foster a broader, worldwide public awareness of freedom of information, to further analyse and define its vital elements, and to benefit from an exchange of experience, the undersigned agree to a continuous cooperation in the International Conference of Information Commissioners.”

The declaration was signed by representatives from the following institutions:

- Information Commissioner of Canada
- Information and Privacy Commissioner / Ontario, Canada
- Commission d'accès à l'information du Québec, Canada
- Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate
- Commission d'accès aux documents administratifs, France
- Berliner Beauftragter für Datenschutz und Informationsfreiheit, Germany

**International Conference of Information Commissioners
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- List of participants -

Michèle Puybasset	La Présidente Commission d'accès aux documents administratifs France
Graham Smith	Deputy Information Commissioner, United Kingdom
Fintan Butler	Senior Official, Information Commissioner, Ireland
José Renato Gonçalves	Member of Comissao de Acesso aos Documentos Administrativos, Portugal
John M. Reid, P.C.	Information Commissioner of Canada
Jennifer Stoddart	La Présidente Commission d'accès à l'information du Québec
Kjell Swanström	Chief of Staff, Parliamentary Ombudsman, Sweden
Leon Wessels	Commissioner, South African Human Rights Commission
Alison Tilley	Centre Manager, Open Democracy Advice Centre, South Africa
Attila Péterfalvi	Parliamentary Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, Hungary
Signe Plumina	Director of Datu valsts inspekcija Latvia
Maris Rukers	Advisor to the Director of Datu valsts inspekcija Latvia
Hillar Aareleid	Director General Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate
Erki Põdra	Head of Analyses and Development Dept., Estonian Data Protection Inspectorate
Brian Beamish	Director, Policy & Compliance, Information and Privacy Commissioner/Ontario, Canada
Helmut Bäumler	Landesbeauftragter für Datenschutz, Unabhängiges Landeszentrum für Datenschutz Schleswig-Holstein, Germany
Alexander Dix	Landesbeauftragter für den Datenschutz und für das Recht auf Akteneinsicht Brandenburg, Germany
Hansjürgen Garstka	Berliner Beauftragter für Datenschutz und Informationsfreiheit, Germany
David Gill	Referent, Berliner Beauftragter für Datenschutz und Informationsfreiheit, Germany

- Landesbeauftragter für den Datenschutz und für das Recht auf Akteneinsicht Brandenburg, Germany
- Unabhängiges Landeszentrum für Datenschutz Schleswig-Holstein, Germany
- Parliamentary Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, Hungary
- Datu valsts inspekcija, Latvia
- Comissao de Acesso aos Documentos Administrativos, Portugal
- South African Human Rights Commission
- Parliamentary Ombudsman, Sweden
- Information Commissioner, United Kingdom

The participants agreed that additional information commissioners will be informed about the outcome of the conference and will be invited to join the International Conference of Information Commissioners.

On behalf of the South African Human Rights Commission, Commissioner Leon Wessels invited the Conference to hold the next meeting in 2004 in South Africa. The Information Commissioners of Canada and the United Kingdom also expressed willingness to host future conferences.

The meeting concluded with a dinner co-hosted by the European Academy for Freedom of Information and Data Protection and the Bertelsmann Foundation. The Mayor of Berlin and Senator for Justice, Ms. Karin Schubert, greeted the conference as a guest-speaker.