



Finland: DPA launches tool for companies to demonstrate accountability

By Asta Puraite

The Finnish Data Protection Ombudsman (DPO) released - on 24 April 2012 - an accountability tool entitled the 'Data Balance Sheet' (DBS) which aims to help companies and public bodies assess their data processing practices. The DBS encourages companies and public bodies to be transparent by disclosing information on their data practices in a structured and detailed way. Through a voluntary DBS, companies should disclose information demonstrating compliance, which can be verified by an independent internal or external auditor.

"Composing the DBS is not mandatory under Finnish law, but one central aim behind the Data Protection Ombudsman's guidelines seems to be helping data controllers to prepare for the proposed changes under the European data protection rules", Jukka Lång, Senior Associate at Dittmar & Indrenius, told DataGuidance. "The DBS guidelines are likely to challenge companies to already look through and to develop their data management processes and policies, and future-proof them from the perspective of the principle of accountability set forth in the EU Commission's proposal."

The DBS outlines potential functions of the DBS, such as reporting, monitoring and developing data processing practices. The specific content of the DBS will depend on the specific practices within a company or public body.

Lång said: "It is probable that companies trying to follow the guide will find it difficult to decide how comprehensive the DBS should be, and whether all this information can be available to the public. I believe that many companies starting to draft their own DBS might find it necessary to keep certain information confidential, for example information relating to internal auditing of the company and enforcement activities. In these cases, it would be possible to maintain two versions of the DBS, one public and another (more comprehensive) used only internally."

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