

Privacy policy

Institute for Development Strategy GmbH · Version October 2026

1. Summary

The Institute for Development Strategy (IfDS) is a small research and evaluation consultancy in Munich. We process personal data to communicate with clients, partners and colleagues, to carry out evaluation and research projects, to meet our legal obligations, and to run our website. We do not sell personal data. We do not use it for advertising, and we do not track visitors to our website.

This policy explains what data we process, why, on which legal basis, with whom we share it, how long we keep it, and what rights you have. It follows the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, in German: DSGVO) and the applicable German law.

2. Who is responsible

Controller within the meaning of the GDPR:

Institute for Development Strategy GmbH
Paul-Heyse-Straße 21a, 80336 München, Germany
Represented by its Managing Director, Dr. Markus A. Palenberg
Email: markus@devstrat.org
Phone: +49 89 46139236

We have not appointed a data protection officer. German law does not require this for a company of our size. Please send all data protection requests to the email address above.

3. Our website

Hosting and server log files

Our website is hosted by IONOS SE, Elgendorfer Straße 57, 56410 Montabaur, Germany. When you visit the website, the server automatically records technical information in log files: date and time of access, page or file requested, referring page, browser type and version, operating system and device type. IONOS anonymizes visitors' IP addresses in these log files. We need these data to deliver the website and to keep it secure. The legal basis is our legitimate interest in a secure and functioning website (Art. 6(1)(f) GDPR). IONOS keeps the log data for eight weeks and does not transfer them outside the EU. IONOS processes the data on our behalf under a data processing agreement.

Login protection

To protect our website against automated attacks, our web server records the IP address, the time and the username used in failed login attempts. We use these data only to block such attacks. They stay on our web server at IONOS in Germany and are not passed on to anyone. Failed attempts are counted for 24 hours, and blocks last up to 24 hours. We keep a list of blocked addresses only as long as needed to protect the website. The legal basis is our legitimate interest in a secure website (Art. 6(1)(f) GDPR).

Statistics

We use the statistics function of our hosting package, IONOS WebAnalytics. It evaluates the server log files described above in aggregated form. It does not use cookies. IP addresses are anonymized and used only to determine the approximate location of access. No profiles of individual visitors are created. The legal basis is our legitimate interest in understanding how our website is used (Art. 6(1)(f) GDPR).

Cookies and external content

Our website does not use cookies for tracking, analysis or marketing. It does not run third-party analytics or advertising tools, and it loads all content, including fonts, from our own server. It contains no embedded content from other providers, such as maps or videos.

Links

Our website links to other websites. We are not responsible for the data processing on those websites. Please read their privacy policies.

4. Email and other contact

When you contact us by email, phone, video call or at events, we process the data you share with us: usually your name, contact details, organization, role and the content of the communication. We use these data to respond and to maintain professional contact.

Where the contact relates to a contract or to preparing one, the legal basis is Art. 6(1)(b) GDPR. Otherwise it is our legitimate interest in professional communication and networking (Art. 6(1)(f) GDPR). We keep correspondence as long as needed for the purpose. Business letters and emails that are relevant for tax or commercial law are kept for the statutory periods (see section 10).

Our email is hosted by IONOS SE in Germany. For document storage and collaboration we use cloud services (see section 8).

5. Clients, partners and business contacts

We process the contact and contract data of clients, partners, subcontractors and suppliers to prepare and carry out contracts, to invoice, and to manage our business relationships (Art. 6(1)(b) GDPR). We process accounting and tax data because the law requires it (Art. 6(1)(c) GDPR). Our tax advisor receives the data needed for bookkeeping and tax returns.

We do not send newsletters or marketing emails. If this changes, we will only do so with your consent.

6. Evaluation and research projects

Most of our work consists of evaluations, studies and advisory assignments. In these projects we may process data about people we interview or survey, workshop participants, programme staff, and authors and stakeholders named in documents. The role we play determines who is responsible for the data.

Projects on behalf of clients

When we collect or analyze data for a client, the client usually decides on the purposes of the processing. In that case we act as the client's processor (Art. 28 GDPR) or under the client's own data protection framework, and the client's privacy information applies. We inform respondents at the point of data collection, for example in the invitation to an interview or on the first page of a survey, about who is responsible, the purpose, and their rights. Where we are an independent or joint controller, we say so at that point.

Our own research and publications

When we carry out research on our own initiative, IfDS is the controller. We collect only the data we need. We pseudonymize or anonymize data as early as possible. We publish results only in aggregated or anonymized form, unless a person has agreed to be named. The legal basis is consent (Art. 6(1)(a) GDPR) or our legitimate interest in scientific research (Art. 6(1)(f) GDPR, in connection with Art. 89 GDPR). We process special categories of personal data, such as health data, only with explicit consent (Art. 9(2)(a) GDPR).

Interviews, surveys and recordings

Taking part in our interviews and surveys is voluntary. We record interviews only with the consent of the person interviewed. Recordings are deleted once the notes or transcripts have been checked. Online surveys run on established survey services that process the data on our behalf (see section 8).

Project teams

We work with evaluators who are either employed or contracted by IfDS. In some assignments, IfDS itself is a subcontractor of a consulting firm. Team members receive only the data they need for their tasks. They are bound to confidentiality and to data protection obligations. Where we work as a subcontractor, the data protection terms agreed between the lead firm and the client also apply.

7. People who work with us

When you apply to work with us, or when you work for us as an employee or freelancer, we process the data needed to decide on and carry out the working relationship, including contract, payment and tax data (Art. 6(1)(b) and (c) GDPR, § 26 of the German Federal Data Protection Act). Application documents of unsuccessful applicants are deleted six months after the decision, unless the applicant agrees to a longer period.

8. Service providers and recipients

We use service providers in the following categories. They process personal data on our behalf under data processing agreements (Art. 28 GDPR). We name categories rather than individual providers, because the tools we use change over time. On request, we will tell you which providers we currently use.

- email and website hosting (IONOS SE, Germany),
- cloud services for document storage, collaboration and video calls,
- online survey tools,
- AI services (see section 9), and
- IT and software support, where needed.

Our tax advisor receives the data needed for bookkeeping and tax returns and is responsible for this processing under professional law.

We may also pass data to banks, public authorities and courts where the law requires it, and to clients and project partners where this is necessary for a project and permitted by law.

Transfers outside the EU

Some of our providers process data outside the EU, mainly in the USA, or allow access from there. We use such providers only if the European Commission has recognized an adequate level of data protection, for example under the EU-US Data Privacy Framework, or if the EU standard contractual clauses (Art. 46(2)(c) GDPR) have been agreed. You can request a copy of these safeguards from us.

9. Use of artificial intelligence

We use AI tools, such as AI assistants, to help with drafting and editing texts, structuring documents, and analyzing documents and data.

We enter personal data into an AI tool only if the provider processes the data on our behalf under a data processing agreement, does not use our content to train its models, and provides the safeguards described in section 8 for any transfer outside the EU. This also applies to pseudonymized data, that is, data that could still be linked to a person. We use other AI tools only with anonymized data or data without any personal reference.

We also follow these rules:

- We enter personal data into AI tools only when this is necessary for the task. Where possible, we remove names and other identifiers first.

- We do not enter special categories of personal data, such as health data, unless the person has consented or another legal basis applies.
- People review all AI-assisted results. We do not use AI to make decisions about individuals.
- Where a client restricts or prohibits the use of AI in a project, we follow the client's rules.
- We declare the use of AI in our reports and publications.

The legal basis is our legitimate interest in efficient and high-quality work (Art. 6(1)(f) GDPR), or the legal basis of the project in which the data are processed.

10. How long we keep data

We delete personal data when they are no longer needed for the purpose for which we collected them, or when you withdraw your consent and no other legal basis applies. Statutory retention periods take precedence. Under German commercial and tax law (§ 257 Commercial Code, § 147 Fiscal Code), accounting records, invoices and business letters must be kept for six to ten years, depending on the type of document. Project data are kept as agreed with the client, and otherwise for as long as needed to document our work and to defend against possible legal claims.

11. Your rights

You have the right to:

- obtain information about the data we hold about you, and a copy (Art. 15 GDPR),
- have incorrect data corrected (Art. 16 GDPR),
- have your data deleted (Art. 17 GDPR),
- have processing restricted (Art. 18 GDPR),
- receive your data in a machine-readable format (Art. 20 GDPR), and
- withdraw your consent at any time with effect for the future (Art. 7(3) GDPR).

Right to object. Where we process your data on the basis of our legitimate interests (Art. 6(1)(f) GDPR), you can object at any time on grounds relating to your particular situation (Art. 21 GDPR). We will then stop processing, unless we can demonstrate compelling legitimate grounds that override your interests, or the processing serves to establish, exercise or defend legal claims.

To exercise your rights, send an email to markus@devstrat.org.

You also have the right to lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority. The authority responsible for us is the Bavarian State Office for Data Protection Supervision (Bayerisches Landesamt für Datenschutzaufsicht, BayLDA), Promenade 18, 91522 Ansbach, Germany, www.lida.bayern.de.

12. Security

We protect personal data with technical and organizational measures that are appropriate for a small organization. These include encrypted connections, access limited to the people who need it, multi-factor authentication for our central cloud account, and confidentiality obligations for everyone who works with us.

13. Automated decisions

We do not use automated decision-making or profiling within the meaning of Art. 22 GDPR.

14. Changes

We update this policy when our processing or the law changes. The current version is available on our website. This version replaces the policy of May 2018.