

Access to information is part of freedom of expression, together with an active citizenry, and thus one of the preconditions for ensuring a vibrant and well-informed democracy. NGOs demand of the governments to respect and comply with their obligations following national and international standards.

[First Baltic Sea NGO Forum 2001](#)

**Submission to the Human Rights Committee
for Germany's List of Issues prior to Reporting,
123rd Session
CCPR
submitted by:**

Walter Keim, [participant](#) of the [Baltic Sea NGO Forum](#)
Opplandsveien 210
NO-4885 Grimstad, 1st June 2018



auf Deutsch: <http://wkeim.bplaced.net/files/if-dimr-pbt.htm>

123 session: Access to Information Law is missing in 3 German states

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 1. **Germany has to adopt access to informations (ATI) laws in all 16 federal states and improve federal ATI law to meet international standards**
 2. Withdraw reservation on Article 19 of CCPR
 3. The rank of CCPR in German law must be respected and should be improved.
 4. The recommendations of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, e. g. educate administration and judges in international law i. e. CCPR should be done.
 5. Judges should not be hired, promoted and supervised by the executive power i. e. [Resolution 1685 \(2009\)](#) and [Recommendation No. R \(94\)12](#) of the Council of Europe should be followed.
 6. CCPR, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights should be included in the Internet collection of the "laws of Germany" (www.Gesetze-im-Internet.de and <http://bundesrecht.juris.de>).
 7. The German Institute of Human Rights should monitor human rights in Germany.
 8. Defamation should be decriminalized.

I refer to the 6. report according to Article 40 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, reporting to the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) dated 31. March 2010 (1). The EU [Fundamental Rights Agency](#) suggested to contact the Council of Europe (2), answering a complaint on lack of Freedom of information in Germany (3). The GRECO (Group of States against corruption) did not observe that [access to informations laws are missing in 5 states in Germany](#) (N).

1. Access to public documents is a human right according to Article 19 CCPR

Freedom of [Information \(including access to public documents\)](#) is part of Article 19 the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Germany has signed.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression reported e. g. in [E/CN.4/1998/40](#), 28 January 1998 and [E/CN.4/2000/63](#), 18 January 2000 and [A/HRC/14/23](#) 20 April 2010 that access to public documents is a human right.

[UN, OSCE and AOS Special Mandates for Protecting Freedom of Expression confirmed in Joint Declaration of 6. December 2004](#), that access to [information is a human right](#): (4):

"The right to access information held by public authorities is a fundamental human right which should be given effect at the national level through comprehensive legislation (for example Freedom of Information Acts) based on the [principle of maximum disclosure](#), establishing a presumption that all information is accessible subject only to a narrow system of exceptions."

The "General Comment No. 34 on Article 19 of the ICCPR" confirms this (5):

"18. Article 19, paragraph 2 embraces a general right of access to information held by public bodies. Such information includes all records held by a public body, regardless of the form in which the information is stored, its source and the date of production."

"19.(...) States parties should also enact the necessary procedures, whereby one may gain access to information, such as by means of freedom of information legislation."

Germany tried to remove the human right of access to public documents and other human rights (13) from the [Draft General Comment No. 34 on Article 19 ICCPR](#) (see page 17 [reference 14](#)). Decriminalization of defamation and abolition of prison sentences (Article 49) is objected. Access to public documents is not considered a fundamental right according to the German Basic Law. The ICCPR has only the rank of a law. Therefore it is suggested to remove access to public documents from the ICCPR.

2. Three states (Länder) violate the human right of access to public documents

The states [Lower Saxony](#), [Saxony](#) and [Bavaria](#) have been informed several times about the human right access to public documents. However these states continue to violate this human right and access laws are not given (6).

The NGO "Bündnis für Informationsfreiheit in Bayern" has collected many examples of denial of access (10). [Reference 7](#) gives additional examples of denial of access to public documents.

The UN Convention against Corruption of 14. December 2005 has been ratified by 158 states. However [Germany could not ratify because bribery of members of parliament is not a criminal](#) act. This law would have to be given by parliamentarians itself.

The [Group of States against Corruption](#) (GRECO) of the Council of Europe [saw deficiencies combatting corruption in Germany](#) and made 2016 suggestions on transparency of financing of parties (K), because the federal parliament Bundestag had refused 2011 (see "Ausschussdrucksache 17(4)283 des Innenausschusses") to comment the suggestions [GrecoEval3\(2009\)3](#) with the majority of the governing coalition parties of CDU/CSU and FDP (M)

[More than 125 states with 5.9 billion](#) i. e. 84 % of the world population adopted either FOI laws or constitutional provisions (I). Citizens in 5 states in Germany with half of the population lack this human right.

3. The rank of the ICCPR is not respected in praxis

Paragraph 118 of the State report reads: "CCPR is part of German justice system as federal law. Therefore it is binding for federal states." But this is not respected by German administration and courts.

Therefore German courts may decide against human rights if there is a conflict, e. g. the highest Court in the German land [Rhineland-Palatinate LG Mainz \(1 QS 25/98\)](#) stated that the court can not give access to documents (as the European Convention of Human Rights would demand), because it is the parliament, which would have to give this right. This court expresses here that they are not allowed to do what human rights would say.

Internet pages "laws in Internet" (www.Gesetze-im-Internet.de and <http://bundesrecht.juris.de>) do not contain the CCPR. Therefore I have [28. April 2007 suggested](#) to add it together with other human rights covenant. The answer 14. July 2007 [says that the capacity was not big enough](#). It is difficult to believe this as reason.

Court cases [Walter Keim ./ Germany VG 2 A 85.04](#) and [VG 2 A 55.07](#) show that the Administrative Court of Berlin (Verwaltungsgericht Berlin), and the Higher Administrative Court (Oberwwaltungsgericht) and later the Constitutional Court ([Verfassungsgericht](#)) in cases [1 BvR 1981/05](#), [1 BvR 2565/05](#) and [1 BvR 238/09](#) that the human rights character of access to public documents of the CCPR is ignored (7). Many applications referring to the CCPR are denied without even discussion. This proves that the rank of CCPR being a law is ignored (7).

The ICCPR human right access to public documents is rejected by the German government, because it is considered no fundamental right of the German Basic law (constitution) (13).

The reservation on Article 19 CCPR restricts foreigners rights in Germany.

The federal law of Freedom of Information has too many exceptions and violates international principle of maximum disclosure. Comparison with laws from 111 other countries places [Germany on 105th rank](#), i. e. 5.9 billion people have better access laws(J).

4. Recommendations

The [Report of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe 2006](#) suggests to educate administration and judges in human rights e. g. CCPR (8). Unfortunately both the federal and local parliaments refused to consider this proposition (9).

Judges at administrative courts are hired, promoted and supervised by the executive power and are not independent according to Article 14 CCPR (11).

In approx. 50 States access to public documents is found in the constitution. Approx. [110 states have adopted access to information laws](#). In Europe basically Belarus and 5 German states are missing. After India in 2005, China in 2008, Russia in 2010 and Brazil soon (BRIC countries) adopt laws on access to information only some countries in Africa and the Middle East are missing.

In many states – e. g. for the European Convention of Human Rights - international conventions have a higher rank compared to laws e. g. Austria, Switzerland and Norway (12).

The Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe suggested to give the German Human Rights Institute the task to monitor human rights in Germany (F).

Recommendations summarized:

1. **Germany has to adopt access to informations (ATI) laws in all 16 federal states and improve federal ATI law to meet international standards**
2. Withdraw reservation on Article 19 of CCPR
3. The rank of CCPR in German law must be respected and should be improved.
4. The recommendations of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, e. g. educate administration and judges in international law i. e. CCPR should be done.
5. Judges should not be hired, promoted and supervised by the executive power i. e. [Resolution 1685 \(2009\)](#) and [Recommendation No. R \(94\)12](#) of the Council of Europe should be followed.
6. CCPR, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights should be included in the Internet collection of the "laws of Germany" (www.Gesetze-im-Internet.de and <http://bundesrecht.juris.de>).
7. The German Institute of Human Rights should monitor human rights in Germany.
8. Defamation should be decriminalized.

Yours sincerely,

Walter Keim

Copy: [Human Right Commissioner of the CoE](#), [Fundamental Rights Agency](#), [Ausschuss für Menschenrechte und Humanitäre Hilfe](#), German Institute for Human Rights, [OSCE](#)

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 12. Geiger, Grundgesetz und Völkerrecht, 5. Auflage, S. 160; Schweisfurth, Völkerrecht, S. 202; Nowak, CCPR-Commentary, Second edition, Art. 2, Rn. 55
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 14. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE. DISCUSSIONS ON DRAFT GENERAL COMMENT NO. 34- MEETING NOTES (18 MARCH – 24 MARCH 2011): <http://freedominfo.org/documents/HRCnotesMarch2011.pdf>
 15. X. Baltic Sea NGO Forum, Final Statement, WS III: Human rights: http://www.bsngoforum.org/files/Final_statement.pdf
1. We urge the CBSS to create an Ombudsman for Human Rights.

2. In each country of the Baltic Sea Region, there shall be installed independent national Human Rights Institutes according to the Paris principles.
 3. The workshop recommends that the Baltic Sea NGO Network oversee the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in each country of all the CBSS member states.
- 16.X. Baltic Sea NGO Forum: The role of international lawmakers and their respective influence on national legislation on access to information: <http://wkeim.bplaced.net/files/ATI-BSNF.htm>

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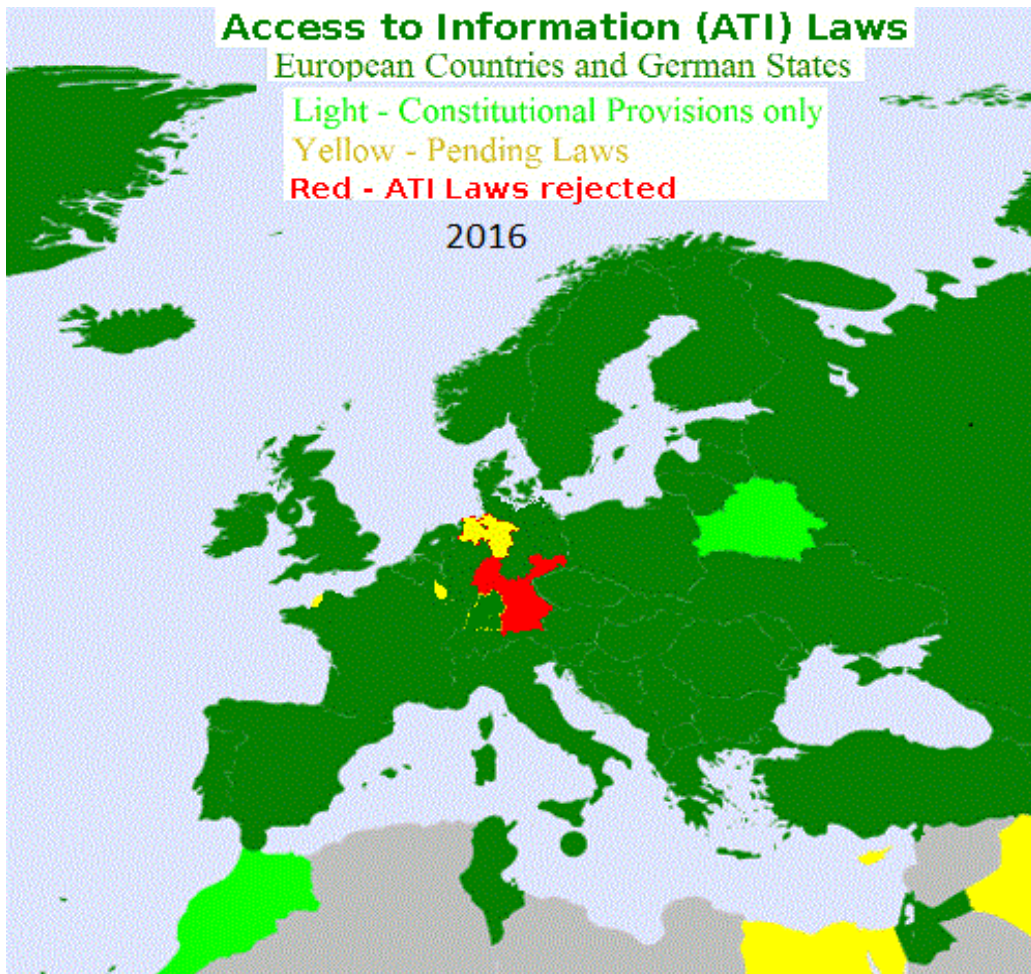
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- N. Keim, Walter (24. August 2012): GRECO failed in Second Evaluation Round and must therefore do better in Third Round: <http://wkeim.bplaced.net/files/foi-greco.htm>
- O. 30. August 2012: Mr. Frank La Rue, UN Special Rapporteur: 5 German states fail to respect human right of access to information, found for 84% of the worlds population

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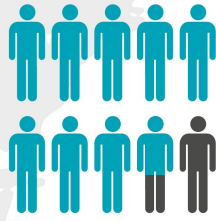
Colours on picture: dark green: FOIA enacted. Yellow: pending law. FOIA= Freedom of Information Act



The Right to Information around the World

88%

of the world's population lives in a country with an RTI law or policy



105

countries have adopted RTI laws



What is the right to information?

The right to information gives every person the right to obtain information, documents, or data from government bodies without having to give reasons



70

countries have joined the Open Government Partnership



Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters



include the right to information in their constitution

countries have joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

