

SAFE STORAGE OF CHILD PROTECTION JUDGEMENTS

Receiving files and de-identification

In the research projects we analyse written judgements from eight jurisdictions: Austria, Ireland, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Norway and Spain. The permissions to access judgements were given by The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) and by the Norwegian Data Protection Authority (Datatilsynet), and in some cases the courts of the individual countries as well as other authorities. We have strictly followed the procedures and regulations we have been given for collecting and storing confidential material. For each jurisdiction there were different access- and user agreements and thus there are differences between jurisdictions in terms of how we have collected and de-identified the judgements. All written judgements are stored in SAFE, which is the University of Bergen's secure solution for storage of sensitive material (described in detail below). All electronic correspondence containing de-identified information has been deleted, and all paper versions are kept in a lock safe in a locked office. In the following we present a brief description of the process and status for each jurisdiction.

Austria

All Austrian judgements were received by email, and they were all de-identified. The cases were checked and a further level of de-identification added by a Centre team member.

England

The English cases were downloaded from the publicly accessible database Bailii, and all judgements in this database are fully de-identified. We have also collected cases from two counties in England, and all these judgments were de-identified in court before they were copied and removed from the premises of the courts. This was done by the Centre's researchers on the court's premises, and some were brought to Norway in person, and some were sent via post.

Estonia

Judgments were received via e-mail encrypted so that they were accessible only by the Estonian researcher of the Centre with an Estonian ID card. The cases were kept encrypted in the private drive of the researcher until judgments had been de-identified by the Estonian researcher, and thereafter deleted. By requirements from the Estonian courts, the year the adoption judgement was decided and the case number were deleted from the documents before we received them.

Finland

Judgments were received via post and email. The judgements were sent to the Centre either directly from the courts or via a Finnish researcher who was explicitly asked by the courts to forward the judgments to the Centre researchers. All judgments had been de-identified before they were sent to us.

Germany

German judgments were received via e-mail and a few judgements were received via regular mail (de-identified). Only the researcher who signed the non-disclosure agreement with the court the judgements came from has had access to non-de-identified material, and they were de-identified before stored in SAFE.

Ireland

Irish newborn judgments were collected from the *Courts Service of Ireland*-website. Only publicly available judgments were used, which had been de-identified before publication. Judgments were downloaded directly from the Court Service's website. Irish adoption judgments are yet to be received (17.10.2019).

Norway

Newborn and adoption judgments were collected at the County Board in paper form and transported to the UiB in sealed envelopes by a researcher. The judgments were then scanned on an offline scanner and UiB's IT department transferred them to SAFE. They were stored in their full form, without any de-identification, and only a limited number of named researchers with permission from the *Norwegian Council for Personal Data Protection and Research* have access to them.

Spain

Judgments were sent to us via email, de-identified. A de-identification check was done by a Center member and all judgements were stored in SAFE.

Detail on the safe storage of sensitive information

Some files containing child protection judgements were at first stored for a period in the Centre's Dropbox (except for Norwegian judgements which were only stored in SAFE). The Centre has a Business Dropbox subscription, which has high levels of security (read more [here](#)). Only team members with the required permissions had access to the files. In June and July 2019 the files were copied to SAFE ("Sikker Adgang til Forskningsdata og E-infrastruktur", secure solution for sensitive data). SAFE is UiB's solution for storing sensitive data used in research, for more information please see [here](#). This was a carefully managed process ensuring that all files were transferred correctly and to the correct locations. A detailed description and logs for the process is in the Centre archive.

Within SAFE there are different servers, and within a server there are folders where one can restrict access. Only team members with the required permissions were given access. All adoption and newborn judgements were stored on one server, the adoption judgements from Norway were stored in an access-restricted folder on this same server. Newborn judgements from Norway were stored on a separate server from the rest of the judgements. All judgments are still stored on their respective servers as of today.

After the transfer to SAFE, all judgments and NVivo files containing judgments were deleted from the Centre's Dropbox and permanently deleted from Dropbox' backup system. A detailed log of this is kept in the Centre archive.

UiB has two backup systems for SAFE where backups of all files are stored. When running into issues with transferring files into SAFE, UiB's IT department was contacted.

NVivo is a data analysis program for qualitative and mixed-methods data, and we use it for analysing the judgements. The judgment files are uploaded into NVivo-projects, which are stored in SAFE together with the judgement files.

The company QDAtraining Ltd. is the Centre's support service when running into problems with NVivo, and when consulting them only NVivo files with publicly available judgement files were used (such as the English and Irish newborn cases, which were collected from the public databases).

All project members and associates have confirmed that they have deleted all documents that they may have received containing sensitive information. This included documents received via email, stored in Dropbox or otherwise electronically, and physical documents.

Renaming the judgements

New file names were assigned to judgement files to assure conformity when coding and also for further de-identification.

Newborn/adoption	Country	Nr	Separator	Year the case was decided*
N	AUT	XX	-	XX
A	ENG			
	EST			
	FIN			
	GER			
	IRL			
	NOR			
	SPA**			

* Year the case was decided (except for Estonian adoptions).

** SPA is not the official country abbreviation – but we use it regardless to have the files in the same alphabetical order as the tables later will be in.

Example:

- NAUT05-15
- AFIN13-17

Key

A password-protected name key was created, linking case numbers, old file names and new file names. This is stored in SAFE.

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