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Ombuds Office for crowdsourcing platforms established

Berlin – Crowd Guru has reached an agreement with seven other important crowdworking platforms, the German Crowdsourcing Association and IG Metall on the establishment of an ombudsman office. The ombudsman's office aims to settle disputes among crowdworkers, clients and platforms by mutual out-of-court agreement. The ombudsman's office is also responsible for monitoring adherence to voluntary commitment, the so-called "Code of Conduct", on which the participating platforms have agreed.

The Code of Conduct is signed by the German crowdsourcing platforms Testbirds, clickworker, Streetspotr, Crowd Guru, AppJobber, content.de, and Shopscout and by the British platform Bugfinders. In total the eight platforms count approximately two million worker registrations between them. The Crowdsourcing Code of Conduct is to date the only agreement in which online labor platforms voluntarily agree to hold themselves to minimum standards with respect to working conditions and relations between workers, clients, and platforms. The goal of the Code of Conduct is to codify the existing standards in Germany with respect to fair dealings with crowdworkers and to ensure that these standards are maintained as the market for crowd work grows.

The Ombuds Office board represents platforms and workers equally and its members are volunteers. Frankfurt labor judge Dr. Silke Kohlschitter will serve as the board's neutral chair. Representing platforms on the board will be a representative from the German Crowdsourcing Association (Deutscher Crowdsourcing Verband) and a representative from the platform Testbirds. (A representative from the platform content.de will act as deputy platform representative should the Testbirds representative be unavailable or recuse themselves in case of conflict of interest.) Representing workers will be a crowdworker as well as a representative of the German Metalworkers' Union (IG Metall).

Crowdworkers may file a case with the Ombuds Office via an online form; they are however first asked to attempt to resolve the case directly with the platform operator. The Ombuds Office will hear cases regarding monetary disputes as well as other matters, including for example platform work processes. Details of the cases will be kept confidential, but the Office will publish a yearly report about its activities.

Hans Speidel, Managing Director of Crowd Guru: "The interests of our crowdworkers have always been important to us. Through moderated forums, chats and our e-mail support we are in constant contact with them. We believe that communication solves many problems and often prevents them from arising in the first place. Should disputes arise, however, we see an independent ombudsman as the ideal authority for resolving them. We therefore fully support the work of the Ombudsman's Office."

Christiane Benner, Vice President of IG Metall, said: "We are convinced that good working conditions can be achieved on digital labor platforms. The Ombuds Office is a further step in this

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direction. Is it important to us that workers are directly involved in shaping their own conditions of work, so we are especially pleased that crowd workers are directly represented in the Ombuds Office board.”

Thomas Andersen, member of the board of the German Crowdsourcing Association, said in connection with the announcement: “In the future, more and more innovative services will be delivered by crowds. And crowd work is only one way of organizing work that will grow in the future but that we can shape today. In case of conflicts among the participants, it is better to let the involved parties handle the matter directly than to rely on laws that may not reflect the details of a given case. For this reason, solutions with the platforms have priority.”

About Crowd Guru

Founded 2008 in Berlin, Crowd Guru GmbH is one of the most experienced crowdsourcing service providers in the DACH region. More than 50,000 freelancers work on more than 30 million microjobs every year. Customers are supported in the areas of categorization, content moderation, content creation, machine learning, research, tagging, product data maintenance and individual solutions. For this purpose, a proprietary web-based technology is used, which enables individual tasks to be offered, completed and reassembled on the platform. Customers are mostly companies that regularly have to deal with large amounts of data that cannot be processed by computers. Managing Director is Hans Speidel. More information at www.crowdguru.de/en/

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