



Business Support on Your Doorstep

EU Alert

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6th November 2009

UK Told to Respect EU Rules on Data Protection

The Commission last week moved to the second phase of an infringement proceeding over the UK to provide its citizens with the full protection of EU rules on privacy and personal data protection when using electronic communications. European laws state that EU countries must ensure the confidentiality of people's electronic communications like email or internet browsing by prohibiting their unlawful interception and surveillance without the user's consent. As these rules have not been fully put in place in the national law of the UK, the Commission today said that it will send the UK a reasoned opinion.

"People's privacy and the integrity of their personal data in the digital world is not only an important matter, it is a fundamental right, protected by European law. That is why the Commission is vigilant in ensuring that EU rules and rights are put in place," said EU Telecoms Commissioner Viviane Reding.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1626>

Digital Dividend

As digital TV replaces our old analogue TV, four-fifths of the airwaves that used to carry TV broadcasts to our homes will be freed up. This means that they can be used for new, innovative services that use radio spectrum, from wireless internet and more advanced mobile phones to new interactive and high-definition TV channels. Remote regions could be big winners from this as wireless broadband could use the new spectrum to deliver high-speed internet to areas not yet reached by landlines. The Commission has set out plans for a coordinated distribution of spectrum that encourages investment and competition in these potential new services. If the allocation of the newly freed airwaves – the "digital dividend" – to new services is coordinated across Europe it could give the economy a boost of €20 to €50 billion. The plan for the realisation of the digital dividend's full potential involves the European Parliament and EU countries, reflecting the major part they have to play.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1595>

Better Functioning Food Chain

The Commission has agreed a Communication that aims to improve the functioning of the food supply chain in Europe. The recent sharp decline in agricultural commodity prices alongside persistently high consumer food prices has raised concerns on the efficiency of this crucial sector of the European economy. Improving commercial relationships between actors of the chain will be a significant step towards a more efficient food supply chain ultimately benefitting all actors of the chain and consumers alike.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1593>

The EU-India Summit to Focus on Climate Change, Energy & Trade

The European Union and India will hold their annual summit on the 6th of November in New Delhi. The Commission's delegation will be led by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, who will be accompanied by Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, as well as Catherine Ashton, Commissioner for Trade. This Summit will address major global issues such as climate change, energy security and fight against terrorism, besides regional issues. Furthermore, leaders will address questions of the international response to the global financial crisis as well as the reform of international financial institutions following the G20-Pittsburgh meeting. The Summit will underline the joint commitment to achieve progress in the negotiations on a bilateral trade and investment agreement.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1678>

Getting Better Access to Company Information

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on possible ways to enhance co-operation between business registers. The objective of the consultation is to improve access to business information and to increase legal certainty surrounding cross-border operations in the EU, which the Commission considers to be missing links in the Internal Market. Responses to this consultation will be taken into account in assessing the need for legislative or non-legislative initiatives in this area. The deadline for responses is 31 January 2010.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1677>

New EU-US Energy Council to Boost Transatlantic Energy Cooperation

A new EU-US Energy Council was launched on 4th November in Washington. The meeting brought together the Commissioners for Energy, Andris Piebalgs, External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner and Research, Janez Potočnik, with the US Secretary for Energy Steven Chu and US Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg to launch the EU-US Energy Council. The EU-US Energy Council will provide a new framework for deepening the transatlantic dialogue on strategic energy issues such as security of supply or policies to move towards low carbon energy sources while strengthening the ongoing scientific collaboration on energy technologies.

"The Energy Council is a timely initiative in the context of growing global concerns on energy security and the important role that the energy sector has in climate change. Elevating these discussions between us to a political level underscores the importance we both attach to this area of our relationship", said Commissioner Piebalgs.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1674>

Consumers to Start Benefiting from Easier Bank Account Switching from November

From 1 November 2009 consumers in the European Union should find it easier to switch their current account from one bank to another within their own Member State. This improvement is thanks to a set of 'Common Principles for Bank Account Switching' which was adopted by the European Banking Industry Committee (EBIC) last year and have now been implemented in the Member states by the national banking associations. From now on, whenever consumers wish to switch their current account to another bank, the new bank will offer its assistance throughout the switching process.

Internal Market and Services Commissioner McCreevy said: "I am pleased that national banking associations have taken their self-regulatory agreement seriously and worked to ensure that the Common Principles are ready to be applied by 1 November. We will be extremely vigilant to ensure that these Principles are effectively applied on the ground."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1667>

Direct Debit from Home Account to Pay Bills Anywhere in the EU

Europeans will be able to pay their bills by direct debit from anywhere in the EU. A scheme that lets companies withdraw payments directly from a customer's account in another EU country has been launched. Holiday home owners, students and retirees living abroad are among those who stand to benefit. Previously, Europeans could only pay its bills recurring services like utilities, phone and magazine subscriptions by direct debit if the company was in the same country as the customer's bank. But under the new scheme, more than 2,500 banks now offer direct debiting across national borders.

The new system, in which the 27 EU nations and five other countries (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Monaco) will participate, is an important step towards a truly integrated EU economy. This direct debit system is supported by new rules to ensure that it can be done as easily and securely from one country to another as at home.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9271>

Commission Provides €200 Million for Nearly 200 LIFE+ Projects

The European Commission has approved funding for 196 new projects under the second call for the LIFE+ programme (2007-2013), the European fund for the environment. The projects are from across the EU and cover actions in the fields of nature conservation, environmental policy, and information and communication. Overall, they represent a total investment of €431 million, of which the EU will provide €207.5 million.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9256>

Consultation: The Interconnection of Business Registers

The Commission has issued a Green Paper launching a public consultation on possible ways forward to improve access to information on businesses across the EU and more effective application of the company law directives. At the same time, the Commission has published a Progress Report on the interconnection of European business registers describing the current legal and factual situation of the access to information and co-operation between business registers.

All interested parties are invited to comment on the options set out in the Green Paper by 31 January 2010.

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2009/interconnection_of_business_registers_en.htm

Consultation: Creative Content in a European Digital Single Market

With this public consultation the Commission's services wish to launch a wide-ranging debate on how to develop vibrant online markets for goods and services protected by intellectual property rights. The consultation addresses the role of legal online markets and explores a variety of copyright management models that may induce a more rapid development of such markets.

All interested parties are invited to comment on the ideas raised in this reflection paper, and in particular on the "Possible Actions" outlined in Chapter 5 by - 5 January 2010 - in electronic format.

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2009/content_online_en.htm

If you have any queries about the EU Alert bulletin, or would like some more information about any of the topics in this edition, please contact Enterprise Europe West Midlands on 0121 455 0268

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