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"When it comes to data protection harmonization, it has to take place at the highest possible level. When it comes to data protection, we are not dealing with normal merchandise. We are dealing with fundamental rights of citizens." With these uncompromising words, Professor Spiros Simitis, Data Protection Commissioner for the Land of Hesse, Germany, introduced the data protection session at the joint EC/Council of Europe conference in Luxembourg on March 28th. Again, an EC directive on data protection was promised within a few months but without any indication of its precise content.

Dr. Walter Dohr, Director of Austria's Data Protection Office surprised participants with a more conciliatory approach to direct marketing than had been expected (see p.19). However, the European direct marketing industry is becoming increasingly sensitive to privacy developments and is attempting to offer a credible self-regulatory programme, for example, by linking the national organizations for those consumers who do not wish to receive direct marketing communications.

This issue includes a 1992 data protection scenario for credit information; we would welcome similar reports from other sectors. The tables of laws and bills have been completely revised this year.

We look forward to meeting you at our conferences on Managing Data Protection and Employee Relations: Planning for European Harmonization on June 14th in London; and at Cambridge on September 11th-13th. Please note our new telephone and fax numbers at the foot of the page.


Stewart Dresner, Publisher

In this issue:

- * Data Protection Roundup on 29 countries.....2
- * Belgium's new data protection bill.....8
- * Japan encourages business privacy policy.....11
- * Australia steps up enforcement.....13
- * New Zealand introduces new privacy bill.....16
- * Direct Marketing Feature on Fair Collection
 - Austria requires express consent.....19
 - UK Registrar clarifies opt in and opt out.....23
 - How NDL International wins consumer consent....26
- * A privacy/credit information scenario for 1992...31
- * Data protection laws and bills at a glance.....34
- * Privacy Laws & Business services.....36

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3 Central Avenue, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 5BT United Kingdom, Telephone: 081 866 8641
Fax: 081 868 2915, Messages: Telephone: 081 958 3155, Telex: 9312100310 TDG
VAT Registration No: 505 3809 59