

# PRIVACY LAWS & BUSINESS

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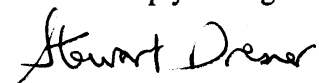
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In this issue, we focus on the European Union's telecommunications revised draft directive (p. 9) which will have an impact on all telecommunications users. Since 1990, it has played a subordinate role to the general data protection directive but with improvements is now ready for faster progress. It is an important element in the EU's policy for a European Information Society.

From this month, the EU, including Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden, are holding regular meetings at ministerial level with appropriate ministers from Central and Eastern European countries. The objective is to prepare these countries for EU membership by the end of decade. The following countries participate at these meetings: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Rumania. Slovenia is expected to join in the near future.

As a result, these countries will be brought into discussions on the EU's Information Society policy which includes data protection/privacy legislation as an essential component, as agreed by the EU Heads of Government at the Corfu summit in June this year. Those countries with existing data protection laws, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic (pp. 2-8), will ultimately wish to harmonise them with the EU's directive. The countries without such laws are more likely, from the start, to adopt legislation according to the EU framework data protection directive.

Companies ask us at *Privacy Laws & Business* for examples of the court cases and sanctions under data protection laws in European countries. They want to know the legal boundaries beyond which there will be a response from the supervisory authorities or from frustrated employees, leading to fines or damages. Some companies respond by looking at the widely differing laws in the countries where they operate and by developing a European compliance strategy. Managers' and employees' data protection guides, as well as corporate codes of conduct, are a usual and a useful part of companies' compliance programmes. Another vital element, often neglected, is adequate resources for staff training. We can help your organisation in all these areas.

  
Stewart Dresner, Publisher

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