

Privacy Laws & Business

NEWSLETTER

data protection and privacy worldwide

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Our 10th anniversary year has led me to reflect on changes in the international data protection law scene since 1987 which we have covered in the *Privacy Laws & Business Newsletter*.

The proliferation of national laws and spread of computers has led to a much *wider public awareness* of the need for protection of individuals' personal data. The widespread use of smart cards and video surveillance has helped this process. My conversations with managers suggest that the *climate within companies is changing*. Some have, in the past, regarded privacy laws as burdensome and/or unnecessary. They are now more likely to consider them as a useful model and stimulus to good management of personal data which can provide competitive and public relations benefits.

There is widespread realisation that *the regulatory tools of the 1970's and 1980's have decreasing effectiveness*, in particular, the requirement to complete detailed registration forms, in an era when almost every business processes personal data subject to the law. The Data Protection Authorities are less able to cope with assessing such an increasing mass of data. There is a trend towards seeking *effective partnerships between the regulatory authorities and others* who can help enforce privacy laws, for example, the use of labour inspectors in France and plans for auditors to check on compliance with European laws in the USA.

The Data Protection Authorities realise that the *limits to their resources and specialisation* mean that guidance or codes of conduct are becoming more common than legally binding rules for specific sectors, and are often negotiated with that sector. *New challenges all the time*, for example, the Internet and genetics, mean that the regulators must constantly be resourceful and creative in interpreting fundamental principles and seeking compliance with the laws in practical ways.

International co-operation between the Data Protection Authorities is increasing, especially as a result of the EU Data Protection Directive. The Directive will in many ways harmonise not only the data protection laws of the 15 EU Member States, but is also already having an impact on the EU's major trading partners, such as Canada, Hong Kong and the USA.

Our new brochure which we sent you in January provides an overview of our services in 40 jurisdictions. Our mission remains to track changing data protection and privacy laws worldwide. Thank you for helping sustain this information network.



Stewart Dresner, Publisher

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Data protection roundup of

39 jurisdictions:- Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guernsey, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jersey, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, UK, USA 2

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