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# EU Alert

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## European Commission Prepares New Negotiations with US on Transfer of Bank Data

The Commission today adopted a draft mandate for negotiating bank data transfers with the United States government under the Terrorist Financing Tracking Programme (TFTP). The Commission wants to complete an agreement this summer to limit gaps in security.

"Terrorism remains among the main threats that EU security has to face and we need to put in place tools that are up to the task, allowing for effective international cooperation" said Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, responsible for Home Affairs. She added "the programme we propose to sustain with this EU-US agreement on the transfer of financial messaging data proved its effectiveness in the past and I am confident that it will continue to do so, granting at the same time the highest possible level of protection for EU citizens' personal data."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/348>

## European Commission Goes Ahead to Bring Legal Certainty to Children and Parents in Cross-Border Marriages

An Austrian woman marries a British man in the UK. The couple lives for two years in Austria with their son. The husband then leaves and the wife wants a divorce. However, she doesn't know which law will apply to her divorce. Can she get a divorce under Austrian law or does UK law apply? Thousands of Europeans find themselves in such difficult situations each year because each EU country has its own system for deciding which country's law applies to divorces. The European Commission today proposed a concrete solution: a law that will allow couples to choose which country's laws apply to their divorce. The proposed EU Regulation will help couples of different nationalities, couples living apart in different countries or living together in a country other than their home country.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/347>

## EIB Support EUR 1bn in Energy Efficiency and Renewables

The European Commission and European Investment Bank (EIB) expect the European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA) facility launched in December to support more than EUR 1 billion of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in 2010. A first agreement with the province of Barcelona will be signed in April, it was announced at the launch of the EU's Sustainable Energy Week in Brussels. The EIB is currently in detailed discussions with 16 other cities or regions about their investment plans to increase energy efficiency and develop renewable energy.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/351>

## Commission Launches Consultation on how European Company Statute Works

The European Company Statute (SE) gives companies operating in more than one Member State the possibility to reorganise their cross-border business under one European label. This enables them to work within a stable legal framework, reduce the internal costs of operating in several countries and hence be more competitive in the Internal Market. The SE has proved to be very popular in some Member States but it has not taken off in others. In order to determine whether changes are needed to make the SE Statute work better; the European Commission has launched a public consultation. With the review of the SE Statute, the Commission is aiming to increase the use of the SE across the European Union.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/338>

## EU Studies its Consumer Policy

A recent EU survey found most consumers are unhappy with the bus and train services in their cities, with many also complaining about banking services and their power and gas companies. That is why services have been the focus of an EU conference on consumer policy this week

The two-day event European Consumer Summit was open to policy-makers, consumer advocates, industry representatives and other interested groups. For many, it was their first opportunity to meet with the EU's new commissioner for consumer affairs, John Dalli. The EU is trying to develop a common approach to consumer policy in Europe, both to protect consumers and to eliminate barriers that undermine trade. Products, services and sales tactics are becoming ever more sophisticated, presenting consumers with increasingly complex choices. Meanwhile European markets are evolving rapidly in response to electronic commerce (e-commerce) and the globalisation of trade.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9686>

## EU Innovation Slowed Down by Economic Crisis

European Commission has launched the ninth edition of the European Innovation Scoreboard, which shows how crisis has affected not only economy and employment, but also innovation across Europe, despite the efforts to make it a key issue on European recovery.

The ninth edition of the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) is out and preliminary data show that the economic crisis impacting Europe is also affecting the progress of innovation across the region. The majority of EU Member States may have posted stronger innovation performance results in 2008, but countries with lower innovation performance levels are likely to be responsible for reversing the convergence process that the EU has undergone in the last few years.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9684>

## Council Simplifies Rules on VAT Invoicing

Up till now, rules on invoicing value-added tax (VAT) have been so complicated that they have hampered the use of electronic invoices in trading across borders. To allow businesses to save expenses and ease administrative burdens, the Ecofin Council on 16 March reached a general agreement on a directive aimed at modernising VAT invoicing requirements

The Ecofin Council adopted a directive that will help businesses to simplify the procedure of VAT invoicing in their last meeting of 16th March. It is estimated that the new instrument can reduce the industry's charges by up to 18 billion Euros annually. This measure is part of the Better Regulation Strategy, aimed by the European Union. It is a core component of Europe's response to the economic and financial crisis.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9682>

## European Parliament Asks for a Tax on Financial Transactions

Plans should be developed for a global tax to discourage excessive risk-taking by financial institutions and ensure that the financial industry pays for the damage caused by the financial crisis, says Parliament in a resolution. If a worldwide tax proves unachievable, the EU could consider the option of going it alone, add MEPs.

Parliament asks the Commission to develop the transaction tax plan in time for the EU to present a common position to present to the G20 in June. The Commission is also asked to assess how such a tax could help stabilise financial markets and prevent a similar crisis by targeting "undesirable" transactions, which should be specifically identified by the Commission, says the resolution. The Commission and Council are urged to look at how the tax could be used to finance development co-operation and help developing countries to combat climate change, as well as at how the tax could contribute to the EU budget.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9667>

## EU on Track to Meet Renewable Energy Targets

The EU will surpass its target to consume 20 per cent of its energy from renewable energy by 2020, according to national forecasts submitted to the European Commission. In its summary published today, the Commission finds that the EU will reach an overall share of 20.3 per cent renewables.

Günther Oettinger, European Commissioner responsible for Energy said: "These forecasts show that Member States take renewable energy very seriously and are really dedicated to push their domestic production. It is an important milestone in the achievement of the goals set in the Europe 2020 Strategy. This is a very positive sign for the environment, as it will help us to cut CO2 emissions and at the same time enhance our energy security."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/265>

## Consultation: Universal Service Principles in Electronic Communications

DG Information Society and Media has launched a public consultation on future universal service principles in the area of electronic communications networks and services. A public workshop on this matter will be also held in Brussels on 30 March 2010.

This consultation is part of the European Commission's follow-up to its Declaration on universal service to the European Parliament in the context of the negotiation of the 'Telecom Package' in 2009 and the second periodic review of the scope of universal service in 2008.

The aim is to facilitate an open-ended and wide ranging public debate relating to the place of universal service provision in electronic communications in a competitive and rapidly-evolving digital environment. The consultation is facilitated by a questionnaire which sets out the key areas for discussion.

[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/policy/ecomm/library/public\\_consult/universal\\_service\\_2010/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecomm/library/public_consult/universal_service_2010/index_en.htm)

## Consultation: Customs Legislation on Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights

The European Commission, in close collaboration with the Member States, has carried out the review of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1383/2003 of 22 July 2003 concerning customs action against goods suspected of infringing certain intellectual property rights and the measures to be taken against goods found to have infringed such rights.

If considered appropriate in the light of this review and after completion of the public consultation, the European Commission shall prepare a proposal for a Regulation of the Council and of the European Parliament, concerning Customs Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). The proposal would replace the Council Regulation (EC) No 1383/2003.

[http://ec.europa.eu/taxation\\_customs/common/consultations/customs/ipr\\_2010\\_03\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/consultations/customs/ipr_2010_03_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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