



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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JUSTICE's hot topics

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Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

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Speaking points

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank our German representation for giving me the opportunity to talk you through several of our biggest files of the moment, ranging from free movement to hate speech and the European Prosecutor's Office.

1. Data protection – what now after the reform

- In spring this year, the General Data Protection Regulation and the Police Directive were adopted and published.
- Thanks to these new rules citizens should take back control over their personal data and the regulatory environment for business will be simplified.
- Both sets of rules must be transposed by 2018.
- During the two-year transition period the Commission will work with all Member States to ensure that the rules are well understood and will be applied in a uniform way.

- We are in close contact with German authorities which work on the national law implementing the GDPR and transposing the Directive. This week my colleagues will meet with German authorities and discuss outstanding issues here in Berlin.

2. Hate speech in the Internet – what is the Commission doing to tackle this

- Last May, the Commission signed a Code of Conduct with major IT operators such as Facebook, to tackle hate speech.
- I'd like to grab this opportunity to thank Germany and their taskforce against hate speech. They were the first ones to draft a Code of Conduct and cooperate with IT operators to counter online hate speech. They set an example for us.
- Of course, the Code of Conduct will only deliver if it is implemented properly.
- We are currently collecting monitoring data from NGOs and IT companies to assess the degree of implementation.

- The preliminary results of our assessment will be released on 7 December 2016, at the High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance.

3. On-line sales – state of play

- About a year ago, the Commission adopted two proposals dealing with contract rules for the supply of digital content and for the online sale of goods.
- Once the proposals are adopted companies will be able to sell goods or digital content across the EU based on a single set of consumer contract rules.
- Consumers on the other hand will benefit from simple and modernised rules, boosting their confidence in online purchasing.
- They will also enjoy more offers at better prices and will have more rights, such as the two-year guarantee period to obtain remedy for a faulty good.
- Once the barriers related to contract law are lifted, we estimate at around 120.000 the number of additional businesses who could sell online across borders and at 8

million the number of additional consumers who will buy online across borders.

- The growing economic activity is expected to generate an additional €4 billion. For Germany it could account for a rise of about €875 million.

4. VW scandal – state of play

- The Commission is committed to ensuring that EU consumers are treated fairly across Europe and that consumer law is respected.
- In the context of the issue with Volkswagen, Commissioner Jourová met high-level representatives of VW who committed to provide a detailed action plan to ensure that all cars are repaired by autumn 2017.
- This plan should ensure that the performance of the cars will not be affected by the repairs and that full conformity will be restored.
- The dialogue on this plan is ongoing.

5. Panama Papers

- Transparency is at the heart of any strategy to prevent money laundering, terrorist financing and tax evasion. The EU is leading by example to prevent the misuse of the financial system by opaque structures hiding the real identity of their owners
- Further to the unprecedented leak of 11.5m files from the database of the world's fourth biggest offshore law firm, the Commission has decided to further improve access to information on beneficial ownership.
- Hence the Commission proposed amending of the Anti Money Laundering Directive in July 2016. It will facilitate public access to information on beneficial ownership.
- Public access to such information allows greater scrutiny by civil society and contributes to preserving trust in the integrity of the financial system.
- The Commission also adopted a list of high risk third countries that present strategic deficiencies in their frameworks to fight money laundering and combat the

financing of terrorism. This will put further pressure on those countries to improve their systems.

- We must now ensure that similar rules are adopted throughout the world – as expressed by the G20. In line with international standards, our partners should implement robust mechanisms for ensuring transparency on beneficial ownership information and access by competent authorities – a line defended in international fora (FATF, G7, G20).

6. The European Prosecutor's office

- The European Public Prosecutor's Office is the Commission's key initiative in the area of justice at the moment.
- Every year billions of Euros are lost from the Union's budget as a result of fraud, corruption, money laundering, or sophisticated VAT carousel fraud. The EPPO's establishment aims at combatting such offences and thus strengthening the protection of the EU's financial interests. A better protection of the EU's financial interests will be to the benefit of us all –

the EU budget, the national budgets but also the European citizens, business and companies.

- The Commission has presented its proposal in July 2013 and after more than three years of negotiations in the Council, we are now entering the final stage.
- We expect the Slovak Presidency to finalise the work and to reach an agreement in the Council by the end of this year.
- We have arrived at a crucial moment in time and we need to make sure that all Member States support the EPPO. This is vital because the EPPO is about the protection of the whole Union budget.

7. What are DG JUST priorities for 2017?

- Under the internal market priority in 2017 DG JUST will put forward a new proposal "the company law initiative" to facilitate the use of digital market technologies throughout the lifecycle of a company, and to facilitate cross-border mergers and divisions.

- We will also pursue negotiations on our proposal on business restructuring and second chance, recently adopted by the Commission.
- This law will ensure that when a company goes bankrupt it winds down as smoothly and efficiently as possible, and entrepreneurs get a fresh start.
- As regards the European pillar of social rights, we will propose in the spring of 2017 a work-life balance initiative.
- In the area of justice and fundamental rights our focus will be on two main dimensions: security and data protection. On safety and security, we will soon put forward an initiative to freeze and confiscate criminals' assets to better compensate victims of crime and curb potential sources for terrorist financing.
- In addition, we will work on an initiative which improves access to electronic evidence, given its importance for more effective criminal investigations and prosecutions in order to fight serious crime and terrorism.
- We will also carry on negotiations on pending proposals: the European Criminal Records information System (ECRIS) and European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO).

- Regarding data protection, we will propose early next year a data protection package, in particular a regulation on personal data protection for European institutions, bodies and agencies.
- We will set out an international strategy on exchange of personal data with third countries.
- We will also continue to promote and defend the rule of law in Europe, and assess the scope for action to protect whistle-blowers who expose illegal conduct of public and private sector organisations by means of EU laws.
- In the area of consumer law, we are assessing the fitness of our consumer protection instruments regarding unfair terms in consumer contracts, price indication, selling goods and associated guarantees, misleading advertising, injunctions and consumer rights. The results of this assessment will be available in 2017. They may lead to a legislative initiative in the area of consumer law.

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