

Data Protection Ireland

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Headlines

- Mechanism to allow data transfer to be in place by the end of March, p.17
- DPC approves use of Binding Corporate Rules, p.18
- 69 questions for Google, p.20

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Public services ID cards to be unleashed on thousands

Hundreds of thousands of citizens will be issued with public services cards in furtherance of the government's Public Services Reform plan.

The cards are currently being introduced "in an accelerated fashion" (according to Tadgh O'Leary of the Department of Public Expenditure) by the Department of Social Protection, and being given to recipients of jobseeker's benefit and allowance, one-parent family payments, disability allowance and other payments.

It is envisaged the micro-

chipped cards, which were piloted in a project last year, will eventually be used by a range of public bodies to identify an individual at points of service and to provide 'egovernment' or online services. Also, areas of the public service may use the information on the card to check their information matches that held by other bodies.

The Data Protection Commissioner, Billy Hawkes, said he had been following developments with the card "very closely" and was concerned to ensure it was used "in a positive way".

Mr Hawkes said that his Office had emphasised the need to minimise the amount of data that was visible on the card, while recognising that certain data had to be visible to make it usable. He also said he hoped that the various arms of the government would have "the same rigorous approach" to data protection issues that the Revenue Commissioners has adopted.

"From our experience, we cannot make that statement about all public service organisa-

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Hawkes: 'we need more resources'

The Data Protection Commissioner has called for greater resources for his Office amidst speculation about Ireland's capacity to regulate major technology companies after the new EU Data Protection Regulation comes into force.

The draft Regulation currently provides that the relevant regulator for an organisation is the one in the country where the organisation has its 'main establishment'. Many major technological giants

and other businesses have chosen to house their headquarters in Ireland because of the tax advantages in the country.

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner has a staff of 22, and a €1.5 million per annum budget. This compares with the UK, where the data protection regulator has over 300 staff and a budget of £15 million (€18 million). "We would obviously have some

resource problems," commented Deputy Data Protection Commissioner, Gary Davis.

The capacity of the ODPC was tested last year when Max Schrems, an Austrian law student, made 22 complaints about Facebook's compliance with EU privacy rules. According to Mr Davis, the ODPC hired a technology consultant

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