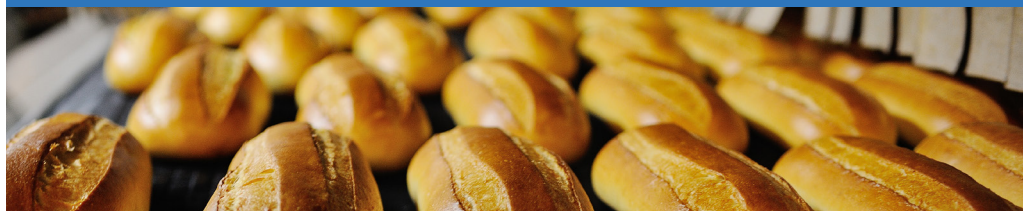


DOES EU FOOD LEGISLATION NEED TO CHANGE?



The quality of products in different EU Member States became one of the topics that resonated both in the EU institutions and in the Member States themselves after the State of the European Union speech by President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker. In the speech, President Juncker said that dual quality of products in the Single Market is unacceptable and shortly after that, the Commission issued a set of guidelines on the application of EU food and consumer laws to dual quality products. The guidelines should act as a tool for relevant authorities in the Member States to assess whether the products sold in different Member States are of the same composition. In addition, the Commission also announced that it will provide financial support for creating a common testing methodology for assessing the composition of products, which should help unite the rules for testing of products across the EU. There is

already a legislative base set in the EU that should tackle the issue, namely the Food Information Regulation and the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive. However, as part of the discussion, the EU wants to assess whether there are legislative changes that need to be made in order to ensure the same composition of products in the EU, or whether the current legislation just needs to be better enforced. The whole debate about the quality of food is an emotional one, however the trust of consumers in products is paramount for producers, traders and retailers in the EU. According to them, the composition of products might slightly vary in different countries of the EU, but that is only given by specific conditions on the market and it does not decrease the quality of the final products in any way. In certain cases, different composition is caused by the varying preferences of consumers across the EU.

MEP CORNER



"The European Parliament, and me personally, I've been very active in the discussion about the different quality of products in the EU for several years, but the main role in the process needs to be played by the European Commission and especially by the Member States."

Olga Sehnalová (S&D, ČSSD),
Member of Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, European Parliament

ePRIVACY REGULATION MUST NOT HAMPER DIGITALIZATION

Trust and security are the two cornerstones and main principles on which the EU wants to build its Digital Single Market. After the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the ePrivacy Regulation is another legislative tool that should, increase the level of security mainly in the field of electronic communications and set rules for the use of communications data, both content and metadata, processed by telecoms operators. According to Ambassador Jaroslav Zajíček, Deputy Head of the Czech Permanent Representation to the EU, it is crucial to set the right balance between the level of security and the development of the Digital Single Market. The Internet of Things is developing in a rapid pace and by 2020, there will

be several tens of billions of connected devices worldwide, creating an enormous amount of data. According to Milena Jabůrková, Vice-President of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, the ePrivacy Regulation will have a major impact on businesses. First of all, the level of complexity will be increased significantly, especially for those companies using machine-to-machine (M2M) communications, because companies will have to comply with complicated obligations. Secondly, the differentiation of what type of communication falls under the scope of GDPR and which one falls under ePrivacy Regulation is not clearly defined. Business representatives acknowledge the need to increase trust and security among users,

News FLASH

>CZECH BUSINESSES DISCUSSED BREXIT WITH PRIME MINISTER MAY

The Director General of Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic Dagmar Kuchtová participated in negotiations between European business representatives and UK Prime minister Theresa May. The Confederation supports a two-year transitional period with predictable and stable environment while preparing new conditions for the mutual relationship.

>CZECH UNEMPLOYMENT STILL LOWEST IN THE EU

According to the latest data released by Eurostat, the Czech Republic recorded the lowest unemployment rate in the EU with 2.7% during October 2017, followed by Malta (3.5%) and Germany (3.6%). The EU28 average is 7.4%.

>PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS APPROACHING

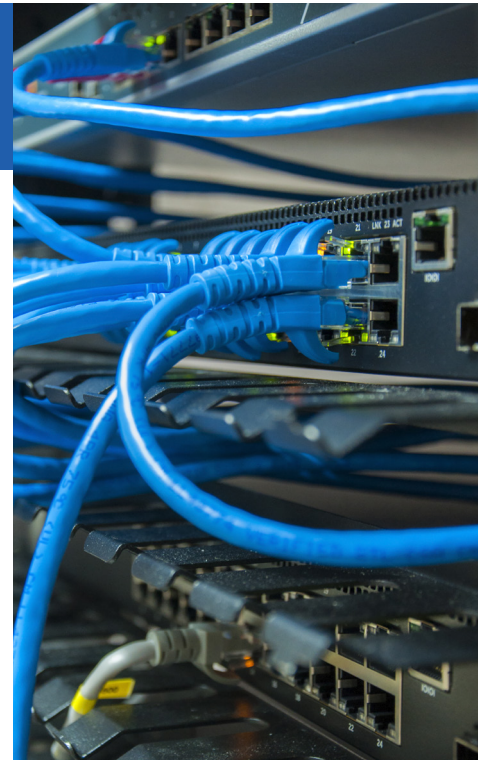
The first round of Czech presidential elections will be held on the 12th and 13th of January 2018, with the second round planned for 26th and 27th of January. There are 9 candidates, including the current president Miloš Zeman.

however the regulation should not slow down or even block technological development. "Therefore, we ask the European Commission to take M2M communication out of the scope of the ePrivacy Regulation," stressed Vice-President Jabůrková. Data is and will be increasingly important "raw material" of the future and the EU must put in place a set of rules that will encourage consumers to use new and innovative services and products, but also stimulate technological and economic development. The event was organized by the Czech Permanent Representation to the EU and the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic in November.

ONLINE PROCEDURES MUST BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL BUSINESSES

A search engine instrument that will give access to relevant websites at national and European level was proposed by the European Commission in May as a Single Digital Gateway. Since then, the proposal has been debated by the European Parliament and the Council which reached a general approach on this proposal on November 30th. Business organisations have contributed their views to the EU institutions in order to ensure a proper functioning of this instrument. The aim of the proposal is to improve the access to information, online procedures and problem solving tools at European and national level at one single point. From a business point of view the success will rely on the level of quality and interconnection of e-government tools available across the EU. The quality can only be ensured if the data provided to the gateway are up-to-date and displayed in at least one additional EU language beside the national language(s) of the Member States. All existing EU

and national IT tools could potentially be used for cross-border activity, therefore, each Member State should carefully verify whether the particular tool can serve for cross-border activity and that foreign entities can be allowed to use it. If a certain procedure is available in one Member State, it should also be accessible to users from other Member States. As the Single Digital Gateway will provide non-discriminatory access to online procedures, the decision-makers should define in which cases it is necessary to have a physical presence. The situations in which Member States are exempted from the obligation to provide all steps of the procedure online should be also specified. Last but not least, for the businesses, it is key that the procedures are not burdensome and that they are asked for the information on the basis of the "once-only" principle. The principle must go hand in hand with the relevant data protection rules.



EESC CORNER: CLEAN, COMPETITIVE AND CONNECTED MOBILITY FOR ALL



In the first half 2017 the European Commission published the Communication „Europe on the move: An agenda for a socially fair transition towards clean, competitive and connected mobility for all“ [COM(2017) 283 final]. The Communication is the first substantial phase of the Mobility Package, with further proposals to follow later in the year. It places the specific proposals, which are covered in separate Committee opinions, in a political context, sets out supporting measures – such as road charging (including the required infrastructure), alternative fuels and connectivity, better information for consumers, a stronger internal market and improved working conditions in the road haulage sector – and proposes steps to “lay the ground” for cooperative, connected and automated mobility. In practice, the Commission’s proposal primarily involves the road transport sector. The mobility agenda reflects Europe’s ambition of making rapid progress towards putting in place, by 2025, a clean, competitive and connected mobility system integrating all means of transport, spanning the entire Union and connecting it to

its neighbours and to the world. Achieving this highly ambitious objective relies both on an industry that is a world leader in manufacturing and service provision and on strong and effective political will on the part of the Member States. Reflecting this Communication “Europe on the move” EESC prepared and in October adopted the Opinion “Clean, competitive and connected mobility for all”

The EESC notes that land transport technology will most likely be revolutionised by digitalisation and automation. This new technology has the capacity to both improve transport market efficiencies but also to provide analytical data to assist in the control and enforcement of existing legislation and the protection of human and social rights. The EESC notes the discrepancy between anticipated emission reduction (13%) in road transport under this package and the necessary 18-19% that the transport sector would need to contribute towards achieving the 2030 climate and energy targets. This gap can only be bridged if Member States make substantial efforts to stimulate the introduction

of “clean” road transport initiatives. The EESC would like to emphasise that the production of clean electricity is an indispensable condition for a successful introduction of electric vehicles (EV) into the mass market. The EESC is of the opinion that the proposed changes in legislation regarding access to the profession, market access – including cabotage – and working conditions, such as driving and rest time and specific rules on the posting of workers in road transport mostly fail to effectively resolve the problems they address.

The EESC encourages the Commission to pursue the Vision Zero by 2050 project further, since its goals are of the utmost importance for our society and citizens.



Vladimír Novotný,
EESC Member,
Group I - Employers

CEBRE CALENDAR:

- 8th December – Debate on Dual quality of food (Prague)
- 11th January – Meeting with the European parliament (Brussels)

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CEBRE was founded in 2002 by the three most important Czech business organizations – Czech Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, Confederation of Employers’ and Entrepreneurs’ Associations of the Czech Republic with kind support of the Ministry of Industry and Trade via its Trade promotion agency CzechTrade.