

Brussels still rules

One of the extraordinary things since the vote is the enthusiasm of the UK establishment to carry on implementing everything the EU sends us and to wish to be even more rigorous in applying EU rules, when many continental countries take a much more relaxed approach. I see we are being taken to the ECJ for alleged non compliance with the clean air rules and over EU citizenship rights and we are busily putting into UK law various EU measures.

One above all shows just how much control Brussels exerts over us. That is the General Data Protection Regulation. This directly acting EU law comes into force on May 25th. It has led to months of work and much opportunity for consultants and lawyers, as businesses scramble to ensure they are fully compliant. Most are already careful in the way they keep and handle data about people they deal with, but need to demonstrate they handle it in a specified way under the new law. I have no problem with the aim of the legislation, but this blockbuster of a law requires specific bureaucratic processes to handle data to be sure that a business that does handle data well is seen to do so.

This of course includes MP offices. We are often sent sensitive details about a person's job or income or health when people wish us to help resolve a dispute with public authorities or help them get a better deal from a branch of government. .

The House authorities sent out substantial and very cautious advice. The Secretary of State for Culture, media and sport who is responsible for this area of law has also offered less austere advice. MPs are keen to be able to share data in order to resolve queries and complaints about government, but also keen to comply with this new law.

The government is also enacting a similar law as UK law. This is the Bill that allowed amendments concerning the press which have been the subject of recent controversy. With or without this law the GDPR comes into effect next week. Businesses are having to contact people and firms on their mailing lists and getting consent to staying on those mailing lists. Some are worried they will lose contact with large numbers of people they want to talk and who may wish to hear from them. Is this a helpful good idea?