

## Mixed reaction to ECJ ruling on women's car insurance

The insurance industry condemned a landmark European court ruling that insurers cannot charge different premiums to men and women because of their gender. The ECJ decision means that women can no longer be charged lower car insurance premiums than men, and the cost of buying a pensions annuity will change. In its ruling, the ECJ said, "Taking the gender of the insured individual into account as a risk factor in insurance contracts constitutes discrimination." The ECJ upheld the opinion of its top adviser and said that singling out women for preferential treatment contravenes article eight of the EU treaty. EU justice commissioner Viviane Reding welcomed the ruling as "an important step towards putting the fundamental right of gender equality into practice," and said she would convene a meeting with insurers in the coming months to discuss its implications. However UK Conservative deputies branding the ruling as 'a setback for common sense'. Martin Callanan, described the ruling as "nonsense". He said women now faced "devastating hikes in already sky-high motoring bills". Commenting on the media attention given to the changes in rates for car insurance, European Women's Lobby vice president Jachanova Dolezelova denied that there would necessarily be a negative impact on women's premiums in the long run, noting that premiums based on the objective criteria of past involvement in accidents would continue to reward safe drivers.



## Member states called on to introduce cancer screening

Member states have been condemned for failing to implement EU legislation designed to combat colorectal cancer. A news conference in parliament heard that only a minority of countries have implemented national screening programmes as required by a 2003 EU directive. Reinhold Stockbrugger, of the European Gastroenterology Federation, said only seven member states had a "sufficient or very good" screening programme. The worst offenders, he said, were central and eastern European countries which joined the EU in 2004 who still had not implemented the directive. In those countries which had complied with the EU law - including France, Italy, Denmark, the UK and Germany - the incidence of deaths caused by colorectal cancer had fallen, he said. Countries yet to introduce screening programmes include Belgium, Ireland, Estonia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and Latvia. "The message is clear: screening can help save lives," Stockbrugger said. The Italy-based academic said that current disparities between member states represented an "inequality" in treatment for people with colorectal cancer. The news conference came after a parliament roundtable debate on colorectal cancer. His comments were echoed by Czech MEP Pavel Poc who said that "huge" numbers of people were dying "unnecessarily" each year from the disease.

## Parliament votes against lifting MEP's parliamentary immunity

Senior German MEP Elmar Brok has remained tight-lipped after deputies rejected calls to lift his parliamentary immunity from prosecution. He refused to comment after parliament's legal affairs committee voted not to lift his immunity. On Monday, the committee discussed a request from the public prosecutor's office in Bielefeld, Germany to lift Brok's immunity. The public prosecutor wanted Brok's immunity lifted for failing to pay part of his taxes in 2005. Brok refused to be drawn, saying, "I do not wish to

comment." But an aide told this website that the committee had voted not to lift Brok's immunity and that the decision was backed unanimously by the committee. Ahead of the meeting, which was held in private, Brok issued a statement saying that he has since paid the outstanding amount, €2300, which was a fee for a speaking engagement. A parliament source said the matter was not necessarily over as MEPs could still vote on whether to lift his immunity at its plenary session next week in Strasbourg.