

Travelling to and from work is work, says EU

European Union has ruled that workers with no fixed office should be paid for travelling to and from their first and last appointments of their day. This could have a huge impact on the payroll expenses of companies across Europe. The European Court of Justice said that the journeys of workers who do not have a fixed place of work, and who travel between their home and their customers' premises, are to be paid work. This means potentially higher salaries for care workers, sales staff, plumbers, nannies and other company employees who work from home. The court said it was to protect the health and safety of workers and ensure they did not work longer than 48 hours per week.

The ruling means that thousands of companies across Europe could be forced to change their business arrangements. Many will have to rearrange the working schedules of employees to ensure that their first and last appointments are near their homes. A British employment lawyer, Chris Tutton, told the BBC that: "Unless [bosses] adjust working hours or ask employees to opt out of the 48-hour working week, employees could quickly exceed the number of hours they are legally allowed to work. Bosses could therefore soon find that they are operating illegally and be at risk of facing costly claims against them." The ruling does not affect people's daily commute to their normal, fixed place of work.

Sean Banville
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Germany and Austria welcome refugees

Germany and Austria welcomed thousands of refugees yesterday after their long walk through Hungary. The refugees arrived at train stations in Germany and at the Austrian border to crowds of local people who applauded the new arrivals and gave them water, food and clothes. German and Austrian children carried baskets of sweets to give to the children from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries. For many of the refugees, it was the end of a long journey that started in Syria and ended with a long walk through Hungary. German rail company Deutsche Bahn announced on Saturday that it would be adding extra carriages to its trains and was doing "doing everything it can" to help the refugees.

The United Nations (UN) has praised Austria and Germany for their efforts to welcome and help the refugees. It said: "This is political leadership based on humanitarian values." Germany's leader Angela Merkel said her country would welcome all refugees from Syria. Germany is expecting around 800,000 Syrians to arrive this year amid continuing uncertainty about the future of Syria. Ms Merkel told reporters that, "as a strong, economically healthy country, we have the strength to do what is necessary." One refugee, a Syrian shopkeeper said: "I'm very glad to be in Germany. I hope that I find a much better life here. I want to work." He expressed concern for his family and young children still in Syria.

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Adidas to make shoes from ocean garbage

Adidas has created a sports shoe from garbage floating in the ocean. The new trainer is part of a project to raise awareness of the serious problem of ocean pollution. Adidas has joined with an organization called Parley, which is dedicated to protecting and preserving the Earth's oceans. Parley's founder Cyrill Gutsch spoke about his organization's cooperation with Adidas. He said: "Our objective is to boost public awareness and to inspire new collaborations that can contribute to protect and preserve the oceans. We are extremely proud that Adidas is joining us in this mission...to show that it is possible to turn ocean plastic into something cool."

Garbage in the ocean is a huge problem. UNESCO estimates that in 2006, there were nearly 30,000 pieces of floating plastic for every square kilometer of ocean. Plastic debris kills over a million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals every year. Adidas used some of this plastic to make its new trainer. The sole of the sneaker is made from sustainable materials, while the upper uses recycled ocean waste. This consisted of plastic and illegal fishing nets. Adidas says it will be releasing a new trainer made from ocean waste later this year. In another green initiative, the sportswear maker said it would be phasing out the use of plastic bags in all Adidas retail stores in the near future.

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Beijing introduces tough smoking ban

A tough new smoking ban has been introduced in China's capital city Beijing. It coincides with World No Tobacco Day and was welcomed by the World Health Organization (WHO). The ban came into effect on June the 1st and is the toughest anti-smoking law to be implemented anywhere in China. The law bans smoking in all indoor public places, on public transport and in workplaces. Anyone who smokes in these places will get a big fine. Restaurants will have a big part to play in making sure the ban works. Restaurant owners will get a heavy fine if people smoke in their restaurants. The public is also being asked to report anyone who breaks the law and smokes in public.

A WHO spokesperson said: "We applauded Beijing for its strong and determined leadership in protecting the health of its people by making public places smoke-free. We are delighted to be formally recognizing the Beijing Municipal Government." There are still hundreds of millions of smokers in China. The country is the world's biggest tobacco producer and has the most smokers. There are around 300 million smokers in China. This is almost the same size as the population of the USA. More than one million Chinese die each year from diseases caused by smoking.

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Online shoppers fooled by fake reviews

A consumer group in the UK has reported that many Internet sites are full of fake reviews. The UK's Competition and Market Authority (CMA) believes there are millions of reviews on sites for hotels, restaurants, theatres and online stores that have been paid for to trick shoppers. It said at least 25 million people in Britain read reviews on websites such as Amazon and TripAdvisor before booking holidays or doing online shopping. The CMA found there was a growth in the industry that writes fake reviews for companies and businesses. Many companies wrote fake reviews about themselves as a marketing tool. Others offered money, free samples or upgrades in exchange for five-star reviews.

Online reviews are very important to businesses. Industry analysts estimate that in Britain alone, \$36 billion a year of consumer spending could be influenced by online reviews. A CMA spokeswoman said: "Millions of people look at online reviews and endorsements before making decisions such as where to stay on holiday or which plumber to use." She added: "We have found that consumers who use online reviews and endorsements find them valuable, but we have also heard about some practices that may be unlawful." Some of the more illegal activity includes rival companies posting negative remarks about each other's goods and services. Bosses could face going to prison for doing this.

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Scientists close to flu vaccine

Scientists in the USA say they are getting closer to developing a vaccine that will provide life-long protection against any type of influenza. This could be welcome news for millions of people around the world who go to the doctor every year to get a flu jab. Two different research teams have been testing new drugs on animals and both have had promising results. Trials will soon begin on humans to determine if the test vaccine has similar successes. Flu expert professor John Oxford told the BBC that: "This is a leap forward compared to anything done recently. They have good animal data, not just in mice but in ferrets and monkeys too." He added that: "It's a very good stepping stone."

The flu virus kills up to half a million people every year. The problem with finding a vaccine is the ever-changing nature of the flu virus. It is in a constant state of mutation. Doctors have to predict which strains of the virus are likely to cause the most infections and then create an updated version of the vaccine accordingly. For this reason, the success rate of most flu vaccines is very low because much of the process involves a lot of guesswork. Scientists say that vaccines in the U.S. reduced the risk of catching flu by just 23 per cent last year. The website Inverse.com said the research could, "point to how we can go about making vaccines for other viruses that mutate rapidly, like HIV or the common cold".

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