

**Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Industry Association
(HKECIA)
Position Paper on Review on Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance**

The Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Industry Association (HKECIA) was established in 1990 to promote Hong Kong as the trade fair and conference capital of Asia. It works to represent the interests of all members involved in the exhibition and convention industries, and provides a unified voice in dealing with the government, legislative and statutory bodies on all matters associate with the role of the exhibition and convention industry in Hong Kong's economy. Currently, HKECIA has 101 members including exhibition and conference organisers, venue managers and operators, contractors, hotels, airline, travel agents and government statutory organisations like Hong Kong Trade Development Council and Hong Kong Tourism Board.

Hong Kong's exhibition industry has an important role to play in Hong Kong's prosperity. An in-depth survey entitled Economic Impact Study Report conducted by KPMG in 2008 revealed that the industry contributed HK\$30.2 billion to the local economy, generated employment for 61,000 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) employees and raised close to HK\$1 billion in taxes. The HKECIA 2009 Exhibition Survey also indicated that the total number of companies exhibiting in trade shows in Hong Kong mounted to over 55,700 and the number of trade visitors from outside Hong Kong alone has reached over 572,000 in 2009.

Majority of exhibitions in Hong Kong are trade fairs which target companies in specific industries operating largely on a B-to-B basis. In practice, exhibition organisers collect prospective exhibitor and visitor data through various sources and channels. Many databases are public information readily obtainable in trade publications or directories. Some are being provided by our exhibition partners like trade and professional organisations. The data that are being collected are normally limited to just basic business contacts like name, job title, company name and address, telephone number and email address but no personal sensitive information. By means of telemarketing and direct mailing, exhibition organisers keep these prospective participants informed of exhibition

news, recent industry developments as well as market information that are beneficial to them.

All marketing material carries a statement of “Opt-Out” choice. If recipients wish not to receive any further exhibition news, for any reasons, their data will be deleted by means of a simple phone call, an email notice or by clicking on the “Opt-Out” button that is provided in e-newsletters. However, if a stringent regulation of “Opt-In” system (means that a prospective exhibitor and visitor must proactively grant exhibition organisers a permission to use his/her details for the form of marketing listed) is to replace the universally accepted “Opt-Out” system, the exhibition and convention industry will be at stake. By definition, exhibition organisers will no longer be able to use the existing database for direct marketing campaigns. With such regulation introduced, other trade partners or professional organisations will be reluctant to share their membership lists with us to avoid the risk of breaching the law. In addition, their members will be deprived of receiving updated industry news and market information. Business will seriously be disturbed and jeopardized if they missed important trade buyers at exhibitions being held in Hong Kong.

The “Opt-Out” system is perhaps the standard practice for all developed exhibition countries including Germany, France, USA, UK and Singapore and it has been working well in our global exhibition industry. The official position of HKECIA in this matter will of course be the “Opt-Out” option. While we advocate better protection and usage of personal data, any new regulations must also provide a proper balance to allow the direct marketing industry a reasonable and effective way to continue their business and services.

12th November 2010