

ISOC European Regional Bureau Newsletter

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Net neutrality

EU: ITRE Committee adopts position on the proposed telecom package

- On 18 March, the European Parliament's **Internal Market Committee (ITRE)** adopted its position on **the proposed telecom package**. The report prepared by **MEP Pilar del Castillo Vera** (EPP, Spain) was adopted by 30 votes to 12, with 14 abstentions. Del Castillo underlined that this represents an important step towards the **consolidation of the EU digital market**.
- **Rules on net neutrality** preventing providers from degrading or blocking Internet connections to services and applications are included in the latest draft. This said, companies would still be able to offer specialised services of higher quality, e.g. video on demand and data-intensive cloud applications, provided that these do not interfere with the Internet speeds promised to other customers. Measures to block or slow down the Internet would be allowed under exceptional circumstances, e.g. court orders.
- The provisions on net neutrality have been criticised by the Socialists and the Greens who fear the text would jeopardise net neutrality. The S&D party abstained during the final vote. **Shadow Rapporteur MEP Catherine Trautman** (France) has **advocated for more precise definition of specialised services** so that there would not be any confusion with Internet access services for which there needs to be a binding reference. Trautman stated that the S&D group is ready to maintain in plenary the amendment rejected by the EP committee. **MEP Amelia Andersdotter** (Greens, Sweden) stated that the work of MEPs consists of limiting the damage, as she considers the Commission's text to be unsatisfactory.
- While the MEPs adopted Del Castillo's report, they did not permit the beginning of negotiations with the EU governments' representatives. Although the mandate is not relevant in practice, considering that EU governments have only begun their examination of the proposal recently and are not in position to form a negotiating position, the absence of the mandate indicates **weak political support for the compromise and casts a shadow over the proposal's prospects** of obtaining backing at the plenary session on 2-3 April. The plenary vote on the report takes place on 3 April.
- The **MEPs voted against extra costs for using a mobile phone in another EU country** (charges should be banned from 15 December 2015). This should also apply to data plans, thus potentially boosting Internet browsing abroad.
- In order to **promote faster mobile Internet and efficient spectrum management**, the proposal contains provisions designed to ensure that all available spectrum resources are fully utilised, allowing easier trade in and lease rights to use parts of the spectrum.

The Body of European Regulators of Electronic Communications (BEREC) has launched a consultation on net neutrality. The consultation concerns ways of monitoring the effective quality of Internet access services provided by operators. The consultation runs until 28 April.

Interestingly, this document reflects views that ISOC has shared with BEREC and the OECD and put an emphasis to the importance of IETF.

Open Internet

Turkey: Twitter ban meets immediate EU criticism

- On 20 March, only hours after **Prime Minister Erdogan** threatened to shut down a social-media site that has become a vehicle for allegations of government corruption ahead of elections, **Turkey's telecommunications regulator started blocking access to Twitter**.
- The move attracted massive criticism from the EU, including **Commissioners Kroes and Füle**.
- Erdogan's press service stated that as long as Twitter does not comply with the court rulings, the social networking service will remain blocked to "relieve" Turkish citizens.
- In a rare act of defiance, Turkish president Abdullah Gül openly criticised the Twitter ban —via his Twitter account <http://j.mp/1nK0N6B>
- Turkey is one of the top 10 users of Twitter with an estimated 15 million users.

Cloud computing

EU: European Cloud Partnership presents its vision

- The **Steering Board of the European Cloud Partnership (ECP)** has published a policy vision document entitled '**Establishing a trusted cloud Europe**'. The document is the result of work of the European Cloud Partnership that aims at establishing a roadmap for European leadership in the cloud.
- The document underlines the need to address the current legal, technical, operational and economic barriers that hamper the market uptake of cloud computing in Europe. Specific and targeted actions should be implemented so that the EU could benefit from the shift to cloud computing. The document suggested that industry, public administrations and cloud users should work on the basis of common templates for similar use cases.
- The ECP has invited all stakeholders to comment on its report. The survey is open until 2 May and the results will be communicated to the Commission in view of future actions in the area of cloud computing.
- During her speech at the **Future Internet Assembly** that took place this week in Athens, Commissioner Kroes underlined the potential benefits the cloud could bring to the EU economy. She also predicted that cloud computing, alongside big data, Internet of things and fast networking, will be one of the pillars of the future Internet. Kroes recently confirmed that the EU will support the research and innovation in the cloud computing sector with €125 million over the next two years.

Internet governance

EU: Kroes welcomes US decision to untighten its link to IANA

- Commissioner **Kroes welcomed** the US government's announcement **to transition out of the IANA function**. The EU will work with the US to implement the globalisation of the IANA functions, she added.

General

EU: MEP Harbour calls for reorganization of EU's work on digital economy

- In his last speech in his capacity as a Parliamentarian **MEP Malcom Harbour** (ECR, United Kingdom) depicted **his vision for the future of the European telecoms industry** and its regulation. The most important point Harbour raised was that regulators and policymakers need to adopt a **holistic view of the digital economy**, thus getting rid of a perception dating from before the online revolution, as the overlap between communication and content providers is to become more and more significant.
- EU lawmakers will need to take into account which companies are investing in networks and which are reaping the biggest returns from those investments, stated Harbour. To **streamline the regulatory oversight**, Harbour suggested that regulators in neighbouring countries should cluster together.

EU: Parliament publishes a study on streaming and online access to content and services

- The **European Parliament's** Directorate General for Internal Policies has published a study on streaming and online access to content and services. The study underlines that the current EU legal and economic setting affects the benefits the EU could reap from the Digital Single Market.
- To remedy the situation, the study called for new **Single Market Act that would focus on digital issues**.