

ISOC European Regional Bureau Newsletter

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Net neutrality

EU: Parliament backs the proposed Connected Continent package

- On 3 April, the plenary of the **European Parliament** backed the proposed reform of the EU telecommunications sector, the so-called **Connected Continent package**. The Rapporteur on the dossier **MEP Pilar del Castillo Vera** (EPP, Spain) welcomed the vote, stating that thanks to the vote the **EU has provided a guarantee for openness of the Internet**. Castillo's report was adopted by 534 votes to 25, with 58 abstentions.
- The **adopted draft defines net neutrality** as the principle according to which all Internet traffic is treated equally without restriction or interference and independently of type, content, device, service or application.
- The **provisions on net neutrality** allow **ISPs to provide higher quality specialised services**, but only **if those services are not offered to the detriment of the availability or quality of Internet access services**. Previously, **BEREC**, the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications reported that several ISPs were blocking or limiting speed of access.
- Compared to the text prepared by the European Commission, the text promoted by the **Parliament limits the list of cases in which ISPs would be entitled to block or slow down the Internet**. The **traffic management tools** would be permitted only to enforce a court order, preserve network security or prevent temporary network congestion. The use of those tools must be timely and remain transparent, non-discriminatory and proportionate.
- **Luigi Gambardella at ETNO reacted negatively** saying that the restrictive nature of the net neutrality provisions will affect the access of citizens and businesses to innovative services. The association has called on EU Member States to ensure that the text of the bill is brought back to the Commission's original idea.
- **Joe McNamee at European Digital Rights** stated that the EU established itself as a global force to protect the open Internet. The EU stance could provide an impetus to the US where discussions on net neutrality are currently under way.
- The vote permitted the **consolidation of the Parliament's position** that will be handed over to the next Parliament (elected in May). The new Parliament would need to endorse the new rules, and EU Member States would need to reach an agreement with the Parliament and the Commission on a reconciled version of the proposed rules.

Data protection

EU: European Data Protection Supervisor presents 2013 activity report

- Peter Hustinx, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) has **presented** the **Annual Report of activities for 2013**. With regards to the proposed overhaul of the EU data protection framework Hustinx stated that the bill will support the recovery of the European economy, providing clarity and consistency as the same rules will apply to all firms providing services in the EU.
- Underlining the overwhelming vote in favour of the reform by the European Parliament, Hustinx stressed that the **EU Member States have to act promptly and to reach a deal** with one another and with the Parliament by the end of the year. **Giovanni Buttarelli**, Assistant Supervisor EDPS, added that a swift adoption of the package is necessary in order to restore confidence in digital environment. He also noted that the value of personal information has greatly increased in line with the growth of the digital economy.
- During a recent press conference, Hustinx called on **President Obama** to keep his pledge to review the **US privacy rules** in the wake of disclosures that have exposed the reach of government surveillance that has shaken the EU-US relations.
- It has been reported that **Germany and the UK particularly oppose several provisions** of the proposal. The UK fears that the law would create more red tape for business and thus negatively affect the potential for growth.

EU: Commission to re-launch search for new European Data Protection Supervisor

- The new search for Peter Hustinx's successor (the EDPS who was scheduled to step down on 16 January) is to start in May as the Commission is to publish a new vacancy note. According to a provisional calendar of the selection procedure, shortlisted candidates would be interviewed in June and July.
- The initial research that started in July 2013 was cancelled as the Commission said it could not find enough qualified candidates to replace Hustinx who served two five-year terms.

Open Internet

Turkey: Constitutional court rules that Twitter ban is illegal

- According to the ruling by the **Turkish constitutional court**, the country's ban on Twitter violated freedom of expression and individual rights, and asked for the ban to be lifted.
- The court sent its ruling to the country's telecommunication authority (TIB) and the transport and communications ministry. Previously, Prime Minister Erdogan stated he would wipe out Twitter after users spread allegations of corruption.
- **Turkey's telecoms authority lifted a two-week-old ban** on Twitter on 3 April. Google's video-sharing website YouTube remains offline in Turkey.

General

EU: Consumers must be able to reap the benefits of the digital economy

- At the **EU Consumer Summit** that took place this week in Brussels, the EU Digital Agenda Commissioner **Kroes underlined** the importance of the digital single market for the EU economy and consumers. The summit's press release underlined that the completion of the market would benefit EU consumers by, on average, €400 a year, some €200 billion Europe wide.

- To do so, the EU needs to ensure conditions for an open, unrestricted, borderless and high quality Internet access, stated Kroes.

EU: Survey shows young people want unrestricted Internet access

- According to a recently published survey of young Europeans (aged between 18 and 34 years old), **users limit their Internet access abroad** fearing high roaming charges.
- With regards to access, the survey has unveiled that **25% of users currently face Internet access restrictions**. In order to have unrestricted access, 79% of respondents said they were in favour of strengthening of the EU's regulatory powers.