

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

EU: European Commission's guide to EU funding for broadband investments

- The European Commission's [Broadband Competence Offices Network Support Facility](#) (BCO-SF) has published a [guide](#) to help businesses and the civil society understand the various financial tools provided by the EU to encourage broadband investment in the region.
- The guide provides details of a number of funds, including European Structural and Investment Funds, European Fund for Strategic Investments, the Connecting Europe Facility, and the Connecting Europe Broadband Fund. It aims to boost the EU's potential for innovative growth and competitiveness.

EU: Digital Commissioner Gabriel answers parliamentary question on the abolition of roaming charges

- On August 21, the European Commissioner in charge of the Digital Agenda, Mariya Gabriel, answered a [parliamentary written question](#) from MEP Carlos Zorrinho (S&D, PT) who asked about the potential side effects of the roaming regulation. Mr Zorrinho suggested that domestic services charges may increase as a result.
- Commissioner Gabriel, in her [response](#) insisted that there was "no objective need for operators to increase domestic prices in response to Roam Like At Home or to restrict roaming in certain tariff plans."
- Commissioner Gabriel also argued that the level of competition on national mobile markets remained the key factor of national price fruition and claimed that the Commission had not detected any general increase in domestic prices as a consequence of roaming.
- The Commission will publish an interim report on the consequences of the newly introduced roaming rules by December 2018.

EU: Parliament finalises its position on telecoms reform

- The European Parliament is finalising its position on the reform of the EU's telecommunications framework, the European Electronic Communications Code, ahead of negotiations with the Council of the EU.

- With the political parties having found a compromise on most aspects ahead of the summer, there are just a few issues (including on joint dominance, and co-investment) which still need to be wrapped up ahead of the votes in Parliamentary Committee.
- The votes are scheduled in the Internal Market and Consumer Rights Committee on 4 September (covering end user rights and services), and in the Industry, Research, and Energy Committee on 11 September (covering access, spectrum and institutional governance).

Trust

UK: Are UK companies ready to address cyber challenges?

- A UK government [study](#) published on August 21 revealed that 68% of Boards at the UK's 350 largest firms have received no training on how to deal with cyberattacks.
- The study also highlights that only 6% of businesses are prepared for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which will enter into force in May 2018. However, awareness of GDPR is good, with 97% of firms being aware of the soon-to-be-applicable data protection rules.
- A separate [study](#) on charities' cyber security capabilities was also released on the same day, showing that charities were just as susceptible to cyber-attacks as businesses, and that their staff was often not well informed about the issue.

UK: UK Government considers creating internet ombudsman role

- The UK's Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport is considering a number of measures to deal with illegal online material to be announced in its upcoming Internet Safety Strategy.
- The Guardian [reports](#) that these measures include the creation of an internet ombudsman to deal with complaints about illegal online material. The department is also look at proposals for a levy on social media companies to help pay for policing online offences.
- The plans also follow the [announcement](#) of the Crown Prosecution Service's Director, Alison Saunders, that she will direct prosecutors to treat online hate crime the same way as face-to-face offences.

UK: UK wants close EU relationship on data protection after Brexit

- In the [last of its summer policy papers](#) published ahead of the next round of Brexit talks, the UK Government called for an early agreement over data sharing with the EU.
- Matthew Hancock, Britain's Digital Minister, stated "the goal is to combine strong privacy rules with a relationship that allows flexibility, to give consumers and businesses certainty in their use of data."
- The paper also claims that the UK would be willing to "explore a model which allows the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to play an ongoing role in EU regulation."
- However, a UK surveillance regulation that entered into force in 2016, the Investigatory Powers Act, has been identified by other observers as a potential hurdle for future EU-UK agreements on data protection, as it may conflict with EU fundamental rights.

EU: Cybersecurity Strategy may be outlined in President Juncker's State of the Union speech

- The European Commission has been working on an updated cybersecurity strategy to replace the current 2013 version, expected to be unveiled in September.

- Politico has reported that the first outline of what can be expected in the strategy may be provided by Commission President Juncker in his State of the Union speech on September 13.
- The State of the Union is an annual speech delivered by the Commission President in which he lays out the Commission's main political objectives and provides guidance for the Commission's work programme for the following year.

EU: Estonia's Chief Information Officer talks encryption and the free movement of data

- On August 23, in an [interview](#) with POLITICO Europe, Siim Sikkut has stressed the importance of the free flow of data and encryption.
- In particular, the Government CIO emphasised that “we should not open backdoors” to encryption and described it as “something [the Presidency] would definitely like people to commit to”.
- On the Digital Summit, scheduled for September 29, Mr Sikkut said he wants EU leaders to have a long-term vision for cybersecurity and digital services. The Digital Summit will bring together EU heads of state or government together for high level talks on digital innovation and Europe's digital future. A discussion paper is expected to be distributed ahead of the event.