

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

EU: 29th anniversary of the World Wide Web

- On the day the World Wide Web turn 29, its inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee voiced the need for stricter regulations of the few companies that control the web.
- In an [open letter](#), he painted a bleak picture of the current Internet, dominated by a handful of colossal platforms that have constricted innovation and competition.
- Not all is lost, according to the father of the World Wide Web, who believes “a web that creates a constructive and supportive environment” is still possible.

EU: BEREC discusses 5G and net neutrality

- On March 14, the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) held a [public debriefing](#) on 5G, international roaming and net neutrality.
- BEREC Chair 2018, Johannes Gungl, presented the study “Implications of 5G deployment and future business models.”
- An online [public consultation](#) was then launched to collect input to feed onto the Commission's Evaluation of the Net Neutrality Regulation.

EU: Institutions fight over co-investment in telecom networks

- Last week, the Commission proposed a new text on the conditions under which co-investment in new telecoms networks can result in deregulation of the market. The text was proposed in an effort to help the Parliament and Council find a compromise in the ongoing trilogue negotiations.
- The new proposal proved controversial with both industry players and the institutions. The association representing the smaller “competitive” telecoms operators, ECTA, came out strongly against the proposals, [claiming](#) that it “exceeds our worst nightmares”
- Meanwhile, the association representing the larger telecoms operators, ETNO, also came out with its own complaints about the ongoing telecoms reform this week. Phillip Malloch, the Chair of the Association, claimed that “unless EU negotiators rapidly change their stance and tweak a draft version of the reform, they might as well withdraw the entire bill”.

- The next trilogue on the telecoms reform will take place on 20 March. It will focus on these controversial network access issues, as well as end-user rights, universal service obligations, and governance issues.

Trust

EU: IAB Europe issues draft GDPR specifications open for feedback

- The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) [released](#) the draft technical specifications for its General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Transparency & Consent [Framework](#).
- This is the result of a joint effort from different industry sectors to help technology vendors, publishers and advertisers meet the requirements set by the GDPR. It outlines how they can access and process consumers' personal data for advertising purposes (i.e. on mobile and desktop channels).
- Stakeholders are invited to give feedback on the Framework by 8 April.

EU: E-evidence discussed at Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting

- E-evidence was high on the agenda of the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting of March 8-9.
- EU Ministers [reaffirmed](#) the importance of establishing a legal framework for the cross-border access to e-evidence and urged the European Commission to finalise its proposal, expected in April.
- The Ministers also discussed developments at international level and called for closer cooperation with the US and at the Council of Europe in particular.

EU: Final report of the HLEG on Fake News and Online Disinformation

- On March 12, the high-level group of experts (HLEG) on fake news and online disinformation, established in January, released its [final report](#). This aims to identify key principles and objectives for future action.
- The report argues the threat is disinformation, as a phenomenon that goes beyond "fake news". It gives a clear definition of the term, which encompasses all forms of "false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit."
- The HLEG believes the best responses are likely to be those driven by multi-stakeholder collaborations, and minimising legal regulatory interventions. It also recommends the drafting of a non-binding business code of conduct to minimise the spreading of disinformation via online platforms.
- Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), and an expert on the HLEG on fake news and disinformation, has voted against the final report, [claiming](#) that it does not tackle the root causes of fake news.
- BEUC is not alone in criticising Brussel's voluntary approach. Several MEPs and EU Member States [favour](#) stricter measures to tackle the issue.

EU: IMCO WG on the Digital Single Market

- The European Parliament's IMCO Working Group (WG) on the Digital Single Market (DSM) will [meet](#) on March 19 to discuss "How can we fight against the fake-news phenomenon to have a Digital Single Market based on trust?"
- The meeting will feature some influential MEPs, including Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein (Chair of the IMCO WG on the DSM) and Anneleen Van Bossuyt (IMCO Committee Chair), as well as European Commission's representatives, academics and independent experts.

EU: International cooperation in the fight against cybercrime

- On March 14, the European Parliament in plenary sitting [discussed](#) “International Cooperation in the Fight Against Cybercrime – the threat to public services.”
- Consensus was shown by MEPs who took the floor that the Commission should continue to prioritise cybersecurity, particularly due to high profile cybersecurity attacks carried out in the past year, such as the WannaCry Ransomware attack.
- On the Cybersecurity Act, the majority of members who took the floor expressed support for both a permanent and strengthened mandate for ENISA and the creation of an EU-wide certification framework.
- European Commissioner for Security Union, Julian King, also attended the discussion and argued that a European certification process is an important step towards creating security by design. He hopes the Cybersecurity Act will be adopted within the current legislative mandate.

FR: France to sue Apple and Google over “abusive business practices”

- On March 14, the French Government [said](#) that it would take legal action against Google and Apple over “abusive business practices,” against French start-ups.
- Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said the US giants unilaterally imposed financial conditions and contracts on French app developers and gathered data on their use, while adding “both can unilaterally modify contracts.”
- Neither company commented publicly in response.

UK: WhatsApp will not share user data with Facebook in the country

- WhatsApp reached a [deal](#) with the UK regulator over Facebook data sharing. It will not share this data until it can do so in compliance with the upcoming General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO)’s investigation on whether WhatsApp could legally share users’ data with Facebook has concluded the practice would go against the principles of the Data Protection Act.
- Germany banned Facebook from using WhatsApp users’ data, and the French data protection authority (CNIL) has its own enforcement action against WhatsApp.

NL: Dutch Parliament moves step forward on new Privacy laws

- The Dutch second chamber of Parliament adopted on Thursday 15 March its national implementation of the new European privacy laws (the GDPR). The bill now moves to the Netherlands’ first chamber of Parliament.
- Countries have until 25 May to implement the new European privacy rules – at which point the GDPR comes into force.