

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

EU: WSIS Forum 2018 discusses how ICTs advance SDGs

- The [World Summit on the Information Society \(WSIS\)](#) Forum 2018 took place in Geneva, on March 19-23.
- This year's WSIS focused on sustainable development trends and ICT initiatives in key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) priority areas, such as infrastructure and innovation.
- The Internet Society and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) organized two workshops on Community Networks, notably on "[Community networks: How the unconnected connect themselves](#)," and "[From the Last to First Mile – Community Networks](#)."
- The event gathered more than 2500 information and communication technology experts worldwide to advance and exchange knowledge and best practices.

EU: European Commission launches WiFi4EU portal

- On March 20, the European Commission launched the [WiFi4EU portal](#). Municipalities and companies are invited to register their details ahead of the first call, which is expected to come on May 15.
- Announced in September 2016, the [WiFi4EU programme](#) offers vouchers worth €15,000 for local authorities to set up Wi-Fi hotspots in public spaces, such as including libraries, museums, public parks, squares.
- The EU has made €120 million available from its budget till 2020 to fund equipment for public free Internet access in up to 8,000 municipalities in all Member States.
- On March 21, the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) held an exchange of views with the Commission on WiFi4EU.
- Roberto Viola, Director General of DG CONNECT, said that more services and functionalities would be added to the system, and that consideration was taking place in the Commission on how to continue with the programme in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).
- Anthony Whelan, Director for Electronic Communications, Networks & Services, at DG CONNECT, added that the Commission was eager to ensure a first come first served system was run, while encouraging a wide geographical distribution of

vouchers. No Member State can receive more than 8 % of the vouchers at this first stage.

EU: Industry associations call for an urgent fix of the EECC

- ETNO, the Association representing Europe's leading telecom operators, and DIGITALEUROPE, issued separate statements urging policy makers to do more on the investment provisions of the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC).
- ETNO's statement [claimed](#) that “the current policy options will not deliver fibre and 5G to EU citizens.” It singled out a number of areas – regulation of fibre networks, geographic surveys of network deployments, regulation of oligopolies, and universal service obligations – in which changes to the existing text were needed. ETNO insisted on the need to focus on the initial ambition of increasing investment in ultrafast networks.
- DIGITALEUROPE made a similar pro-investment [statement](#), urging co-legislators to include in the legislation “unequivocal pro-investment tools for the deployment of Very High Capacity Networks, including through co-investment”.

Trust

Global: Facebook and Cambridge Analytica accused of misuse of personal data

- Cambridge Analytica, known for its work for Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, has been [accused](#) of harvesting information from the Facebook profiles of more than 50 million users without their consent. This data was used in an effort to swing voters for President Trump. Alexander Nix, Cambridge Analytica's suspended CEO, claimed that the company was practically the reason that President Trump won the US election.
- Cambridge Analytica is said to have obtained the personal data through an outside researcher, Aleksandr Kogan, who, Facebook argues, claimed to be collecting it for academic purposes.
- Facebook claimed that the situation did not entail a “data breach” as Kogan legitimately accessed the data but then misused it, going against their policies. Kogan meanwhile, [claims](#) that he is being used as a “scapegoat”.
- Facebook has [suspended](#) Cambridge Analytica as well as Kogan from Facebook, pending further information.
- The social network also [announced](#) that it was taking action on potential past abuses and putting stronger protection in place to prevent future abuses. These protections include the investigation of apps that have access to information, informing people about data misuse, and restrictions on login data.

Global: Reactions to Facebook data scandal

- Politicians from both the US and the EU have demanded explanations for the alleged unauthorized data harvesting.
- The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has started an [investigation](#) into Facebook.
- The UK is also looking into the issue. Andrea Jelinek, Chair of the Article 29 Working Party [stressed](#) her support for the investigation and stated that the members of WP29 would work together during this process.
- European Parliament President Antonio Tajani invited Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg to explain the companies' position to the EP, while EU Justice

Commission Věra Jourová compared Cambridge Analytica's political campaigns with communist-era manipulation of behaviour.

EU: IMCO WG on the Digital Single Market discusses fake news

- The European Parliament's IMCO Working Group (WG) on the Digital Single Market (DSM) [met](#) for the 15th time on March 19 to discuss "How can we fight against the fake-news phenomenon to have a Digital Single Market based on trust?".
- The discussion looked at the latest research on what fake news is, its patterns, the actors behind it, and the possible incentives, motivations, and agendas that drive it forward.
- In particular, Christian D'Cunha, Policy Assistant to the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), announced the imminent publication of an Opinion on the online manipulation of personal data, and explained that the EDPS is looking into ways to encourage more cooperation between different regulators, particularly electoral regulators, audiovisual regulators, and data protection regulators.
- Moreover, the EDPS wants to encourage the European Parliament to reform the e-Privacy Regulation, since it can be an extremely powerful tool to modify the incentives in the market.

EU: EDPS presents 2017 Annual Report at the EP

- On March 20, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) Giovanni Buttarelli presented the 2017 Annual Report to the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE).
- The [2017 Annual Report](#) claims that good progress has been made on the objectives of the EDPS. It states that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which will enter into force on 25 May 2018, is seen as a gold standard worldwide. However, the EDPS argued that new rules on ePrivacy are still needed.
- The EDPS has also announced that the 40th International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners will take place in October. The 2018 International Conference [website](#) has now been launched.

EU: ITRE Committee discusses Cybersecurity Act

- On March 21, the European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) held an [exchange of views](#) on the European Commission's proposal on the EU Cybersecurity Agency (ENISA), and on the Cybersecurity Act.
- Concerning the new mandate for ENISA, rapporteur Angelika Niebler (EPP, DE) argued that the Commission should have more ambitious plans, suggesting that over 500 people more would be needed for the Agency to be able to carry out its envisaged tasks effectively.
- On the proposed EU certification framework, the rapporteur believes it should follow a risk-based and outcome-focused approach. She proposes that for different products the risk involved should be identified and then a decision should be taken on whether certification should be compulsory or not.
- The shadow rapporteurs also shared their opinions on the file. Members who took the floor agreed that the proposed legislation was timely and needed, and were in favour of the proposed permanent agency status for ENISA. In regards to the EU certification framework, most MEPs agreed on the voluntary approach put forward by the Commission, but stressed that this should be subject to a risk-based analysis.

NL: Dutch citizens vote against new surveillance law

- A consultative referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act 2017 was [held](#) in the Netherlands on March 21, along with the municipal elections.
- 48.7% of voters voted against the new legislation and 47.3 for (the other ballots were spoilt or blank). The legislation would have granted law enforcement authorities far-reaching surveillance powers, including the collection of data from large groups of people at once.
- The new law, described as a “Big Brother charter” by critics and privacy experts, will still be debated in the Upper House of Parliament at the end of April, to then enter into force in May. However, following the referendum, the government coalition may want to rethink its position.