

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



2 February 2019 – 8 February 2019

<https://www.Internetsociety.org/regions/europe/>

Frédéric Donck (ERB)

Internet Access

EU: How Europe can win the “5G Olympics”

- In his latest blog [post](#), the Director General of the European Commission’s DG Connect, Roberto Viola, compares the global race to develop 5G to the Olympic Games.
- Just like an athlete “a 5G network or device needs to have different abilities and strengths...very high capacity, speed, low latency, high reliability or the ability to connect a massive number of devices per square kilometre”.
- Europe is underinvesting, with the US investing an average of €194 per year per capita in the telecoms sector, compared to €92 in the EU, says Viola, explaining that Europe’s fragmented markets and substantial investment into 3G slowed down its take-up of 4G and putting it behind for 5G deployment.
- But, Europe’s strong industrial sectors in automotive, manufacturing and health, are an opportunity to be exploited, especially as the Commission’s 5G Observatory reports that Europe is leading with 140 major 5G trials for vertical sectors, made possible by a strong public-private partnership model.

EU: “Large differences” persist between countries on digital performance, says Commission

- Answering a [Parliamentary Question](#) from Spanish MEP Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto (S&D) on the EU’s actions on digitisation in rural and depopulated areas, the Commission responded this week that much work remain to bridge Europe’s digital divide.
- Some progress has been made. Between 2014-2020, Member States allocated around €6 billion of structural funds to finance high-speed broadband roll-out of at least 30 Mbps to more than 14.5m additional households.
- The Connecting Europe Broadband Fund launched in Spring 2018 also helps smaller-scale and higher risk projects in remote areas, with an expected leverage of €1.7bn. The Commission also highlighted initiatives like the “EU Action for Smart Villages”, helping to revitalise rural areas through social and digital innovation, and the Broadband Competence Offices Network, a voluntary initiative aimed at speeding up the deployment of broadband in areas lagging behind.
- In the next EU budget, the Commission provides €3bn in grants for different investments in very high capacity networks in areas of milder market failure.
- But despite the progress, Corinna Cretu, the EU’s regional commissioner, emphasised that “there are still large differences between Member States and regions, as well as citizens living in urban and rural areas”.

Croatia: 135,000 communities to get high speed broadband

- The European Commission's Connecting Europe Broadband Fund (CEBF) has [signed](#) an agreement with two telecom companies from Slovenia and Croatia to invest €30m into high-quality fibre-to-the-home broadband in Croatia.
- The RuNe Group will deploy an open-access network for residential, business and public administrations in the rural areas of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar and Istria regions, both in the North-Western parts of the country, covering over 135,000 locations.
- The €420m CEBF is managed by Cube Infrastructure and piloted by the European Commission, with funding from the European investment Bank, and national infrastructure funds, the German KfW Bankengruppe, the Italian Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia and France's Caisse des Dépôts et consignations.

Trust

Global: Google pays more in fines than in taxes

- A [report](#) by The Inquirer finds that Google now pays more in fines to EU authorities for data breach and anti-trust violations than it does in taxes. Google's earnings report showed the company paid \$4.2bn in income taxes in 2018, but paid \$5.1bn in fines the same year.
- This does not include the most recent €50m fine imposed by the French authorities for a GDPR violation, and that is now being challenged by Google.

EU: Safer Internet Day 2019, EC announces new measures on child safety

- The European Commission (EC) marked Safer Internet Day 2019 on February 5 2019 with the [creation](#) of a new Expert Group on "Safer Internet for Children" to improve coordination between Member States and propose concrete actions to keep children safe online.
- Speaking about the initiative, Mariya Gabriel, the EU Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: "On this day, we focus more than ever on ways to enhance safe, positive and inclusive use of digital technology, especially among children and young people."

EU: EU calls for talks with US on law enforcement access to data

- The European Commission has this week [recommended](#) opening talks with the US administration on cross-border law enforcement access to data. Issuing draft negotiating mandates, EU Justice Commissioner, Vera Jourova, has called for talks over how to speed up law enforcement access to data stored in the US arguing that "much of the data needed to track down ... criminals is stored in the U.S. or by U.S. companies".
- The talks are also aimed to address conflicts in laws on e-evidence as there has been concern from some EU companies that complying with the US CLOUD Act may put them at odds with European privacy rules such as the GDPR. The Commission is submitting the two recommendations for the negotiating mandates to the Council.
- The recommendations will now be considered by the Council, which must formally adopt a decision to authorise the Commission to open negotiations in line with the negotiating directives set out in the mandates.

EU: Romanian Presidency circulate new ePrivacy text

- The Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU circulated a new compromise proposal on the ePrivacy Regulation (ePR) this week following the seminar sessions organised by the European Commission last month which were designed to allay Member State concerns around how the ePR would apply to IoT devices and scanning Internet services for child pornography.
- The ePR complements the GDPR with stronger privacy safeguards for new players, updating privacy rules originally designed for traditional telecoms services (fixed line and mobile phones) including by introducing limits on how platforms or apps can use metadata for marketing purposes, ensuring they are only done with a person's consent.

- The new text circulated does not have any dramatic changes. The amendments relate mainly to situations of multiple end-users and the question of consent. The new text however includes an explicit permission to process data for the purposes of detecting and deleting material constituting child pornography.
- However, there remains much scepticism about any meaningful evolution in the Council before the end of the Romanian Presidency as Member States remain divided and the Presidency is rumoured to not have the necessary political influence to move the discussions forward.

EU: Copyright - music and audio-visual industries lobby against the reform

- A [joint letter](#) signed by music labels, commercial broadcasters and the football industry, calls for an end to the EU copyright directive discussions “on the basis of current proposals”, because “the outcome of these negotiations in several of the Council discussions has been to produce a text that contains elements that fundamentally go against copyright principles enshrined in EU and international copyright law.”
- The copyright directive is still strongly supported by collecting societies, who argue that without this reform “creators will be entirely deprived of any means to get a fair remuneration...the market will be entirely driven by the commercial interests of free-riding tech giants.”
- Authors from both the audio-visual and music sectors also support the directive because of the additional remuneration rights it intends to provide.
- In a different [joint letter](#), this time signed by the Society of Audiovisual Authors and the European Composers & Songwriter Alliance, the signatories call on negotiators to press on: “it is time to agree, in this last round of trilogue negotiations, on a meaningful Article-14 that is a first step forward in ensuring member states provide authors and performers with a fair and equitable remuneration from digital services when their works and performances are made available online”.

Germany: Competition authority orders Facebook to change data collection procedures

- Germany’s competition authority, the Bundeskartellamt, ordered Facebook this week to stop combining the user data it gathers through external websites.
- German Facebook users will now need to give their consent to allow the social network to combine data from their WhatsApp and Instagram accounts, and from third-party websites with their Facebook data.
- Speaking about the case, Andreas Mundt, the President of the Bundeskartellamt, said: “The previous practice of combining all data in a Facebook user account, practically without any restriction, will now be subject to the voluntary consent given by the users.”
- The social media company announced it will challenge the ruling before the Higher Regional Court of Dusseldorf.