

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

EU: The next European Parliament takes shape

- Following the EU elections on May 24-26, the new Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will be deciding in the coming weeks on committee membership and leadership, and eventually who will be leading on key digital files.
- Digital Commissioner Mariya Gabriel stated this week she would keep her position until the end of the Commission's mandate, thus giving up her MEP seat. Conversely, Vice-President of the Commission Andrus Ansip, who was elected in Estonia to the EP, however suggested he would take his seat and give up on his executive post.
- Other recent developments include the four German members of the Pirate Party joining a strong Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament. Despite their former chair Julia Reda not returning, the party is likely to play a prominent role on privacy issues. In addition, Czech EPP Pavel Svoboda, former chair of the European Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee – which handles the EU's copyright reform – was not re-elected, meaning the committee will appoint a new chair, likely to be done between the two Parliament plenary sessions planned in July.

EU: 5G deployment remains fragmented in the EU, says new study.

- The think tank Institut Montaigne has released a [report](#) analysing 5G security policy and the presence of Chinese company Huawei on the European market.
- The study finds that the EU is approaching 5G deployment in a fragmented or "dispersed order" due to the lack of a single telecoms market in the territory.
- Some countries such as Poland, Italy, Spain, Portugal or the Netherlands show deep 5G penetration, whereas others like Norway, Estonia, Denmark or Slovenia have become more difficult markets for the 5G deployment.
- The Montaigne Institute, broadly affiliated to centrist and liberal parties in France, also offers a set of recommendations around considering 5G as a critical infrastructure for European sovereignty, acting according to precautionary principles, and supporting an ecosystem that results in technological competitiveness in Europe.

EU: Court rules against Skype, saying it can be classified as a Telecoms operator

- The European Court of Justice [ruled](#) earlier this week that calls placed to mobile and fixed phones using Skype as a server would constitute a telecom service and not an internal one.

- The Microsoft-owned 'Skype to Phone' service allows users of a platform to place calls at a low-cost using Internet services with a technology known as "voice over IP" or VoIP.
- The ruling is likely to be welcomed by traditional telecoms operators and comes at a time when the European Commission seeks to level the gap between traditional telecoms providers and new Internet-based rivals.
- Following the Court's pronouncement, a Microsoft spokesperson stated: "We welcome the clarity provided by the court [...] Skype will comply with the Court's final decision".

EU: Ministers give green light to negotiate with the US on e-evidence

- The Council [authorised](#) yesterday the European Commission to negotiate on behalf of the EU an agreement with the United States government enabling easier access for both sides to electronic evidence (e-evidence), in a bid to enhance judicial cooperation.
- Improvements include judicial access to e-mails and documents located on the cloud, thereby complementing the existing EU framework on access to e-evidence – which is still being negotiated by EU lawmakers.
- Speaking on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the EU, Romanian Minister for Justice, Ana Birchall, stated: "A lot of the data is needed to track down [these] criminals is stored in the U.S. or by U.S. companies. An EU-US agreement to speed up the access is therefore of outmost importance."

Trust

Global: Mozilla to stop Facebook from tracking personal data

- This week, Mozilla's Firefox browser introduced a default option that restricts large social media companies, such as Facebook, from tracking people's web activity.
- The new feature blocks cookies from other companies that track user's online behaviour, this being crucial for activities such as revenue and web advertising.
- Dave Camp, Senior Vice-President at Firefox, [stated](#): "This past year, we've seen tech companies talk a big game about privacy as they're realising that after several global scandals, people feel increasingly vulnerable [...] It is unfortunate that this shift had to happen in order for companies to take notice".
- According to Camp, the new tool will help increase user safety and trust as they browse the Internet.

China: Chinese regulator to potentially copy EU rules on users' online protection

- The Chinese government proposed last week a new package of measures to reinforce data protection for individuals in the whole country.
- Among one of the [provisions](#) (see [unofficial translation](#)), companies that are "using user data and algorithms to deliver news information or commercial advertisements shall conspicuously label them with the words 'targeted' and provide users with functionality to stop receiving information from targeted delivery".
- The measure resembles the recent EU improvements on online data protection and will potentially lead to a harmonisation of rules in both the EU and China, thus creating a more protected online environment in the Asian country.

EU: European Data Protection Authority identifies data flaws on EU institutions' websites

- Following an investigation conducted by the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), the authority has [flagged](#) data protection and security issues in seven out of ten of the EU websites analysed.
- EDPS Giovanni Buttarelli stated: "The responses to this remote inspection have been reassuring. The EU institutions responsible for the most important websites have informed us of technical measures that they have implemented to significantly reduce the risks to security and privacy that were detected in our inspection".

- Consequently, all inspected EU websites now provide HTTPS connections and have reduced the number of third-party trackers they use. Next steps include the investigation of the most visited EU websites.

EU: Platforms must do more against fake news, say policymakers and experts

- Civil society groups, members of the Transatlantic Commission on Election Integrity and Members of the European Parliament have addressed a [letter](#) to the EU institutions asking them to assess the impact that platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Google or Instagram had had in the EU election campaign.
- The platforms mentioned in the letter had recently signed the [Code of Practice](#) against the spread of online disinformation and fake news.
- Earlier this year, the Commission published a [progress report](#) recognising the progress made by these platforms and asking them to “step up their efforts to broaden cooperation with fact checkers in all Member States”.
- The letter suggests the creation of an “ad hoc committee of parliamentarians from national parliaments and the European Parliament” to address the issue of fake news and online disinformation.