

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

Global: Microsoft plans to roll out internet access to 40 Million People by 2022

- Microsoft has [announced](#) that "through the new international track of the Airband Initiative, our goal is to extend internet access to 40 million unserved and underserved people around the globe by July 2022."
- It plans to work with local ISPs and communities to implement affordable internet access and encourage regulators to use TV White Space (TVWS) — wireless frequencies that can be reprogrammed to allow wide-ranging internet access.
- The company will also enable "rural digital transformation in newly connected areas, with a focus on supporting agriculture, education, rural entrepreneurship, and telemedicine, as well as off-grid energy sources were necessary in order to improve rural productivity and livelihood."

EU: Committee of the Regions calls for more connectivity investment

- In a debate with Finland's Minister for European Affairs Tytti Tuppurainen, EU's local and regional representatives have [called](#) on the EU to ensure all regions and their citizens benefit from the digital and ecological transitions.
- The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) also adopted two opinions on 9 October requested by Finland's Presidency of the Council of the EU, which focus on tackling the [digital divide](#) and ensuring [cohesion and solidarity](#) for all Europeans.

Spain: Broadband market stats published

- Of the 15 million fixed broadband connections in Spain, 11.5 million (up 1.6 million on a year earlier) had a contracted speed of 30Mbps or higher.
- In March 2019, 87.7% of fixed broadband lines were provided by the three main operators, or almost three percentage points than a year earlier.
- The National Commission on Markets and Competition (CNMC) also [reported](#) that the total number of quadruple and quintuple packages stood at 12.3 million in Q1, with the latter growing the most during the year.

Trust

Global: Facebook encryption plans continue to divide stakeholders

- Controversy is growing around Facebook's encryption plans, with the US, UK and Australia sending an [open letter](#) to Facebook asking it not to go ahead with its plans for end-to-end encryption as the social network shifts towards messaging.
- FBI Director Christopher Wray [warned](#) that Facebook's proposed move to encrypt its messenger would turn the platform into a "dream come true for predators and child pornographers."
- The Internet Society together with more than 110 organizations has signed [an open letter](#) telling Facebook to 'in no uncertain terms, continue increasing the end-to-end security across Facebook's messaging services.'

Global: Twitter user data wrongly used for advertising

- Twitter [disclosed](#) on Tuesday that user's email addresses and phone numbers collected for safety or security purposes were inadvertently used for advertising purpose.
- Twitter said it doesn't know for certain how many of its users were affected but stressed that no data was shared with third parties. The issue, was resolved on Sept. 17, according to the company.
- The slip-up comes as debate intensifies both in the US and Europe on stronger safeguards to help protect users' data privacy.

EU: EU Internet Forum garners commitment to an EU-wide Crisis Protocol

- The 5th EU Internet Forum has produced a [commitment](#) from its participants to an EU Crisis Protocol, which is a rapid response to contain the viral spread of terrorist and violent extremist content online.
- The European Commission, Member States and online service providers, including Facebook, Twitter, Google, Microsoft, Dropbox, JustPaste.it and Snap have committed to working together in adherence to the protocol.
- Discussion was also held on the overall progress made in ensuring the removal of terrorist content online and tackling other challenges since its last meeting in December 2018.

EU: France and Denmark sign joint vision on cyber norms

- French and Danish "digital ambassadors" Henri Verdier and Casper Klynge have signed a [joint vision](#) that sets out the country's approach to internet freedom and cyber diplomacy.
- The vision commits the two countries to "engaging at the global level, with a clear and strongly normative vision, on the issues raised by digital technologies," including the defence of data protection rules and net neutrality.
- The text promotes the EU as "a 'soft power' in the digital era" and gives a nod to the incoming commission's priorities on technological sovereignty and digital business.

EU: Von der Leyen warns the EU must harness data or be 'crushed' in tech war

- On Thursday, Commission President-elect von der Leyen and German Health Minister Jens Spahn [warned](#) in an article for Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, that the EU risks being "crushed in a 'global tech war'" if the continent doesn't develop a plan for handling data.
- Von der Leyen and Spahn called for the EU to use the "huge potential" of data better and in a way that benefits society, while also protecting citizens from data misuse, referring to the German health care system as a good example,

with citizens able to volunteer their data in a controlled and anonymized format.

- The two were careful to distinguish the EU from the US and China, stating that their use of data was “incompatible with our European ideals.”

EU: Member State 5G risk assessment report published

- EU Member States have published a [report](#) on the EU coordinated risk assessment on cybersecurity in 5G networks.
- The report comes at a time when several EU Member States are considering measures to restrict the use of Chinese telecoms equipment maker, Huawei, technology in 5G networks due to potential security risks.
- The report identified security challenges mainly linked to key innovations in the 5G technology and the role of suppliers in building and operating 5G networks, highlighting an increased exposure to attacks and more potential entry points for attackers, increased sensitivity of certain pieces of network equipment, as well as increased exposure to risks related to the reliance on suppliers.

EU: Stakeholders call for the rethink of ePrivacy legislation

- Over fifty associations from a range of sectors have come together to [urge](#) the EU institutions to reconsider its proposal for an ePrivacy Regulation.
- They argue that without a major overhaul of the text, Europe’s digital transformation will be severely hampered as a result of the legal uncertainty and rigidity brought about by the ePrivacy Regulation.
- Signatories of the petition include, EDIMA, IEF–Internet Economy Foundation, European Tech Alliance, BSA - The Software Alliance, CCIA–Computer and Communications Industry Association.

EU: European Commission to create a European Digital Media Observatory

- The European Commission has launched a [call for projects](#) worth a maximum of €2.5 million to create a platform to fight against online disinformation ahead of a wave of upcoming elections.
- The platform aims to bring together fact-checkers, university researchers and media organizations in the fight against disinformation. It would also create a framework for academic researchers to have access to platforms’ data.
- The call, which follows up on a December 2018 action plan against fake news, is open until December 2019.