European Regional Bureau Newsletter

Internet Access

EU: European Parliament approves deal on 5G mobile broadband

- On 14 March, the European Parliament voted in favour of the repurposing of the 470-790 MHz frequency band in the European Union for 5G telecommunication and radio and digital television broadcast.
- Commission Vice President Andrus Ansip stated that the vote was a "milestone in EU's spectrum coordination" to improve connectivity in Europe by 2020.
- DigitalEurope welcomed the decision of the European Parliament as "This 700 MHz spectrum band is particularly important for 5G services, such as for connected cars."

EU: European Parliament Study on telecoms regulation

- The European Parliament released a study on the optimal regulatory model for telecommunications services in the EU.
- The study reviews market trends for digital networks and applications. It critically assesses the Commission proposal for a European Electronic Communications Code and claims that while it goes in the right direction, it is not ambitious enough.

EU: Digital Single Market Review in May

- European Commission is expected to release its mid-term review of the digital single market (DSM) strategy on 10 May.
- The review may include an effort to put pressure on certain files that are moving slowly, such as the online shopping proposal. It is expected to also offer new research on business-to-business practices of internet platforms.

EU: AT&T and Time Warner merger approved

- On 15 March, the European Commission cleared the deal between AT&T and Time Warner without any conditions.
- It justified this decision with reference to the fact that AT&T's business in Europe is only limited to telecommunication services to business consumers.

Trust

Global: Thousands of Twitter accounts hacked amid diplomatic conflict between Turkey and the Netherlands

- A number of Twitter accounts including Forbes, Amnesty International or the European Parliament, were hacked on 14 March used to post pro-Turkish propaganda amid the diplomatic crisis between the country and the Netherlands.

- All the accounts were hacked through their use of the third-party analytics service Twitter Counter. The European Parliament indicated that it would limit the number of external apps and services linked to its Twitter accounts to avoid further hackings.

EU: Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos met with Facebook, Twitter and Google
- As a follow up to the EU Internet Forum of December 2016, Home Affairs Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos met leading Internet companies to tackle the issue of terrorist content online.
- The Commission launched a support program worth €10 million to help civil society organizations fight terrorist propaganda and hate speech online. It will host a round table with tech giants and smaller tech companies in April.
- These discussions are conditioned upon the outcome of the debates over online platforms liability regime within the review of the e-commerce directive.

EU: European Data Protection Supervisor's report on the Digital Content Directive
- The European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) Giovanni Buttarelli's report stated that personal data should not be used as a form of payment in online services. He believes that the proposed rules could contravene the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- His opinion, although non-binding, is likely to escalate tensions between the three European institutions regarding the directive – on which current Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union was hoping to close a deal before July.

EU: European Parliament adopts big data report
- On 14 March, the European Parliament passed a non-bidding report on big data. The resolution warned about privacy and discrimination issues connected to the use of big data.
- It draws attention to the need to ensure public trust in technologies by strong enforcement of fundamental rights and compliance with data protection law.

EU: European Parliament wants e-privacy deal by October
- Marju Lauristin, rapporteur on the e-Privacy Regulation, revealed the Parliament's timeline to reach a deal on e-privacy.
- She plans on submitting her report – which will form the basis of the Parliament's position on privacy rules for the electronic communications sector - by the end of June. A committee vote is then due to be held on October 11 or 12, before a plenary vote also in October.

EU: ENISA report on European standardisation
- On 15 March, ENISA released a study on European standardisation within the context of the NIS Directive.
- The aim of the study is to identify gaps and overlaps in standardisation and to provide recommendations such as adopting a standard based framework for the exchange of threat and defensive measure information and promoting synergies between the European Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS) and the USA Cybersecurity Act.

EU: EDRi Open letter on copyright proposal
- Following the release of a leaked version of the European Parliament's draft report on copyright, European Digital Rights (EDRi) signed a joint open letter together with 27 other civil society organisations to stop what it describes as a "censorship machine."
- It expresses strong concerns over the proposed obligation for Internet platforms to use automated upload filtering technologies, believing this could "impact negatively on free speech and democracy" and create "a system where citizens will face Internet platforms blocking the upload of their content."

EU: European consumer authorities warning to Internet platforms on scams
- Justice and Consumers Commissioner Vera Jourová called on Internet platforms to to take actions on scams within a month or face fines.
- This call follows <u>a letter</u> sent by the EU's national consumer authorities and the Commission to large Internet platforms last November.

EU: Telcos can share customer data across EU
- On 15 March, the European Court of Justice <u>ruled</u> that a telephone subscriber's data can be shared throughout the European Union if they consent to share the information in their home nation.

Germany: Fighting hate speech and fake news
- Germany's justice minister has proposed a new law to fight hate speech and fake news with fines up to €50 million for social media networks.
- The new law would also require social media companies to clearly explain rules and complaint procedures to users and follow up on each complaint. The proposal could be adopted this summer ahead of the German federal election.
- The European Commission has so far been pursuing voluntary codes of conduct rather than legislative action.