

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

EU: WP on Telecommunications and Information Society meeting

- The Working Party on Telecommunications and Information Society [meets](#) on 10 January. There, the new Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission will present their respective work programmes.
- The meeting will also be an occasion to exchange views on the proposal for a Directive establishing the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC), currently being discussed by the co-legislators (Commission, European Parliament and Council) at trilogue meetings.

Trust

Global: CEO Zuckerberg sets “fix” Facebook as a New Year’s challenge

- Mark Zuckerberg [pledged](#) to work on fixing Facebook’s numerous problems which came up in 2017. Among other things he announced that he planned to study encryption and cryptocurrencies to “see how best to use them in our services.”
- In his Facebook post, Zuckerberg noted that the world felt “anxious and divided”. The social network itself has faced [criticisms](#) for leaving a window open to discriminatory content and allowing fake news.
- Zuckerberg now claims he is determined to make a change and “protect Facebook’s community from abuse and hate.”

Germany: New Social Media Hate Speech Law now fully enforced

- The beginning of the New Year 2018 marks the start of [full enforcement](#) of Germany’s anti-hate speech law, the Network Enforcement Act (“NetzDG”). This does not add new elements to the definition of “hate speech”, already included in the country’s [criminal code](#), but forces companies to police hate speech or face fines up to €50 million.
- Under NetzDG, social media companies must respond to government requests to remove illegal content, notably hate speech and fake news, within 24 hours of receipt. It allows a week to consider more ambiguous cases.
- The law, which passed in July, does not apply to messaging applications.

- Following the full enforcement of the law, Twitter and Facebook have already temporarily [blocked](#) some accounts and content online.
- Critics believe the NetzDG undermines free speech and forces companies to take decisions on issues that should be a matter for Germany's courts while deleting innocuous content in their eagerness to avoid fines.

Global: Chip security flaws hit computer processors worldwide

- A major security bug was [discovered](#) in Intel's computer chips manufactured after 1995. It is considered that it may be a "fundamental design flaw" which will require changes at the OS level to be fixed.
- This flaw could enable hackers to access sensitive data such as passwords, login keys and more from the chip itself. Hackers could also insert malware into PCs via the opening, and could potentially affect servers in data centres that run cloud computing services (i.e. Amazon Web Services).
- "Meltdown" is the name given to the vulnerability affecting Intel chips; while "Spectre" is the name given to the vulnerability affecting in other chip vendors (as well as Intel, including ARM, and AMD).
- The UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) issued [guidance](#) on Meltdown and Spectre, including advice on what people can do to protect themselves.

UK: Security Minister threatens to tax "ruthless profiteer" companies if they do not do more to fight extremism

- The UK government is considering new taxes on big tech companies like Facebook and Google because of their alleged inaction against extremist groups.
- Security Minister, Ben Wallace, [called](#) tech companies "ruthless profiteers", accusing them of not doing enough to help the government to fight terrorists that take advantage of their platforms.
- He [added](#) that "because of encryption and radicalisation, the cost is heaped on law enforcement agencies," and if tech giants continue to be less than co-operative, the government should look at means like a tax as to encourage them or compensate for their inaction".

Belgium: Privacy watchdog threatens fines for eavesdropping apps

- The Belgian Commission for the Protection of Privacy has [said](#) it may take action against eavesdropping apps that listen to what a smartphone user is watching on TV, over privacy concerns.
- Fines may follow once the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) takes effect on May 25.

EU-Japan: data transfer deal expected in spring 2018

- During a visit to Tokyo, European Justice Commissioner Věra Jourová [met](#) with the Japanese Data Protection Authority to advance the dialogue on the promotion of high data protection standards. Commissioner Jourová [reaffirmed](#) the EU's aim of finalising a data transfer agreement with Japan as soon as possible in 2018.
- She [added](#) that an adequacy decision would allow the flow of personal data between EU and Japan without the need for extra authorisations, thus cutting costs and red tape. A number of issues remain unsolved, however the Commissioner said she was confident that, if they breach these differences, an agreement will be concluded in spring this year.
- The next high-level meeting is expected to take place in the near future in Brussels with a view to finalising the discussions.

France: President Macron announces bill against fake news

- On January 3, during a New Year's address to the press corps at the Elysee Palace in Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron [announced](#) a new law to combat “Fake News”.
- President Macron said he wanted to change the country’s legal system to protect democratic life from fake news. “During the election period, on the Internet, content will no longer have exactly the same rules,” he said.
- The proposed law would allow for “content to be taken down, user accounts deleted and websites blocked if needed,” he added.
- President Macron aims to make platforms more transparent and give media regulators (e.g. the media watchdog CSA) more power to fight fake news.

Other**EU: Bulgaria Presidency of the Council of the EU’s programme and priorities**

- On January 1, Bulgaria formally took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU from Estonia. Its mandate will last until 30 June 2018. The [programme](#) of the Presidency is now available, along with its [priorities](#), as well as the [calendar](#) and [provisional agendas](#) of the Council meetings.
- Bulgaria aims to continue working and make significant progress on a number of crucial files, including the free movement of non-personal data and the Cybersecurity Act.
- Bulgaria also considers the step-by-step adoption of the EU Roaming Rules by the Western Balkan countries (through gradual reduction of the charges and increasing the broadband Internet access opportunities) to be an important initiative for digital connectivity.
- The country also puts a strong emphasis on the need to further invest in research and innovation, as well as digital skills.