

# European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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## Internet Access

### EU: Commission blames Member States for being behind target on broadband coverage

- The European Commission has [responded](#) to criticism about a European Court of Auditors report which found the EU's goal of ensuring that half of European households have ultra-fast broadband connections by 2020 is significantly behind target.
- The [Special Report](#), published in June, found that rural areas remain problematic; 14 out of all 28 Member States had less than 50% fast broadband coverage in rural areas. Moreover, only 15% of all households had subscribed to ultra-fast broadband by mid-2017.
- The Commission claimed that whilst EU policy, regulatory and financing initiatives support broadband roll-out, national and regional authorities remain responsible for the design, implementation and fulfilment of their own broadband strategies.

### EU: Protests on EU Copyright reforms spill into European capitals

- Protests took place this week across European capitals over the attempt to overhaul EU copyright rules ahead of a key vote in the European Parliament on September 12. There was [limited attendance](#), however.
- Internet activists claim that the legislation, which was proposed by the European Commission in 2016, would amount to censorship of the Internet. It would require the likes of Google and Microsoft to install filters to prevent users from uploading copyrighted materials.

### Finland: Nokia secures €500m EU loan for 5G research

- The Finnish company signed a [deal](#) this week with the European Investment Bank (EIB) which will see it receive €500 million in financing for its research and development of 5G technology. The loan is backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), also known as the 'Juncker Plan'. The EU is concerned

that China and the US are moving fast with 5G and want to ensure that European companies are involved in the race.

#### **UK: Local government broadband funding**

- The UK Government is encouraging local authorities to bid for a share of its £95 million '[Local Full Fibre Networks Challenge Fund](#)'. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has opened applications for expressions of interest from local bodies for a third-round of funding. Applications need to demonstrate that they can either deliver broadband in rural or hard-to reach locations, help improve public sector services or remove barriers to the commercial roll-out of fibre and 5G. There will be no fixed date for formal submissions - instead, local bodies with an interest in bidding for the Challenge Fund are invited to submit an informal expression of interest to the programme.

## Trust

#### **EU: Online terrorist content regulation due mid-September**

- The expected proposal for a new regulation which would compel online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to remove terrorist content within an hour is due to be discussed at the European Commissioners' retreat this weekend. EU Commissioners head off for their annual special seminar on Thursday to finalise what should be said in Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's state of the European Union address on September 12.
- According to officials, the proposed regulation would require EU Member States to designate a national authority capable of determining what counts as terrorist content and give notices to tech companies to remove the flagged content. The costs of non-compliance could be high, similar to the GDPR-style fines of up to four percent of global annual turnover.

#### **EU: No EU DPA in charge of Google yet**

- Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU's new privacy rules, companies active in multiple EU countries abide by a one-stop-shop principle that allows them to deal with one data protection authority (DPA), rather than dealing separately with DPAs in 28 countries. However, it is understood that no EU DPA currently has lead responsibility for Google.
- With its European headquarters in Ireland, Google has identified the Irish Data Protection Commission as its lead DPA in Europe, but according to reports, the Irish DPA does not yet have the responsibility to launch privacy investigations against Google because the company has not completed its establishment in Ireland.

#### **EU: Date set for ECJ appeal for Google 'right to be forgotten' case**

- Google's appeal against the decision of the French data protection authority (CNIL) on its 'right to be forgotten' ruling will begin in the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on September 11.
- The EU 'right to be forgotten' rules allow private citizens to request search engines to delist incorrect, irrelevant or out of date information from search results about them. CNIL argues that the delistings should apply globally rather than just on local domains and fined Google €100,000 in May 2017. Google [appealed](#) the decision and the case is now due to be heard in the ECJ.

#### **EU: Applications for expert group on business-to-government data sharing**

- The European Commission has [opened applications](#) for its new expert group on business-to-government data sharing. The group will look into government access to, and re-use of, private sector data for public interest purposes. The group will provide advice on future policy and funding initiatives.
- The deadline for applications is September 28 and the first meeting of the new group will be in November.

#### **Estonia: New 'Cybersecurity' Ambassador role**

- Estonia is following the lead of Australia and France in creating a new cyber ambassador role to strengthen the country's influence on cybersecurity policy in the world. It is understood that the current head of cyber policy coordination at the EU's External Action Service (EEAS), Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar, will be appointed to the role of Ambassador at Large for Cybersecurity in September.
- Wiktor Staniecki, currently based at the EU delegation in Tokyo, will replace Tiirmaa-Klaar as head of cyber policy coordination at the EEAS. However, attempts in the European Parliament to create the EU's own cyber ambassador role were voted down this week. The Foreign Affairs Committee voted down Marietje Schaake MEP (NL, ALDE) amendment which would have created funding €500,000 for a cyber envoy role.

#### **Germany: New cyber defence agency**

- The German Government [announced](#) this week that it will invest €200 million over the next five years to launch an agency that will develop its own cyber defence capabilities. The new agency will be a joint interior and defence ministry project and will be modelled on the U.S. Pentagon research agency DARPA. Its focus will be on developing "disruptive" technology to make Germany more independent in its fight against cyber threats.

#### **Germany: Berlin seeks ECJ review of its data retention law**

- The German Government is seeking a ECJ review over whether its data retention law which requires telecoms and Internet companies to store customer data for law enforcement purposes is constitutional.
- The law was de facto overturned when the ECJ ruled a year later that similar laws in other European countries were disproportionately wide.

- [Politico reports](#) suggest Berlin considers the ECJ's judgment from December 2016 unclear on whether or not Germany's 2015 law breaks European rules, and want the ECJ to review Germany's law specifically.

#### **UK: Data breach complaints soar since GDPR**

- The number of data protection breach complaints to the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has [more than doubled](#) since GDPR came into force on May 25. The complaints are made up of individuals alleging that their personal data had been shared without their permission as well as companies self-reporting incidents where data was accessed.
- According to a freedom of information request, the ICO received 6,281 complaints between the period May 25 - July 3. That compared with 2,417 complaints in the same period last year.

#### **Global: Australia bans Huawei from government procurement**

- Australia has joined a number of western countries, including the US & UK, in [banning](#) the Chinese telecom equipment-maker, Huawei, from public procurement. Reports suggest that Canada and New Zealand are also considering a ban, whilst France, Germany and the European Commission have not decided whether to introduce a wholesale government ban on Huawei, opening up a divide between the so-called 'Five Eye' intelligence sharing countries and continental Europe on the issue.