

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

EU: EU telecoms agency presents its draft 2019 work programme

- The Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) this week presented its draft work programme at a [stakeholder forum](#) in Brussels.
- Jeremy Godfrey, the incoming BEREC Chair 2019 described BEREC's planned actions focussing on part on the work BEREC had to do on guidelines related to the new EU telecoms framework – the European Electronic Communications Code.
- He noted that the BEREC 2019 Work Programme was still [open to feedback](#) until 7 November and requested input.

EU: Digital Commissioner highlights EU's efforts in improving rural connectivity

- During the FT-ETNO Summit, Commissioner Mariya Gabriel stressed how the EU's new telecommunications Code was a leap forward in ensuring that those inhabiting rural areas benefit from better connectivity.
- Addressing an audience of industry representatives from the telecoms sector, the Commissioner said that, thanks to the Code: "citizens will have access to affordable communications services, including universally available Internet access for services" but also services such as "eGovernment, online banking and video calls".
- In a nod to the lobbying efforts of the telecoms sector, she acknowledged the industry's concerns over the capping of international calls but cited this change as an important success for consumers that would reap rewards in the long term.

UK: Online news consumption comparable to income inequality, says Reuters Institute

- A new [report](#) from the [Reuters Institute](#) (University of Oxford) finds strong inequalities in the readership and consumption of online news, highlighting a growing digital divide.

- The differences between the ways in which richer and poorer social groups access online information is established based on their reliance on a factor called “direct discovery” or the tendency of users to directly click on news websites instead of being guided there by “distributed” forms of discovery on social media and search engines.
- In a survey limited to UK-data, the authors found that poorer social groups use fewer sources of online news, are less likely to go directly to news organisations for information, and are consequently more reliant on distributed discovery of news via social media and search engines.
- The study suggests that social inequality in news consumption will continue to increase as we move towards a more digital media environment, due to the prevalence and ease of access of distributed forms of discovery, concluding that policy-makers should spend less time talking about the polarisation of online users and more about the unequal access to high-quality news.

Trust

EU: Trust leadership will be our next challenge, says new BEREC Chair

- Europe must seize the opportunity to restore trust into big data through pro-privacy regulation, declared the incoming Chair of BEREC, the European telecoms agency.
- During the panel “Dialogue: 2020 Vision” of the [FT-ETNO Summit](#), Jeremy Godfrey said the next wave of challenges for telecom regulators would include facing new political objectives, fast technological change, globalisation and a demand for strong pro-privacy initiatives.
- Chaired by the Financial Times newspaper and organised with the European Telecommunications Network Operators’ Association (ETNO), the Summit gathered government ministers, company CEOs and European regulators to discuss future connectivity trends.
- In a panel on “access, fairness and competitiveness”, the outgoing chair of BEREC, Johannes Gungl, [touched](#) upon the impact of Net Neutrality regulation on the roll-out of 5G. He said that in 2018, BEREC had tried to find out whether the current framework of rules on Net Neutrality posed a threat, concluding that there were none and that “the EU’s current Net Neutrality framework is flexible enough for 5G”.

EU: Online platforms and advertisers unveil their action-plans on fake news

- On Tuesday, a group of companies, including Google, Facebook, Twitter and Mozilla, [presented](#) their individual action plans on tackling fake news to the European Commission (EC).
- The move follows the establishment of the EU’s voluntary code of practice for tackling disinformation online, [published](#) in September 2018 as a voluntary set of self-regulatory standards. The action plans are intended to serve as the concrete realisation of these commitments.

- Facebook's pledges include "training for all European Parliament political groups on election integrity and on the use of Facebook as a campaigning tool" to be planned in autumn 2018, and rolling out "political ad labelling and the political ads library" by spring 2019.
- The EC will assess the code's implementation within one year, while representatives of the companies are expected to "meet regularly" to analyse their progress.

EU: Blockchain technology clashes with GDPR, says new report

- The EU's courts and data protection authorities have not conclusively settled issues between the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and blockchain, says a new [report](#) published by the European Commission's Blockchain Observatory.
- Three main tensions are highlighted between the distributed ledger technologies and the EU's new data protection rules, namely: the difficulties in identifying the obligations of data controllers and processors; disagreements on when personal data should be anonymised; and the difficulty in exercising new data subject rights, like the right to be forgotten and the possibilities to erase certain data on blockchain technologies.
- As a solution, the authors propose four rule-of-thumb principles for entrepreneurs and innovators: they should "start with the big picture" and decide whether blockchain is needed and really meets their data-needs; avoid storing personal data on blockchain and use data obfuscation and encryption techniques instead; if blockchain can't be avoided, favour private, permissioned blockchain networks; and be transparent with users.

EU: US Commerce Secretary in Brussels for EU-US Privacy Shield Review

- The 2nd [Annual Review](#) of the EU-US Privacy Shield - the data protection agreement designed to protect companies on both sides of the Atlantic when transferring personal data - took place in Brussels this week (Oct 18-19).
- US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross led the US delegation, joined by US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Chairman Joe Simons. The two met the EU's Justice Commissioner Vera Jourová on Thursday to kick off the two-day review. The review focused on the commercial aspects on the first day, notably questions related to the oversight and enforcement of the Shield. The second day covered developments on the collection of personal data by US authorities for purposes of law enforcement or national security.
- The FTC claims that the agency is fulfilling its 2016 promise to conduct "vigorous enforcement" of the Privacy Shield arrangement but some critics in Europe argue the US has not kept up its end of the deal by failing to strengthen US protections on data use.
- In July this year, the European Parliament [called](#) on the Commission to suspend the Privacy Shield as it "fails to provide enough data protection for EU citizens".

- The Commission will publish its conclusions in a report at the end of November 2018.

UK: Government officials warn ministers against no-deal on data after Brexit

- A leaked UK government memo drafted over the summer by civil servants warned ministers of the “significant legal costs” for businesses if no deal was found on data after Britain’s exit from the European Union.
- The document provides a stark assessment of the consequences of a no-deal on data protection, more so than the current public statement on the issue: the technical data protection [notice](#). This earlier guidance focused on standard contractual clauses (a mechanism approved with the EC to offer minimum safeguards for the free flow of personal data) as the most relevant alternative legal basis for data transfers for companies in the UK. The leaked internal document, however, argues that only a deal on data would avoid “substantial disruption”.
- Meanwhile, on the industry side, the UK tech start-up lobby “The Coalition for a Digital Economy” has teamed up with the Washington-based Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) to launch a [report](#) claiming that both the EU and UK government underestimate the damage that a “data wall” could have on their tech sectors.

UK: Government agencies draft “world’s first” Code of Practice for the Internet of Things

- The UK’s Department for Digital (DCMS) and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) have published new measures to combat the insecurity of the Internet of Things (IoT).
- The government department launched the voluntary [Code of Practice](#) for consumer IoT security with the aim of ensuring businesses continue to strengthen the cyber security of their products at the design stage.
- The Code of Practice sets out “security by design” and includes advice like “make it easy for consumers to delete personal data.” HP Inc. and Centrica Hive Ltd are the first companies to sign-up and commit to the code.