

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

EU: Council of the EU adopts Single Digital Gateway Regulation

- The Council of the EU [adopted](#) on 27 September a regulation setting up a single digital gateway to facilitate access to online information and procedures, assistance and problem solving services.
- The new gateway aims to simplify eGovernment services in the hope that individuals and companies will find it easier to move and establish businesses in another Member State.
- The main elements of the proposal include an existing portal named “Your Europe” to which a number of networks in the languages of all Member States will be integrated. The gateway will make it easier, says the Commission, for citizens to request a proof of residence, apply for study loans, secure a European Health Card, or register employees for insurance schemes.
- Once the Council and European Parliament (EP) sign the regulation, it will enter into force on the twentieth day following its publication in the EU’s Official Journal.

Global: European Commission on Digitalisation in developing countries

- In response to a [Parliamentary question](#) on digitalisation in developing countries from MEP Louis Michel (ALDE, BE), the Commission emphasised the importance of digital technology to promote economic and human development.
- Furthermore, the Commission drew attention to its continued support of digital infrastructure projects including the “Central Africa Backbone project” and “Multinational Trans-Saharan Backbone Optical Fibre Project”.

Global: Commission VP Ansip at the UN Broadband Commission

- Commission VP for the Digital Single Market Andrus Ansip made a [statement](#) at the UN Broadband Commission meeting on 23 September, presenting a report on the drivers of digital entrepreneurship in the developing world.

- The report was developed by the broadband Commission's working group on digital entrepreneurship, which is itself chaired by VP Ansip.
- The report emphasises four main areas to promote digital entrepreneurship: digital infrastructure and macroeconomic fundamentals; policy support for government's digital entrepreneurship; fundamentals for stronger e-commerce; governance of regional and global markets.
- In his statement, Ansip highlighted the need to set up the digital economy for success. This involves "building connectivity infrastructure and making connections affordable", he said.

Trust

EU: Commission unveils fake news Code of Practice

- The European Commission has published a new [Code of Practice](#) developed jointly with several prominent Internet platforms to fight online disinformation.
- The Code, which limits itself to non-binding recommendations, calls for platforms to make commitments towards clearer policies on the use of automated bots and the placement of certain kinds of advertising.
- The Commission will publish the full document on October 9 or 10, along with a list of the Code's signatories and a roadmap for its implementation.

EU: "Race to the bottom" in ethics for AI remains a risk, says new report

- A new [report](#) released this week by the think tank The Future Society in the EP warns against an excessively competitive market for AI innovation that would drive out concerns for ethics, safety and human values.
- The recommendations made by the report, include setting up an intergovernmental panel of AI experts, establishing a global platform to exchange data, and developing schemes with employees, trade unions, employers and governments to train workers in AI.
- The report was released in the European Parliament as part of the [Global Civic Debate](#) on 'Governing the rise of AI' in partnership with Dutch MEP Marietje Schaake, and was drafted as part of a wide consultation process including 2,000 participants from civil society, including: think tanks (Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, Tencent Research Institute), universities (Cambridge and Harvard Universities) and national data protection authorities like France's CNIL.

EU: MEPs to debate the creation of a new "EU Cyber Envoy"

- As part of the European Parliament's debate on the Digital Europe programme in the EU's next long-term budget, MEPs will have to decide whether to include a pilot project for an "EU cyber envoy" to "coordinate the advancement of an open, interoperable, secure and reliable Internet in the EU's relation with third countries".

- The proposal was put forward in the form of an [amendment](#) by Dutch MEP [Marietje Schaake](#) (ALDE) and Estonian MEP [Urmas Paet](#) (ALDE), and will be debated and voted during the plenary session of October 22.

EU: Companies call for tougher rules on Platforms-to-Business Regulation

- A group of companies have signed a letter to EU Ministers calling for a tougher approach to regulating large Internet platforms through the Platform-to-Business Regulation, which would compel platforms like Google or eCommerce companies like Booking.com to reveal more information about how they formulate their terms & conditions, and helps Member States set up redress mechanisms for SMEs against unfair trading practices of platforms.
- The [letter](#) was addressed to ministers in the Competitiveness Council and signed by Spotify, the European Broadcasting Union, the European Game Developers Federation and Google complainant Foundem.
- The signatories highlight the unfair trading practices of Internet platforms, including the “unilateral, sudden and frequent” changes to terms and conditions without any possibility for business users to negotiate; “intrusive and unjustified” interference in the commercial relationship between business users and their consumers; or arbitrary restrictions to the access to data.
- The call from these companies echoes in part the views of the European Parliament’s rapporteur, [Christel Schaldemose](#) (S&D, Denmark), who argued for measures going beyond transparency in her draft [report](#) for the Internal Market & Consumer Affairs committee (IMCO).

EU: European Commission investigating Amazon’s use of data

- The European Commission [announced](#) last week that it had launched a preliminary competition investigation into how Amazon uses data about merchants who trade on its marketplace.
- The preliminary probe is focused on Amazon’s dual role as a competitor, but also host, to third-party merchants, which sell goods on Amazon’s websites. More than half of all sales globally on Amazon come from third-party retailers.
- The Commission has sent questionnaires to retailers who do business with Amazon as part of a preliminary information-gathering process.
- Margrethe Vestager, the EU’s Competition Commissioner, who is reaching the end of a five-year term, has risen to international prominence for bringing cases against US tech giants, imposing a €4.3bn fine on Google in July for allegedly abusing its dominant position in mobile operating systems, and forcing Apple to pay Ireland €13bn in back taxes after finding that Ireland had given the company state aid.

France: GDPR leads to record number of data protection complaints

- France’s data privacy watchdog CNIL [published](#) an overview this week of how French companies are reacting to the GDPR, registering over 600 notifications of

data privacy violations and 3,767 complaints, a 64% increase compared to last year over the same period.

- CNIL welcomed the progressive up-take in the data protection processes foreseen by the GDPR, citing that 24,500 entities in France had nominated a data protection officer.