European Regional Bureau Newsletter

Internet Access

Germany: Agency calls for study into health impacts of 5G

- The head of Germany's Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS) has called for research into potential health risks caused by 5G mobile networks, due to the more intense radiation levels.
- BfS President Inge Paulini, a toxicologist, said in the german press there was still "little knowledge" on the impact of this kind of high intensity electromagnetic radiation on human health.
- Among her concerns are that 5G would result in "significantly higher data transmission volumes, new and additional transmitters and higher frequencies", all of which would "change the radiation intensities".
- These concerns will feed-in to the ongoing debates of governments across Europe as they discuss how and when to roll-out the next generation broadband connection.

Trust

EU: Commission prepares 5G security guidance

- According to several news reports, the European Commission aims to present its recommendation on cybersecurity for 5G networks within the coming weeks. The recommendations are being prepared by Commission Vice President for the Digital Single Market Andrus Ansip.
- Member States have asked the Commission for guidance on whether they should impose restrictions on Chinese telecoms equipment makers such as Huawei and ZTE.
- However, German Chancellor Angela Merkel pushed back earlier this week against calls to impose a ban on Huawei.

EU: Commission calls for more action from social media platforms on fake news

- The [results](#) from the European Commission's Code of Practice against Disinformation were published this week by Google, Facebook, Twitter, Mozilla and several EU trade associations.
- In response, the Commission welcomed the progress but called on the platforms to step up their efforts ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2019. The websites have all confirmed that their tools for assessing the transparency of political ads will be operational in advance of the elections.
- However, the Commission said Google, Facebook and Twitter still needed to enhance their cooperation with researchers and fact-checkers while providing more data on fake accounts they have spotted and deleted.

EU: Platforms must take more responsibility for content published, says EU Justice Commissioner

- During [Politico's Artificial Intelligence Summit](#), Věra Jourová, European justice commissioner, called on social media platforms to elevate their standards and take quicker action in order to prevent the spread of terrorist content online.
- The Commissioner held this week a meeting with the representatives from Google, Facebook and Twitter and recognized publicly the commitment from the platforms, which stated they were working on their directions.
- The companies have already signed up to a voluntary code on disinformation. Meanwhile, the French and German governments are preparing legislation that would impose fines if the platforms do not remove hate speech or terrorist content within 24 hours.

EU: Google fined for abusing its online ad dominance

- The European Commission has fined Google with a €1.5 billion [antitrust fine](#) as a result of the company's hindering of competition regulations by abusing its dominant position in online search advertising.
- The European Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager, stated that google had 'cemented its dominance and shielded itself from competitive pressure' through the imposition of contractual restrictions on other platforms.
- The company has been fined €8.2 billion in total by the EU since 2017, and Vestager announced that Google could face more investigations as "complaints keep coming".

EU: New laws on terrorist content must comply with human rights, say stakeholders

- Several European associations such as Access Now or Allied for Startups have put together a [letter](#) regretting that the approach taken by the European legislators did no address elements such as the definitions of 'terrorist content' and 'service providers', as well as the amount of time platforms have for removing illegal content.
- More concretely, the organisations - which claim they are aligning their views with the ones of the European Fundamental Rights Agency - believe that the soon

- to be imposed criteria will undermine current efforts and will have a strong impact on European citizens' fundamental rights.
- Among the demands of the organisations are a more accurate definition for 'terrorist groups' that are linked to those listed by the EU and the United Nations, a more 'realistic deadline' for the removal of illegal content online, and adaptable provisions for the different types of companies and organisations.

EU: ePrivacy and the lessons learned from GDPR

- During her [opening speech](#) at the 9th Annual European Data Protection and Privacy Conference, Commissioner for Digital Mariya Gabriel spoke at length about the efforts to fight online disinformation ahead of the European elections, as well as the ePrivacy Regulation.
- She stated that there was now finally "light at the end of the tunnel" and called on the Romanian Presidency to reach an agreement on the file in the Council.
- Commissioner for justice Věra Jourová also stressed the global impact of GDPR and the lessons learned so far such as companies' now having 'put their data house in order' and ultimately performing greater innovation at lower costs.