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Internet Access

Global: German minister raises concerns about European companies access to the Chinese digital infrastructure market

- During a trade visit to China earlier this week, the German Economy Minister, Peter Altmaier raised concerns with the Chinese Minister for Industry and Information Technology, Miao Wei, about EU companies getting fair access to 5G tenders in China.
- The discussions took place in the context of ongoing questions about potential bans for the Chinese telecoms company Huawei based on cybersecurity concerns. The Chinese officials made clear they were expecting the EU to not ban Huawei from any 5G tenders unless the EU wanted to see Nokia and Ericsson banned in China.
- In the German Minister's view, banning Huawei is not a matter of pointing fingers at a company in particular, but rather about ensuring safety and security. In this regard, that suppliers can be excluded from part of the network if they infringe security requirements.

EU: Leaders put 'digital sovereignty' and skills top of EU agenda

- EU leaders meeting in Brussels this week adopted a long-term strategic agenda for the European Union which prioritises investment in digital skills as well as ensuring the EU is digitally sovereign. The document which was adopted is designed to send a political message from the European Council to the European Commission about the high-level policy priorities (covering everything from industrial to climate policy) it should focus on during the next five years.
- Leaders warned of the far-reaching impacts of the digital transformation and argued that it was essential that the EU ensures it remains digitally sovereign. To this end, the EU "must work on all aspects of the digital revolution and artificial intelligence: infrastructure, connectivity, services, data, regulation and investment."

- EU leaders also urged the Commission to prioritise Europe's cybersecurity and cyberdefense and reiterated the need to step up investment in people's skills and education.

- On cybersecurity, leaders were clear about need to step up efforts: "We must protect our societies from malicious cyber activities, hybrid threats and disinformation originating from hostile State and non-State actors. Addressing such threats requires a comprehensive approach with more cooperation, more coordination, more resources and more technological capacities."

EU: Industry groups lay out their plans for AI deployment

- Two cross-sectoral industry groups laid out a joint-plan for the deployment of artificial intelligence technology in Europe this week. The Big Data Value Association (BDVA) and euRobotics published a document entitled "Strategic Research, Innovation and Deployment Agenda for an AI PPP" which sets out their priorities for AI.

- In the report the two organisations identify a number of key challenges which are inhibiting uptake of AI in Europe. Those include the fragmented research landscape, lack of skills and know-how, AI policy and regulation uncertainty, societal trust in AI, the lack of a true Digital Single Market, access to AI infrastructure, technological barriers and the lack of an EU private investment environment. The organisations called for "collective action from all stakeholders to address these challenges" in order to develop an AI Innovation ecosystem.

UK: Conservative leadership candidate makes pledge on broadband rollout

- Leading candidate to become the next leader of the UK Conservative Party and Britain's next Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has pledged to accelerate the UK's roll-out of "full-fibre" Internet connection. The former Foreign Secretary who is now the front-runner in the leadership contest to succeed Theresa May wrote this week he wants the super-fast service to be available "for all by 2025", eight years ahead of the UK Government's current target.

- As of May 2019, the UK telecoms regulator Ofcom said that only 7% of UK properties were currently served by full fibre. Johnson argued that an urgent full fibre roll-out for every home would help tackle the "digital divide".

- Concerns have however been raised about the feasibility of Johnson's pledge. The Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA) responded that "Boris Johnson's ambitious commitment to achieve full fibre coverage by 2025 is welcome, but needs to be matched with ambitious regulatory change, including reform of the fibre tax."

Trust

Global: Facebook officially launches cryptocurrency

Following [rumours](#) last week, Facebook officially [confirmed](#) this week its intention to create a new cryptocurrency called Libra. The cryptocurrency aims to provide fast, cheap, and secure online payments by smartphone, sidestepping the traditional financial system.

- Regulators have [expressed concerns](#) about this new financial instrument. French Minister Bruno Le Maire argued that the Libra must not become a 'sovereign currency'. Similarly, the Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, pledged that the international community will monitor every step in a "coordinated fashion". Facebook's role in the project has also prompted a number of [privacy concerns](#) given its recent data breaches.

EU: Key MEP complains about Commission starting talks with US on law enforcement access to data

- Birgit Sippel, Socialist German Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and rapporteur for the e-evidence file during the last mandate has expressed discontent about the European Commission starting talks with US government on law enforcement access to data before the European Parliament has agreed its position on the file. The complaints relate to the [EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting](#) which took place in Bucharest this week.

- A potential deal would reciprocally enable EU law enforcement authorities to request data held by US-based companies on servers in the US and vice-versa. More concretely, it would give access to messages held by Facebook, WhatsApp, Google or Microsoft amongst others.

- The MEP told media that the European Parliament had already "decided, for a number of good reasons, to check the Commission's proposal for an EU e-evidence regime in depth, and not to rush through the proposal".

- Although the text was adopted by EU Member States, it has not yet been approved by the Parliament and will likely remain under the control of the Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE).

EU: Leaked EU 'trustworthy artificial intelligence' policy recommendations

- A draft of the European Commission's AI Policy and Investment Recommendations has been [leaked](#) this week. The recommendations which are being prepared by the Commission's independent High-Level Expert Group on AI (HLEG) are being developed with the aim to provide guidance to the Commission on appropriate policies for regulation and investment to foster the uptake and development of AI in the EU.

- There are two major sections of the document; one on how to use AI to have a positive impact on Europe and another on how to strengthen the framework for 'trustworthy AI'. The recommendations cover the private sector, the public sector, research, infrastructure, skills, governance and investment.

- The recommendations advise against a one-size-fits-all approach for AI regulation, but call for a review of the EU's existing rules, as well as for defining "red lines". The expert group argues that "AI enabled mass scale scoring of

individuals" should be banned and states that there needs to be "very clear and strict rules for [AI use in] surveillance for national security purpose."

- The recommendations argue that although the EU currently lags behind the US and China in terms of the development of AI, the EU's ethical approach will become a competitive advantage for European manufacturers which will help it get ahead with consumers.

- The document is due to be formally published at a EU AI stakeholder conference next week.

UK: Data protection authority warns advertising industry is illegally profiling internet users

- The UK's data protection regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), this week published a report highlighting how thousands of advertising technology companies are sharing personal data without a legal basis.

- The report sets out major concerns about the programmatic advertising process known as real-time bidding (RTB), which makes up a large chunk of online advertising, warning that systematic profiling of web users via tracking technologies such as cookies is in breach of EU privacy laws.

- The ICO argues that the adtech industry "appears immature in its understanding of data protection requirements" and claimed there were "general, systemic concerns around the level of compliance".

Romania: Four hospitals hacked causing major disruption

- Romanian Intelligence Services (SRI) reported this week a cyberattack that hit four hospitals, causing delays in admissions, discharges and prescriptions.

- The healthcare facilities had been attacked by the so-called BadRabbit Ransomware, which encrypts computer files and then requires for payment in order to restore access. According to the SRI, it would have been detected if an anti-virus would have been in place.

- Sorina Pintea, Romanian Health Minister, stated that the attack would have an impact on patients: "Hospital documents are released from a computer system that, if blocked, hampers admission and prescribing. The lost of data would be a major, inconceivable problem".