European Regional Bureau Newsletter

Internet Access

UK: Telecoms industry challenges Johnson on his ambitious "full-fibre broadband for all by 2025" plan

- In a joint letter, UK internet service providers warned this week that the new administration's target to have full rollout of fibre-optic broadband by 2025 was only possible if the government took serious action to tackle problems causing delays.
- In the letter the broadband industry identifies four major criteria to meet the target; planning reform to get access to land to install cables, rethinking the fibre tax, building all new homes with provision for fibre broadband, and training the large number of engineers needed for roll-out.
- During his leadership election campaign in June, now-Prime Minister Boris Johnson published an article declaring his desire to deliver a 100% rollout of fibre-optic broadband to properties across the UK by 2025, calling the government's former target of 2033 "laughably unambitious".

UK: Ofcom opens up spectrum use to boost connectivity in rural areas

- Last week, a landmark decision by the UK's communications regulator, Ofcom, allows for the use of licensed but unused spectrum on a local basis.
- Designed to help rural communities, unused spectrum, mostly owned by mobile phone companies, can now be sold to anyone who can identify a legitimate use for it. It will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis, with bids being accepted towards the end of 2019.
- According to Ofcom, "mobile operators want to provide services right across the country but in some places, they don't use all the spectrum, so some of it might be available for others to use."

Trust

Global: Privacy chiefs express concern over Facebook's new cryptocurrency

- Privacy regulators from around the world, including from the U.S. and E.U. released a joint statement this week expressing concern about Facebook's new cryptocurrency, Libra.
- The cryptocurrency project which was launched by Facebook in June has come under a wave of scrutiny since the initial launch announcement. The data regulators have concerns about the initiative which would see Facebook potentially adding the financial data of millions of users to its existing trove of user data, which it often fails to protect.
- "Once the Libra Network goes live, it may instantly become the custodian of millions of people's personal information," the statement said. "This combination of vast reserves of personal information with financial information and cryptocurrency amplifies our privacy concerns about the Libra Network's design and data sharing arrangements."

EU: Cookies guidelines in the spotlight

- The International Association of Privacy Professionals this week published a report comparing the differences in cookie guidelines published by British and French data protection authorities, the ICO and the CNIL respectively.
- In July 2019, both the ICO and the CNIL published new guidance on the use of cookies. Although aligned in many aspects, the two DPAs diverge on issues such as territorial scope, the prominence of options given to users, cookie retention periods and user consent. For example, according to the CNIL, analytic cookies do not always require consent, whereas the ICO states the opposite.
- Coming up in court: French digital rights activist group, La Quadrature du Net, are bringing a case against the CNIL's cookie guidelines. The case will be heard by the Council of State on August 14.

EU: Finance ministers to simulate cyberattacks

- It was confirmed this week that during the Economics and Financial Affairs Council meeting in Helsinki next month the European finance ministers will take part in a set of "war games" to test the EU's responses to cyberattacks, particularly on financial institutions.
- Finland, which currently holds the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU, believes that more practical exercises with wider participation are necessary to be prepared for the increased threat of cyberattacks.
- The exercise aims to give the participants a sense of the complexity and preparatory work that is needed to handle a cyberattack.

Ireland: DPA asks Apple for more info on Siri recordings

- The Irish data protection authority, the Data Protection Commission, has requested information from Apple about how it processes audio recordings captured by its smart assistant, Siri.
- The request for information follows [reports](#) last month that Apple had allowed contractors access to transcripts of audio recordings in order to analyse to improve Siri and dictation. Apple has now suspended the process.
- The DPA is keen to establish further details on how the personal data is processed and understand if it is compliant with its GDPR obligations. In a similar case, the German city-state of Hamburg's DPA last week ordered Google to stop using data collected from its digital assistant after reports that contractors also had access to the recordings.