

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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Internet Access

Global: France and India to work shoulder to shoulder in securing cyberspace

- Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed a bilateral statement in which both countries affirmed their commitment to securing an open, safe, and peaceful cyberspace.
- Adhering to the UN Framework on cyber norms, the [declaration](#) will strive to “prevent malicious activities, undertake immediate corrective response, mitigate their potential impact and identify their causes.”
- Paris and New Delhi agreed to maintain closer cooperation in areas such as AI regulation, information manipulation, protection of personal information, and digital governance, among others.

EU: The European Commission sets high connectivity objectives for 2025

- The European Commission [published](#) a brochure named “Connectivity for a European Gigabit Society,” which provides an overview of the current European connectivity landscape and outlines the Commission’s future objectives associated with Internet connectivity.
- The current figures demonstrate that, at present, 99% of all EU households are covered by at least one 4G mobile operator, while in rural areas 4G coverage increased from 38% in 2014 to 96% in 2019.
- The Commission is determined to provide access to mobile data connectivity to all areas across the EU by 2025, with 5G coverage expanding into all urban areas and major terrestrial transport paths.

EU: MEP believes GDPR could hinder the development of AI-related technologies

- Eva Kaili, a Greek Socialist MEP, [stated](#) last week that despite its achievement in safeguarding consumer data from being processed without consumers’ consent,

the GDPR contains aspects that might obstruct the development of self-learning algorithmic systems.

- AI is “a cornerstone of the EU’s future strategy” whose progress largely depends on the availability of datasets, Kaili highlighted, pointing out that in order to keep innovation intact, lawmakers should not over-regulate AI.

Trust

Global: Stakeholders around the world are calling for a ban on facial recognition

- Kate Crawford, the co-director and co-founder of the AI Now Institute at New York University, [alarmed](#) that governments need to stop the use of facial recognition before a proper regulation and sufficient safeguards are put in place.
- The urge comes amid growing concerns among US lawmakers and a debate on a legislation that could [limit the funding](#) dedicated to facial recognition technologies.
- In Europe, where watchdogs have called for a public debate on the use of facial recognition, law enforcement authorities have started using the technology for the identification of individuals in large crowds.
- The French City of Nice – which used facial recognition during one of its famous carnivals – called on the French Government to define national rules for the use of facial recognition, which is expected to be deployed in the 2024 Olympic Games.

EU: Germany pushes for a new European cloud service “Gaia-X”

- Germany’s Federal Minister of Economics, Peter Altmaier, [announced](#) that his country is working towards the establishment of an EU-wide cloud service called “Gaia-X”.
- The announcement comes as several German and European businesses have called for a highly secure data infrastructure which would improve the welfare of EU industries.
- Meetings with stakeholders prior to the official launch will be held in the coming weeks, yet it still remains unclear whether “Gaia-X” will be a state-controlled establishment or an independent entity focused exclusively on EU data infrastructure.

EU: Member States to draft a stricter 5G regime

- Amid American efforts to pressure allies to impose sanctions on Chinese tech giant Huawei, by October 31, the EU Cybersecurity Agency has [to complete](#) – based on national capitals’ feedback – a joint review on Member States’ threat exposure.
- By the end of 2019, the review will result in a so-called toolbox that could provide a justification for harder measures against foreign companies, which could potentially include the establishment of an EU-wide framework on 5G security.

- A German examination of its own 5G network security had previously pointed out that EU countries are mainly concerned about interference from foreign state and non-state hackers which target confidential and strategic information.

EU: Facebook faces privacy questions in Europe

- In a case which underlines the growing trend towards human surveillance of private companies, US tech giant Facebook [admitted](#) to the Irish Data Protection Commission (DPC) that the personal information of 48 EU users was affected by an artificial intelligence transcription on their Messenger audio chats.
- As the issue occurred in 14 EU/EEA countries, national data protection authorities could find themselves capable of investigating whether their citizens were affected or not, meaning that Facebook could potentially face up to 14 probes. In addition to Germany and Ireland, the list of countries affected include the UK, Belgium, Slovakia, Italy, Sweden, Cyprus, Lithuania, France, Ireland, Greece, Denmark, and Austria.
- Germany seems to be taking a tougher stance, as the Hamburg data protection authority [has opened](#) an investigation into the case: only 5 out of the affected users were German, yet the authority stated that more users could have been affected by the audio transcription.

EU: The Commission initiates a debate between platforms and rights holders

- On 28 August, the European Commission (EC) [opened](#) a call for expressions of interest to take part in a discussion on the application of the Copyright Directive's Article 17, which deals with the use of online content by content-sharing service providers.
- The EC wants to hear the views of all relevant parties involved and find a practical solution for the application of Article 17, especially regarding the use of unauthorized content by online-sharing platforms.
- The first discussion, taking place on 15 October, aims to collect and map existing information and best practices on the use of copyright-protected content by online platforms in coordination with rights holders, which will contribute to the progress made in future meetings throughout 2020.

EU: Microsoft introduces a new Germany-based Cloud Service

- On August 28, Microsoft announced a new version of its cloud computing service, which will allow German customers' data to be stored on servers located in Germany, will be introduced.
- In a recent press release, the US tech giant [stated](#) that the "new cloud regions combine high global standards with additional German security requirements and certificates."
- The service launch comes amid [increasing concerns](#) by European watchdogs and lawmakers regarding the growing dependency of Europe on the cloud computing services offered by a small number of foreign countries.

Croatia: Many Croats have never used the Internet, a survey reveals

- A survey conducted by the Croatian Institute for Economy [revealed](#) last week that 21% of Croatian citizens have never used the Internet, while only 27% of the population makes online purchases – compared to the 50% EU average. As for the use of Internet in the business sector, numbers also remain quite low, with only 73% of Croatian companies having an official website.

France: Paris expects social media platforms to sign a hate speech pledge

- Although social media companies did not sign the “Charter for an Open, Free, and Safe Internet” during the G7 Summit at Biarritz, French authorities [are still optimistic](#) that social media companies would do so.
- Although the White House has objected the signing of the charter by American tech giants Google, Snapchat, and Facebook, French Junior Minister for Digital Industry, Cedric O, stated that there is “no doubt on the fact that the social networks will sign the pledge.”
- In Washington, a White House official stated that the Government had not pressed companies to not sign, pointing out that it still evaluates the Charter, which, in the official’s view, “certainly has its merits.”

Sweden: Stockholm to introduce new 5G security checks

- A [newly-proposed law](#) on 5G security was introduced by the Swedish Government on August 29.
- The legislation will [introduce](#) security checks, performed by the country’s telecom regulator, on companies whose 5G services could pose a threat to the country’s national security.
- It is expected that the new piece of legislation will come into power on December 1, 2019.