

European Regional Bureau Newsletter



7 April 2018 – 13 April 2018

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Internet Access

EU countries sign new agreements on AI, Blockchain, eHealth and Internet Access

- Digital ministers from the EU's 28 Member States signed new commitments at the European Commission's Digital Day 2018, which took place in Brussels on April 10.
- The joint statements included pledges for deeper cooperation on [AI](#), [blockchain](#), cross-border access to [genomic information](#), a new pan-European [Innovation Radar](#) to better locate and fund tech innovations, and a partnership to set up the EU's first 5G [large-scale testing corridors](#) to test connected and automated driving across borders.
- During the event, Commissioner for the Digital Single Market Andras Ansip noted that "in the coming weeks" Member States should agree a new telecoms policy that will help roll-out 5G across the EU.
- The event was co-organised by the Bulgarian Government, which holds the six-month rotating presidency of the Council, and included speeches by Ivan Dimov, Bulgaria's Minister of Education and Science, who reminded that increasing rural connectivity in the Balkans remained a key priority, with plans already underway to sign a Letter of Intent with Serbia and Greece to build its own 5G-enabled corridors to enable connected driving on a route stretching from Belgrade to Thessaloniki via Sofia.

EU: DIGITALEUROPE welcome the Commission's commitment on tech investments

- DIGITALEUROPE, the association representing Europe's ICT companies, addressed a [letter](#) to Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, welcoming his plans for a "Digital Europe Programme", a new financing instrument dedicated entirely to digital technologies in the EU's next multiannual budget.
- The draft proposal would drive investments in the adoption of artificial intelligence, high performance computing, advanced digital skills, cybersecurity and interoperability solutions to help standardise the European tech market.
- In DIGITALEUROPE's statement, Director General Cecilia Bonefeld-Dahl also gave her support to any efforts that made use of the EU's Structural and Investment Funds to accelerate the implementation of super-fast Internet, emphasising the importance of connecting Europe's most far-flung communities.

Trust

EU: Commissioner Jourova calls for Facebook CEO to come to Brussels

- The EU's justice commissioner has reiterated calls for Mark Zuckerberg to speak before a joint hearing of four committees in Brussels, only a day after the 33-year old Facebook CEO finished his testimony before the US Congress.
- The call follows revelations that 2.7m Europeans were caught in the Cambridge Analytica scandal and in the context of several national investigations into the company.
- Germany's competition authorities have [ruled](#) against Facebook for abusing its dominant position as the world's leading social network to illegally track users around the Web and reinforce its online advertising clout. The case could set a global precedent on how competition authorities use data in future prosecutions.
- Germany, France and the United Kingdom are all pushing social media platforms to accept greater responsibility and liability for digital misinformation, terrorist propaganda and hate speech, spread around the world thanks to their networks.

EU: "Sorry is not enough" say representatives of Europe's data protection authorities

- The group uniting Europe's data protection authorities known as Working Party 29 (WP29) has established a Social Media Working Group and released a [statement](#) fully supporting the investigation into Cambridge Analytica and Facebook by the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- In the statement, the Group's Chair Andrea Jelinek, declared that: "We are at the start of a new era of data protection. The protection of individuals against unlawful use of their personal data on social media platforms will be one of our key priorities", adding that: "a multi-billion dollar social media platform saying it is sorry simply is not enough".
- The work of this new Social Media Working Group will continue after the establishment of the European Data Protection Board (EDPB). The EDPB will have a wide range of competences to ensure the consistency of the application of Europe's new data protection rules contained in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

EU: Debate in the Parliament's LIBE Committee on Privacy Shield, One Year On

- Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were divided on the effectiveness of the Privacy Shield during a [debate](#) in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) in the context of the Commission's first annual [review](#) of the measures.
- Critical MEPs included Sophia in't Veld MEP (ALDE, Netherlands) who noted that the Privacy Shield had been found inadequate by the European Court of Justice's assessment, adding that the use of the Shield by Cambridge Analytica to access the private data of EU citizens demonstrated its weakness. Meanwhile, Axel Voss (EPP, Germany) insisted that the US authorities were implementing the agreement and that the measures provided a good framework to build upon.
- The Commission's representative admitted they were disappointed that no permanent official had been appointed on the US side and that the Department of Commerce was slow in enacting the certification process, but declared that the overall level of protection was adequate.
- The [EU-US Privacy Shield](#) was adopted in July 2016 and became operational on 1 August 2016.

EU: New e-evidence proposal to be launched next week

- The European Commission is expected to unveil new measures on Tuesday 17 April allowing European policing authorities to file requests for electronic evidence directly with tech companies like Google, Facebook and Microsoft.
- The [e-evidence](#) proposal would make it easier for police and prosecutors to investigate cases within the EU's borders. But for the proposal to be most effective, it requires the cooperation of US officials to reach European data stored by American companies outside the EU.
- Despite the Commission's calls for close cooperation on the issue, the Trump Administration fast-tracked its own bill, the "Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act" ([CLOUD Act](#)), allowing US authorities to request data from companies in Europe and overseas. The EU's Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner, Věra Jourová, lamented the accelerated adoption of the CLOUD Act, saying: "In a situation in which we face the same problems and same enemies, we should be able to come with the same solutions".

EU: The divided debate around giving robots "electronic personality"

- In a [letter](#) to the European Commission, 156 experts from 14 countries warned of the risks of giving robots an electronic personality that would make them liable for damages in court.
- The idea comes from a European Parliament report, known as the "Robotics Report", from early 2017, that suggests self-learning robots could be granted "electronic personalities" enabling the machines to be held liable for damages if they hurt people or damage property. Advocates of this position include manufacturers who claim that it would resolve many of the liability questions currently surrounding AI.
- But the letter argues that doing so would absolve manufacturers of their responsibility for the actions caused by their machines.
- The debate on liability is likely to grow as the surge of investments into AI continues, with what analysts are describing as a gold rush. The market for consumer robots is expected to [triple](#) within the next five years, from \$5.4bn in 2018 to \$14.9bn in 2023, while the sale of "cobots" – machines designed to work alongside humans – are [forecast](#) to increase thirty-fold, from \$100m in 2015 to \$3bn in 2020.

UK: The UK's government launches its first cyberattack

- Britain carried out its first major cyberattacks in 2017, disrupting the Islamic State's communications and propaganda infrastructure, [revealed](#) one of Britain's intelligence chiefs.
- Jeremy Fleming, Director of GCHQ, told a cybersecurity conference in Manchester that his agency had coordinated operations that "denied service, disrupted specific online activity, deterred individuals and destroyed equipment and networks".
- The report confirms the growing tendency of European governments to engage in cyber-warfare, using similar tactics to those deployed more widely by the United States, China and Russia.