

# European Regional Bureau Newsletter



7 September 2019 – 13 September 2019

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## Internet Access

### EU: The new EU Commissioners responsible for digital policy unveiled

- This week, the European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen [announced](#) the new College of Commissioners.
- Former French Minister, Sylvie Goulard, who will be Commissioner for the Internal Market, will lead on digital policy, focusing on issues such as connectivity, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and platform regulation.
- Digital policy will also be coordinated by Margrethe Vestager, who will be both an Executive Vice President for digital and Commissioner for Competition. The move to combine competition and tech policy was among the biggest surprises of the team unveiled by von der Leyen and has raised questions about how the Dane will juggle two of the most politically sensitive parts of the Commission's regulatory and antitrust work. Von der Leyen insisted Vestager's expanded portfolio was a "perfect combination" at a time when competition policy has been moving into areas such as data privacy.

### EU: The third call for Wifi4EU announced this week

- On Monday, the European Commission [announced](#) that the new call for the Wifi4EU initiative will be opened on September 19.
- The initiative, which began in November 2018, grants winning municipalities vouchers of EUR 15,000 to install free Wi-Fi networks in public spaces.
- Wifi4EU's total budget is EUR 26.7 million, and the Commission plans to distribute 1,780 vouchers to EU municipalities on a first come, first served basis.

### EU: Investments in cloud infrastructure should be a priority according to EU digital chief

- For a long time, the EU has struggled to establish a strong cloud infrastructure owing to a lack of investments and the presence of international players.
- In this regard, the European Commission's digital chief Roberto Viola [pointed out](#) this week that "for Europe to lead the next technological race, we need to

prioritize investment towards strengthening the existing European cloud infrastructure and service industrial basis.”

- Viola also pointed out that when boosting its cloud capabilities, Europe must comply with the data protection rules in order to ensure that technological developments go hand-in-hand with European values and norms.

#### **Germany: Berlin to expand network connectivity**

- Berlin’s transport ministry [has released](#) a five-point strategy on how to accelerate the deployment of 4G and 5G networks across the country, especially in rural areas.
- The transport ministry points out that by 2021, 99 percent of German households will be covered by LTE networks.
- The government will collaborate with mobile network operators such as Telekom, Vodafone, Telefónica, and 1 & 1 Drillisch in order to deliver the strategy.

#### **Hungary: Budapest could launch its 5G networks before the end of the year**

- This week, Houlin Zhao, the head of UN’s Internet and Telecoms Agency, [announced](#) that Hungary could launch its next-generation 5G networks by the end of this year.
- Hungary, unlike several other European states, has dismissed American concerns regarding the involvement of Huawei in the deployment of national 5G networks.
- Laszlo Palkovics, the minister responsible for innovation and technology, pointed out that he was “very glad” of the fact that multinational companies such as Huawei are involvement in the development of future technologies.

## Trust

#### **Global: The World Economic Forum calls for an assessment of the safety of 5G**

- 5G will provide tremendous benefits in terms of connecting a wide variety of services that have remained unconnected in the past, the World Economic Forum [wrote](#) in a report published this week.
- The 5G revolution, nonetheless, “poses a wide and unprecedented set of risks that need to be considered by a significantly broader set of stakeholders.” It notes that never before have networks been relied upon for such an extensive number of services and it will be vital to protect them from interference – whatever its source.

The report calls underlines the need to consider security at all points in the supply chain and considers if an independent global oversight body might be a realistic prospect.

**Global: The EU-U.S. Privacy Shield mechanism delivers the expected results**

- The third annual review of EU-US Privacy Shield agreement which facilitates transatlantic data sharing took place this week.
- In an official statement, EU Commissioner Věra Jourová and US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross [highlighted](#) the vital role of the shield in “protecting personal data and contributing to the \$7.1 trillion economic relationship between the United States and Europe.”
- Both parties also reinforced their commitment to working towards a stronger and more credible enforcement in order to promote trust in the digital economy.

**EU: Europe to seek tough cybersecurity standards**

- In a recent hearing before the European Parliament’s Industry Committee, the new head of EU’s cybersecurity agency (ENISA), Juhan Lepassaar, [stated that](#) the new EU cybersecurity framework is expected to set “the new global standard for trust.”
- Like many other EU officials working in the cybersecurity domain, Lepassaar emphasized that “trust is a must” in the development of new technologies.
- Additionally, ENISA’s chief expressed hope that the EU’s cybersecurity act will, like the GDPR, distinguish the EU from the rest of the world as a protector of personal freedoms and ethical values.

**EU: Facebook’s audio transcription saga continues**

- Austria followed Germany this week launching an investigation into the American tech giant’s use of audio recordings.
- The company had previously [admitted](#) that it had collected audio chats from numerous of its European users and used humans to transcribe them without consumers’ knowledge.
- Meanwhile, the company [announced](#) this week that it would toughen its policy standards on the toleration of images of self-harm on its platform.

**EU: 40% of European businesses under attack by hackers**

- The association of audit firms, RSM, published a [report](#) this week which found that nearly 40% of European businesses have fallen victim to a cyber-attack.
- About 75% of all the attacks never become public knowledge, the association adds.
- For their study, RSM surveyed 597 companies in 33 European countries and concluded that often the main reason behind hackers’ success is the presence of undertrained employees which serve as easy targets.

**France: French regulator responds to telecom companies**

- France’s telecom regulator, Arcep, [responded](#) to the criticism that Orange and other telecom companies expressed last week regarding the regulator’s politicised approach towards the regulation of the industry. Orange also

complained about Arcep's sanction power claiming that the regulator is at once the regulator, the judge and the arbiter.

- In an open op-ed, the regulator disagreed with telecom companies' claims, countering that by objecting "Arcep's power to impose penalties" one is "defying the pragmatic spirit of regulation à la française."