

# European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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## Internet Access

### EU: Broadband targets for 2020 will not be met, say Auditors

- Despite progress, not all of Europe's 2020 targets will be met, says a special [report](#) issued by the European Court of Auditors.
- Broadband coverage has improved across the EU, with all Member States achieving basic broadband coverage by 2016, but not all of the 2020 targets will be achieved in time. According to the conclusions of the report, this is partly due to a lack of financing for projects in rural and sub-urban areas.
- The Commission's 2020 targets, as set out in its 2016 Communication "[Towards a Gigabit Society](#)" and the 5G Action Plan, aim for the universal availability of Internet connectivity with a downlink of at least 100 Mbps for all European households (rural or urban) and the provision of 5G connectivity as a fully-fledged commercial service in at least one major city in every Member State.
- The Council of the EU is in the process of approving Council Conclusions on the report. Last week the Working Party on Telecommunications considered the report, and the Member State Permanent representatives are now invited to endorse the [draft conclusions](#).
- Despite the reports findings, these draft conclusions emphasise the positive achievements by Member States, noting that "all Member States achieved the basic broadband coverage target by 2016" and that "many of the examined Member States are in a good position to reach the 2025 targets".

### EU: Commission announces new checklist for 5G strategies

- The European Commission (EC) also released this week a draft of a report its services are preparing on the status of 5G roll-out in Europe.
- According to the report, all Member States have adopted a National Broadband Plan (NBP), but many countries still need a national 5G roadmap describing in detail how the technology will be deployed. The authors note this is understandable given that 5G technology is still in standardisation phase and no

large-scale commercialisation is expected before 2019, but nonetheless the EC identifies issues that could be addressed.

- Among the biggest obstacles to 5G deployment in Europe are access to spectrum resources, reducing the cost of building local 5G connectivity, securing public financing support, and the additional research needed to enable 5G innovation for new use-cases (for ex. connected cars) and for use in public safety services.

### **Germany: Chancellor Merkel committed to reducing dead-zones of connectivity**

- In an interview with T-Mobile's online news [site](#), Angela Merkel said she was conscious of Germany's desire for excellent connectivity in rural and urban areas.
- Speaking about mobile dead zones, the Chancellor said: "It's become [important for Germans] to be able to talk on the phone everywhere, on the train, on the road, out in the moor, and to stream movies essentially on every meadow. To achieve this across the country isn't easy".
- Chancellor Merkel's government is rolling out a programme for schools and industrial neighbourhoods to be connected to fiberglass data networks. Following that, it will be important, explained Angela Merkel, to give every mid-size company creating jobs fast Internet access.

### **Telecoms Framework Package adopted by Parliament**

- The new legislation – the European Electronic Communications Code – that will provide the regulatory framework for the telecommunications sector in the years to come was finally adopted by the European Parliament during its plenary sitting on 14 November.
- Responding to this adoption, Commission VP Ansip and Commissioner Gabriel welcomed the achievement. In a [joint statement](#) they claimed "with these rules, we will be able to ensure faster access to radio spectrum waves, a key resource for mobile communications, and boost investment in high-speed and high-quality networks in every corner of the EU, including in remote areas".
- For its part, the Council will adopt the telecoms package on 3 December. Shortly after this, the legislation will be published in the EU Official Journal, after which Member States will have two years to transpose the rules into national law.
- The Commission first came forward with the legislation in September 2016.

## Trust

### **EU: International Declaration on Cybersecurity adopted in Paris**

- During the conference, delegates adopted the [Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace](#), an international declaration calling on states, businesses and international organisations to work together in upholding international law in

cyber space, protecting rights online, fighting against destabilising activities and ensuring the security of digital products.

- Of the 370 signatories, the government signatories include almost all EU states, Canada, Japan, Mexico, but not the United States, China or Russia.
- Welcoming the Declaration's adoption, ISOC CEO Andrew Sullivan writes in a [blog](#) that the text embodied the Internet's way of doing things: open, decentralised, and distributed, with an approach based on cooperative voluntary action and not unilateral decisions.
- But at the same time, Andrew Sullivan warns against the temptation to introduce geography-based controls on connectivity, controls that do not respect the Internet's multi-layered structure, leading to policies that do not distinguish between issues of content and network neutrality.
- The solution is a self-organising community capable of taking a distributive [approach](#) to security solutions, addressing specific issues (spam, routing security) or a specific locality (protection of critical infrastructure or security of Internet exchange), which, he argues, is more effective than top-down regulation.

#### EU: eGovernment conference highlights importance of online trust

- Alongside the Internet Governance Forum, the French government also hosted the GovTech Summit attended by over 1500 policy-makers and industry representatives.
- A high level of online security for citizens is the pre-condition to further developing new digital identification systems (eID), concluded one panel.
- Striking a positive tone, the Estonian Commissioner for the Digital Single Market Andrus Ansip, told the audience that EU countries were making good progress in modernising their eGovernment systems. According to the EC's latest figures, 10 countries (Malta, Austria, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, Denmark) and Norway are delivering high-quality digital services.
- Two reports were published during the summit: "[The European 150: The startups driving Europe's GovTech Revolution](#)", and "[GovTech: Europe's next opportunity](#)".

#### France: President Macron announces partnership with Facebook

- The French president [announced](#) on Monday a six-month partnership with Facebook to fight online hate speech.
- As part of this partnership, both sides will meet regularly between now and the EU elections in May 2019 in Paris, Dublin and California to agree on how the French government and Facebook can collaborate on removing harmful content from the platform. This is the first time Mark Zuckerberg's social networking company has teamed up with national politicians to tackle a contentious issue like fake news or harmful online content.
- Reacting to the news, the Internet Society's CEO Andrew Sullivan, said this type of partnership creates a model for how laws could be made in the future, but warns that "it may not provide a replicable framework that other countries and

companies can work on. We don't want to create regulatory frameworks that cement the position of the current dominant players".

#### **UK: Draft Brexit Withdrawal Agreement agreed with European Commission**

- On Wednesday evening, the UK's Prime Minister Theresa May released the text of the [Withdrawal Agreement](#) had been reached with the European Commission, setting out the terms by which the UK will leave the European Union.
- The future international treaty sets out a transition period until 31 December 2020 after which the UK's data flows will depend on a new deal governing reciprocal data exchanges. Without this deal, Great Britain's access to many of the EU's databases post 2020 will be severed.
- The Withdrawal Agreement includes some exceptions on law enforcement and judicial cooperation. The UK will have "time-limited access" to certain databases, including the Schengen Information System and the law enforcement platform known as the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA). Further derogations include systems allowing the UK to comply with procurement, VAT and customs rule, all of which the EU can charge for the costs of facilitating access.
- TechUK, the association representing the UK-based tech industry, called on the Westminster Parliament to support the Agreement. Other associations commenting on the agreement include Laurent Hellebaut, CEO of Agoria, Belgium's tech association, who said: "I wouldn't say we're happy but we welcome the fact that negotiators have an agreement".