

# European Regional Bureau Newsletter



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## Internet Access

### Global: New Digital Highway will connect Europe with Latin America

- The European Commission [announced](#) this week that the contract to construct an optical fibre cable running under the Atlantic Ocean connecting Latin America and Europe is now in force.
- The project is run by the BELLA Consortium (Building the Europe Link to Latin America), an international partnership of research and education networks whose leading investor is the European Commission with a contribution of €26.5m from the programmes Horizon 2020, Copernicus, and the regional Development Cooperation Instrument.
- The EU Commissioners Mimica (International Cooperation), Bienkowska (Internal Market), Moedas (Research & Innovation), and Gabriel (Digital Economy) welcomed the project as a leap forward for EU-Latin American relations, saying it would tackle Latin America's digital divide with Europe: "Latin America and Europe have never been so closely connected: we are pleased to see this intercontinental cable becoming a reality. This project also reflects the EU's commitment to work together with Latin America towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda".

### EU: Greece gets green light for €50m investments into broadband services

- The Commission [approved](#) this week under state-aid rules a scheme to support the uptake in Greece of broadband services with download speeds of at least 100 megabits per seconds.
- Speaking about the benefits it would bring Greek citizens, the EU's Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said: "[The Greek superfast broadband project] will help more people use higher speed broadband services in areas where suitable infrastructure is available but insufficiently used."
- For Commissioner Vestager, the investments would also contribute to "bridging the longstanding digital divide in Greece."



## Trust

### Global: “Today, there is no consensus on who is responsible for data privacy” says global AI expert

- In an [article](#) written ahead of the World Economic Forum’s Annual Meeting in Davos, Einaras Von Gravrock, the CEO of CUJO AI and a prominent blogger on digital issues, highlights how Internet-users are failing to protect their data online.
- Comparing several global surveys, Von Gravrock finds there is no consensus on who should be held responsible for data privacy: “Some consumers agree that the responsibility lies with them, others think governments or businesses are better equipped to deal with this complex issue”.
- Overall, he finds that governments do not have the resources or speed to react to cybercrimes, businesses lack the incentives to focus on the topic, and consumers lack the knowledge and motivation to tackle it.
- According to [PwC](#), consumers expect companies to protect their data proactively: 92% of consumers say companies must be proactive about data protection, 82% agree that the government should regulate how companies use private data, and 72% think businesses, not government, are best equipped to protect them. But the author also points to other studies, like the [report](#) by Israeli tech company Gigya that finds that 63% of people believe individuals themselves are responsible for their data, not brands or governments.
- Some users have begun to avoid sharing their information, either by opting out of various online services or thinking twice before buying an IoT device. Von Gravrock points to a Eurobarometer study that reveals how 87% of users avoid disclosing their personal information online, while 39% reduced the personal information they give out on websites.
- While connected consumers are starting to take more precautions, there remains no adequate privacy and security available on personal or governmental levels, the author concludes.

### EU: The Internet’s “Right to be forgotten” discussed in Court

- One of the European Court of Justice’s advocate generals released this week two important opinions on cases against Google over the “right to be forgotten” on Thursday.
- In his non-binding [opinion](#) to the EU’s highest court, Advocate General Maciej Szpunar argued that the right to be forgotten must be balanced against the public’s “legitimate interest”, in a ruling that favours Google over France’s privacy regulator CNIL in their ongoing legal battle to decide whether the right to be forgotten should have legal effect outside the EU.
- The advice given by Advocate-General Szpunar was that “search requests that are made outside the territory of the EU should not be subject to the de-referencing of search results.” And he goes on to say that search engines should not be compelled to take down all content linked to the request, only those available in the country where the request originated.

- The Advocate General supplemented this position with a second [opinion](#) on sensitive data, arguing that search engines like Google should always accept requests for delisting sensitive data that includes anything revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinion, union membership, health data and sexual orientation.
- Google [disagrees](#) with CNIL's request to delist all versions of a single link globally, saying that if the CNIL's proposed approach was to be embraced as the standard for Internet regulation, "we would find ourselves in a race to the bottom...the Internet would only be as free as the world's least free place".
- Since the ECJ instituted the right to be forgotten in 2014, Google has received over 760,000 requests to have links removed, 89 percent of the requests were filed by individuals, and according to Google's own [statistics](#), the company delisted 44 percent of URLs requested by users to be removed.

#### EU: High Level Expert group on AI reveals draft ethics guidelines

- In December 2018, the high-level expert group appointed to advise the European Commission on its approach to ethics framework for artificial intelligence (AI) published its draft ethics guidelines.
- The [guidelines](#) aim to offer guidance on the implementation and operationalisation of AI systems, and propose that trustworthy AI have two components: an ethical purpose with five essential values (beneficence, non-maleficence (do not harm), human autonomy, fairness, explicability) and technical robustness.
- The guidelines released are less prescriptive than the earlier draft, which included clear red lines such as the use of AI for identification without consent (e.g. facial recognition) and lethal autonomous weapon systems. Those areas are now defined as critical concerns raised by AI following disputes between experts.
- The guidelines are open for comments until 18 January 2019. In March 2019, the high-level expert group will present their final guidelines to the Commission. It will then be for the Commission to decide what to do with the recommendations of the expert group, but no legislation is predicted before the EU elections in May 2019.

#### EU: Agreement on Article 13 of the Copyright Directive, according to Greens MEP

- Julia Reda, a German Greens MEP, has [released](#) a summary of the state of play of the negotiations of the Copyright Directive's Article 13, which would require online platforms to filter or remove copyrighted material from their websites - one of the most controversial aspects of the file.
- According to MEP Reda, the co-legislators have reached an agreement on the core of Article 13.
- Provided there is an agreement at the January 21 trilogue, the final vote in the Parliament could take place on March 11-14, March 25-28, April 4 or April 15-18.

**France: Digital and Gender Equality Ministers call for online hate speech legislation**

- The French Secretary of State for Digital Affairs Mounir Mahjoubi, re-iterated in a tweet that the government will be prioritising a draft a law on online hate speech in 2019.
- The legislation will be drafted together with the Secretary of State for Gender Equality, Marlène Schiappa, who said in a [radio interview](#): “There is a limit to freedom of speech, and it’s called the law,”, while referring also to racist and anti-Semitic abuse she had been subject to as public official over the past week.

**UK: Disruption to data flow “more serious” than potential tariffs on goods, says Brexit Minister**

- Speaking to Members of Parliament this week, Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay said “issues such as data” are “much more serious” to the UK’s service economy than the political debate around the level of tariffs post Brexit.
- The Minister was urging the parliamentarians in the House of Commons to back the withdrawal deal that Prime Minister Theresa May struck with the EU27 leaders, which would prevent an abrupt UK departure from the bloc through a transition agreement and allow time for the European Commission to make a data protection adequacy assessment.
- As it stands, the EU will not allow its citizens’ data to flow to third countries, like the UK after Brexit, if their data protection regimes have not been deemed “equivalent” to the EU’s without extra safeguards.