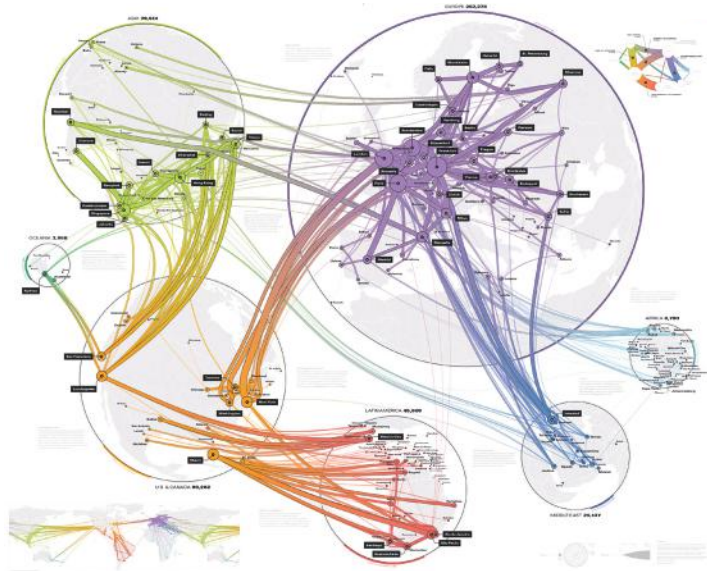


# NEWS

## FROM AROUND THE GLOBE



TeleGeography's 2018 Global Internet Map tracks global capacity, traffic and pricing data, as well as global user figures and the most connected ISPs. See [bit.ly/2QBh2af](http://bit.ly/2QBh2af)

### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

## EU SETS OUT AI PLAN AMID CONCERNS

The European Commission (EC) has published a plan prepared with member states to foster the development and use of artificial intelligence (AI) in Europe. It focuses on four areas: increasing investment, making more data available, fostering talent and ensuring trust.

The EC recognises that investment levels for AI in the EU are low and fragmented compared with other parts of the world such as the US and China, and has set out various European funding models and a network of European AI excellence centres. It also proposes to create cross-border "data spaces" for AI; support advanced degrees in AI through scholarships; and a group of experts, representing academia, business and civil society, is working on ethics guidelines for the development and use of AI.

A first version of the ethics guidelines has been published and the experts will present their final version to the EC in March 2019 after consultation through the European AI Alliance. The ambition is then to bring Europe's ethical approach to the global stage and cooperation is invited with all non-EU countries "that are willing to share the same values".

Meanwhile, the third annual AI report from the AI Now Institute at New York University notes a year of "cascading AI scandals" that have raised questions of accountability, saying "existing regulatory frameworks fall well short of what's needed". Among the report's recommendations:

- Governments need to regulate AI by expanding the powers of sector-specific agencies to audit and monitor these technologies by domain
- Facial recognition and "affect recognition" (a subclass of facial technology) need stringent regulation to protect the public interest
- The AI industry urgently needs new approaches to governance and AI companies should waive trade secrecy and other legal claims that stand in the way of accountability in the public sector
- Technology companies should provide protection for conscientious objectors, employee unions and ethical whistleblowers
- Consumer protection agencies should apply "truth-in-advertising" laws to AI products and services.

European plan: [bit.ly/2RHn9a2](http://bit.ly/2RHn9a2). AI Now report: [bit.ly/2UsZxru](http://bit.ly/2UsZxru). Also issued is the Montreal Declaration for Responsible Development of AI: [bit.ly/2Qmw701](http://bit.ly/2Qmw701)

### DIGITAL DIVIDE

## WORLD PASSES 50% MARK

The ITU estimates that at the end of 2018, about 51% of the global population, or 3.9 billion people, will be using the internet. In developed countries, slow and steady growth has increased the percentage of population using the internet from 51.3% in 2005 to 80.9% in 2018. In developing countries, growth has been much more sustained, increasing from 7.7% in 2005 to 45.3% at the end of 2018. Of the ITU regions, the strongest growth was in Africa, where people using the internet increased from 2.1% in 2005 to 24.4% in 2018. While fixed telephone subscriptions continue to decline, with a penetration rate of 12.4% in 2018, the number of mobile subscriptions is greater than the global population. Mobile broadband penetration rates have reached 61 per 100 inhabitants in 2018, and nearly the entire world population (96%), now lives within reach of a mobile cellular network.

The global and regional estimates are in *Measuring the Information Society*, released at the 18th World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS).

### OVER THE TOP

## INDIA REJOINS OTT DEBATE

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has restarted the debate on regulating over the top (OTT) services such as WhatsApp and Skype by issuing a consultation paper, "Regulatory framework for OTT communication services".

The paper "seeks to analyse and discuss the implications of the growth of OTT services... the relationship between TSPs [telecoms service providers] and OTT players, whether any change is required in the current regulatory framework and the manner in which such changes should be effected", the regulator says. TRAI has sought comments from stakeholders on whether a regulatory or licensing imbalance is impacting investments in telecoms networks, if there is any issue of a non-level playing field between OTT providers and TSPs, and any issues on lawful interception of OTT that are required to be resolved in the interest of national security.

### EUROPE

## CODE PASSED INTO LAW

The European Council of Ministers has approved a directive establishing the European Electronic Communications Code and the legislation was published in the EU's Official Journal in December. Also issued is a revised regulation for the European regulators body (BEREC). The code aims to stimulate investment, better protect consumers and establishes an emergency number for public warnings.

## INTERNET GOVERNANCE

### MACRON CALLS FOR EXTENSIVE REFORM

The 2018 Internet Governance Forum (IGF) held in Paris saw the first appearance at the event of a UN secretary general, and also a speech by Emmanuel Macron, in which he said the internet is “profoundly threatened” by cyber attacks, hate speech and disinformation, and by the internet giants. Macron said regulation is needed for the success of the internet and that a middle course must be charted between a self-governing “Californian” model and an authoritarian “Chinese internet”, and that the IGF “needs to produce more than just debate and reflection” and produce “tangible proposals”.

He suggested putting the IGF directly under the UN secretary general and outlined several initiatives on content, including cooperation between France and Facebook on fighting hate speech, and support for the “Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace”. The call was issued during Paris Peace Week, which included the

inaugural events of the Paris Peace Forum and the GovTech Summit.

In his address, UN secretary general António Guterres called for a multidisciplinary approach, including experts not usually involved such as philosophers and anthropologists, and encouraging a shared language to make the IGF’s work more inclusive.

Artificial intelligence was prominent at the IGF from ethical and legal perspectives. There were concerns about the use of biometric data, protection for journalists, and rights for disabled people. Cybersecurity continues to be a major theme, and current processes to strengthen it were highlighted, and also new principles for the internet of things. The EU’s copyright directive was criticised, and there was much discussion on platforms and content. Links to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were still prominent, as expected.

See IGF report at [bit.ly/2rv3bnm](http://bit.ly/2rv3bnm)

## DISINFORMATION

### LSE PROPOSES INFO WATCHDOG

The Truth, Trust and Technology Commission at the London School of Economics has published a report, “Tackling the information crisis”, in which the key proposal is for an independent platform agency for the UK that would be a watchdog – rather than a regulator – which evaluates the effectiveness of platform self-regulation and the development of quality journalism, reporting to parliament and offering policy advice. It should be funded by a new levy on UK social media and search advertising revenue, be a permanent forum for monitoring the behaviour of online platforms, and provide annual reviews of “the state of disinformation”. The report also suggests ways to support the traditional news industry to combat the information crisis and calls on the government to coordinate a media literacy programme. [bit.ly/250N5NG](http://bit.ly/250N5NG)

## SPECTRUM

### GSMA WARNS ON 5G DECISIONS

The successful rollout of 5G services relies on timely access to the right amount and type of spectrum in the next year, warns the GSMA in an industry position paper aimed at influencing the World Radio Communication (WRC-19) conference in 2019. The operators’ body says that governments around the world have started to auction spectrum for 5G networks, but variations in how much spectrum has been assigned, the onerous conditions imposed – and the cost of access to that spectrum – means the speed, reach and quality of 5G services could vary dramatically between countries. Several key considerations for governments and regulators are set out, including that 5G needs wider frequency bands to support higher speeds and larger amounts of traffic.

## IIC EVENTS

12-14 February 2019, Kuala Lumpur  
IIC Regional Regulators Forum and Telecommunications and Media Forum

26-27 March 2019, Brussels  
IIC Telecommunications and Media Forum

May 2019, Miami  
IIC Telecommunications and Media Forum

25-26 June 2019, Riga  
IIC Telecommunications and Media Forum (in association with BERC)

7-10 October 2019, London  
IIC Communications Policy and Regulation Week, including 50th Annual Conference

## IN BRIEF

### BIG DATA HEARING

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has held a 3 day hearing on big data and privacy in a series on competition and consumer protection in the 21st century. The materials are at [bit.ly/2B1RLfq](http://bit.ly/2B1RLfq)

### CANADA CONNECTS

Canadian broadband operators have launched a scheme for low income families. Connecting Families, backed by the government, provides a fixed internet connection with at least 10 Mbps and 100 GB of data for CAD9.99 a month with no contract or credit check.

### FACING REGULATION

Microsoft has renewed a call to regulate facial recognition. “Unless we act, we risk waking up in 5 years to find that services have spread in ways that exacerbate societal issues,” says the firm’s president, Brad Smith. See blog post at [bit.ly/2PotxkO](http://bit.ly/2PotxkO)

### PLATFORM PRELIMS

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has issued preliminary recommendations in its digital platforms inquiry, which is covering Google, Facebook and the Australian news and advertising industries. See [bit.ly/2BhEwHN](http://bit.ly/2BhEwHN)

### BEREC ELECTION

BEREC, the European regulators body, has elected Dan Sjöblom of the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority as chair for 2020. Jeremy Godfrey (ComReg, Ireland) is chair for 2019.