



REGULATORY WATCH

A round up of the latest news from the world of communications and media policy

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EU scales back AI rules to boost investment

The European Commission is withdrawing a planned AI liability directive as part of a broader push for deregulation. Henna Virkkunen, the commission's vice-president in charge of digital policy, said that an upcoming code of practice on AI due in April will limit reporting requirements to existing rules. She denied that this was due to pressure from the US administration and insisted it was part of the EU's ambition to enhance its competitiveness. The move follows disagreements at the recent Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris at which US vice president J D Vance criticised EU tech regulation. The US and UK refused to sign the international AI declaration at the end of the meeting.

Ofcom announces fresh auction of mobile spectrum

Ofcom has announced its intention to auction the upper block of 1.4 GHz band (1492-1517 MHz) for 4G and 5G mobile use. It expects that further deployment of the upper block of the 1.4 GHz band will help improve the performance of mobile services, particularly in areas where coverage is patchy, such as some indoor areas and in remote parts of the UK. To avoid potential disruption to Inmarsat satellite receivers on board maritime vessels and aircraft, Ofcom is also proposing to limit the power that mobile networks can transmit around certain ports and airports for an initial period, relaxing this limit later on. Ofcom plans to use a sealed-bid, single round auction format, with a 'second price' rule – where winning bidders pay fees based on the second highest price bid. Ofcom's proposals are available [here](#) and any interested party can provide comments until 25 April 2025.

Indian music labels join copyright action against OpenAI

A group of India's top Bollywood labels, including T-Series, Saregama and Sony are set to join a legal action launched last year by Indian news agency ANI that claims OpenAI's ChatGPT used its content without permission. The labels have asked a new Delhi court to hear concerns about 'unauthorised use of sound recordings' in training AI models in breach of copyright. Other book publishers and media groups have also joined the action in India, which is OpenAI's second largest market.

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US broadband program needs 'overhaul'

Fibre networks and municipal broadband networks could get less funding under new plans resulting from the change of administration in the US. The \$42 billion BEAD (broadband equity, access and deployment) program is overseen by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The US government has nominated a new head, Arielle Roth, who is known to be sceptical about many elements of the program. In 2024 she said 'instead of prioritizing connecting all Americans who are currently unserved to broadband, the NTIA has been preoccupied with attaching all kinds of extra-legal requirements on BEAD and, to be honest, a woke social agenda, loading up all kinds of burdens that deter participation in the program and drive up costs'. She is expected to change funding conditions and revisit the preference for fibre.

Meta to build 'world's longest cable'

A new subsea cable project, spanning 50,000 km and five continents, has been announced by Meta. No timescale has been given, but the company says that, once complete, 'Project Waterworth' will connect the US, India, Brazil, South Africa and 'several other regions'. Subsea cables are the backbone of global digital infrastructure, accounting for 95 per cent of intercontinental traffic, says the company in its blog, Engineering at Meta. The new project will consist of 'industry-leading' subsea cables of 24 fibre pairs (compared to a typical 8 to 16) and is designed to be highly resilient, with much of the deployment in deep water and advanced burial techniques employed in shallow waters to avoid damage.

Sources: The Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal, APNews, Euronews, CNN, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, Bloomberg, Economic Times, Ars Technica, Reuters, BBC, Politico, Telecommpaper and with thanks to Squire Patton Boggs

