



REGULATORY WATCH

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

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European telecoms groups link up to bid for mobile satellite spectrum

Four of Europe's largest telecoms groups are exploring a joint bid for radio wave spectrum that would enable them to provide their own direct-to-device (D2D) satellite mobile services. Deutsche Telekom, Orange, Telefónica and Vodafone have signed a letter of intent which would result in them competing directly with Starlink. The initiative comes after the EU announced its intention to reserve part of the 2 GHz spectrum band for European players in a bid to reduce reliance on providers outside the bloc. The proposal has been heavily criticised by Starlink and increased geopolitical tensions with the US government. Under the plan, the companies involved would establish the ground infrastructure and partner with an existing provider for the satellite constellation. (Financial Times)

Microsoft withdraws from UK data centre over power issues

Microsoft has pulled out of a deal to lease capacity from an Nscale data centre after problems with power supply. Nscale had purchased a site in Loughton, outside London, for its first UK data centre and announced that Microsoft would lease the 50 megawatt facility with 23,000 Nvidia GB300 chips to power its Azure services. The facility was due to go live by the end of 2026 but said that challenges with the UK power grid had prevented this from happening. (Wall Street Journal)

Meta introduces new business terms that grant 'broad scraping permissions'

Meta is accused of dramatically expanding its right to scrape data from business accounts under new terms of business coming into force at the end of October. Current terms permit Meta to scrape business's websites only to 'optimise your ads'. The new terms initially included the word 'train' in the list of permitted use cases, but this has now been changed to the word 'develop' business products such as 'ads, Meta Business Tools and Meta Business Suite' However, media lawyers suggest that the new wording allows Meta to use scraped content to develop a 'business product' which could include use to train its AI models. (Nieman Lab)

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UK asks apple to widen access to its payment tech

Apple's fees and charges for using its payment technology are blocking innovation and growth, according to the UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The regulator is currently consulting on reducing fees and adopting measures to force Apple to grant access to apps that use an alternative technology standard called Host Card Emulation (HCE). Apple does not permit this in the UK. The CMA believes that changes could enable the development of a range of new products such as account-to-account payment, digital IDs and travel passes and noted that in the six months since access was widened in the EU a series of alternative payment apps have been launched. Apple argues that the change will result in lower privacy and security protections and warned against the UK adopting a similar approach to the EU. (BBC)

Publishers join forces to contest India's privacy law

A group of 21 news publishers has challenged India's privacy law in court, according to Reuters. The Indian government announced the implementation of a privacy law last year, designed to protect the digital personal data of users and placing compliance requirements on big tech platforms. The publishers point out that media outlets are not exempt and that this represents an invasion of press freedom. Media companies received assurances that the law would protect press freedom but, in the absence of the carve-outs journalists enjoy in the UK and EU, the companies have been alarmed. They argue that some provisions in the law, especially those requiring consent, could force journalists to disclose sources or erase stories, effectively putting an end to investigative journalism.(Reuters)

Digital Networks Act is a 'European strategy for the whole connectivity ecosystem'

The latest draft of the EU's Digital Networks Act (DNA), designed to reform the bloc's telecoms-sector rules, has been published. European Parliament rapporteur Michał Kobosko has said he wants to broaden the scope of the Act to be more than just telecoms reform, including extending net neutrality beyond telcos. The draft also contains obligations on large generators of internet traffic to negotiate agreements with telecoms operators over how their networks connect and exchange data. This is, according to Kobosko, designed to ensure interoperability and resilience. The Act also contains strict 'sovereignty and resilience criteria for pan-European (mobile) spectrum licences'. (Cullen International, Financial Times)

