



REGULATORY WATCH

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

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EU-US data privacy framework survives legal challenge

The General Court of the European Union has dismissed an action for annulment brought against the EU-US Data Privacy Framework (DPF), thereby upholding the framework's validity. This decision means that companies can continue transferring personal data to the United States under the current system, although the ruling can still be appealed to a higher court. The EU data protection regime imposes strict rules on personal data transfers outside the EEA. In 2022, the European Commission adopted an adequacy decision for the DPF. Philippe Latombe, a French MP, had brought proceedings before the EU General Court seeking annulment of the Commission's adequacy decision.

'No compromise' on EU's tech regulation

European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen has delivered her 'State of the Union' speech with a commitment to 'massively invest' in digital and green technology. She promised to speed up the creation of the Savings and Investment Union and the Competitiveness Fund, designed to help tech companies source funding from within the EU. Business will be made easier via 'less paperwork, less overlaps, less complex rules', she said, along with the promise of a digital euro.

She offered what was seen as a clear rebuke of Trump's repeated threats to retaliate with tariffs against countries with digital rules or tech taxes: 'The EU won't compromise on its tech regulation', she said.

Google avoids break-up order

A judge in the US has ordered Google to share more data and banned the company from making exclusive distribution contracts following a ruling last year that it had created an illegal monopoly. The US Department of Justice had argued that Google should have to sell its Chrome browser and if necessary, its Android operating system. The government, said the judge, had 'over-reached in seeking forced divestiture of these key assets' and made clear that the threat to Google's search engine posed by generative AI was central to his decision not to impose more onerous requirements. Google's shares leapt in price following the ruling.

Separately, the European Commission fined Google 2.95 billion Euros for its search advertising practices, raising tensions with the US administration who have been consistently critical of the EU's treatment of US tech companies. Chinese regulator, The State Administration for Market Regulation, is reported to have dropped its competition investigation into Google during US trade talks.

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US ends international agreements to combat fake news

The US State Department has issued a notice to European countries terminating memoranda of understanding designed to forge a unified approach against malicious information spread by foreign governments such as Russia, China and Iran. The memoranda were part of an initiative led by the Global Engagement Center (GEC), a State Department Agency established under the Biden presidency that tackled disinformation spread by US adversaries and terror groups. The GEC was closed by the Trump administration in April. It's thought that 22 countries in Europe and Africa had signed the memoranda to date.

Satellite plans 'will ruin the night sky'

Vodafone's plans to beam mobile signals from satellites to earth face mounting opposition from scientists who accuse the company of ruining the night sky with oversize satellites. Vodafone has formed a joint venture with AST SpaceMobile, whose satellites are much larger than competitors, covering 2,400 square feet (the size of a tennis court). The sunlight reflecting off them makes them brighter than stars, according to astronomers. The UK Space Agency and international organisations, including the UN, are drawing up plans to tackle the issue, including potential new standards on the size and brightness of satellites.

EU forced to re-calculate DSA supervisory fees

Meta and TikTok have won a legal challenge to the way the European Commission charges fees to companies for supervising their compliance with the Digital Services Act. The size of the annual fee is tied to the number of average monthly active users for each company and whether each posts a profit or loss in the preceding financial year. The two companies said the methodology was flawed, resulting in disproportionate fees. However, the Commission dismissed the ruling as a technicality: 'The Court's ruling requires a purely formal correction on the procedure. We now have 12 months to adopt a delegated act to formalise the fee calculation and adopt new implementing decisions', a Commission spokesperson said.

Sources: *The Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal, Bird and Bird, APNews, Euronews, CNN, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, Bloomberg, Economic Times, Ars Technica, Reuters, BBC, Politico, Telecompaper*

