Edition Content

STATE OF THE UNION 2018
Juncker gives last State of the Union speech before the European elections P.2

CYBERSECURITY CAPACITY
European Commission proposes new regulation on developing cybersecurity capacity P.3

DIGITAL TAX
EU policymakers are keen to make progress on digital service tax P.5

CYBERSECURITY CERTIFICATION SCHEMES
Event: How cybersecurity certification schemes can enhance Europe’s security and competitiveness P.6

E-HEALTH
European lawmakers and experts debate health applications of Big Data P.7

BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY
Session on Blockchain at Interel Brussels offices P.8

GLOSSARY
REGULATION: EU legislative act that is binding in its entirety and is to be applied in its entirety across the EU by all EU Member States.

COUNCIL OF THE EU: Co-legislator, made up of representatives from Member State Governments. Has a six-month rotating presidency, currently held by Austria until the end of the year.

ECOFIN COUNCIL: The ECOFIN Council is made up of the economics and finance ministers from all Member States. Relevant European Commissioners also participate in meetings.
STATE OF THE UNION 2018
Juncker gives last State of the Union speech before the European elections

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, delivered his last State of the European Union speech on Wednesday, 10 September. Mr Juncker used his speech to outline in broad strokes where the EU’s focus should be in the future, where there is still work to be done in the current Commission “to ensure that our imperfect European Union becomes more perfect every day”.

In his speech, Mr Juncker provided a bigger picture in a range of topics, such as a new partnership with Africa, the role of the EU on migration, the enhancement of the monetary union and Brexit.

The State of the EU also included references to specific pieces of legislation. Concerning the digital tax, the President noted that European citizens will be interested to know that companies pay their taxes where they make their profits, adding that the EC’s proposal would rapidly become a reality. Moreover, the speech announced that the EU will be changing its security union to counter terrorist propaganda, with a relevant proposal published shortly afterwards.

This year’s State of the EU speech placed the emphasis on the challenges the EU currently faces. Despite mentioning some achievements, it was clear that the President sought to address the big concerns, such as migration and the rule of law, while making the case for more work to be done on trade, foreign policy and defence. This was in line with the theme, “A Europe that protects”, which was used as the main theme for this year’s speech.

(Source: Interel)
CYBERSECURITY CAPACITY

European Commission proposes new regulation on developing cybersecurity capacity

Following the State of the European Union speech in September, the Commission published a proposal for a European Cybersecurity Competence Network and Centre. The proposal aims to boost the EU’s cybersecurity capacity and promote innovation in the sector. This was the result of the fact that the EU is a net importer of cybersecurity products and solutions, and largely depends on non-European providers. The proposal builds on existing partnerships and funding schemes in the field of cybersecurity.

The Regulation proposes the set-up of a European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre with a network of National Coordination Centres. This cooperation model should work in order to stimulate the European cybersecurity technological and industrial ecosystem.

The Regulation (Article 8) also creates a Cybersecurity Competence Community, which “shall consist of industry, academic and non-profit research organisations, and associations as well as public entities and other entities dealing with operational and technical matters. It shall bring together the main stakeholders with regard to cybersecurity technological and industrial capacities in the Union. It shall involve National Coordination Centres as well as Union institutions and bodies with relevant expertise”. Membership will be open to entities established within the Union which can demonstrate cybersecurity expertise on either research, industrial development or training and education.

The Competence Centre will facilitate and help coordinate the work of the Network and nurture the Cybersecurity Competence Community, driving the cybersecurity technological agenda and facilitating access to
Edition Content

STATE OF THE UNION 2018
Juncker gives last State of the Union speech before the European elections P.2

CYBERSECURITY CAPACITY
European Commission proposes new regulation on developing cybersecurity capacity P.3

DIGITAL TAX
EU policymakers are keen to make progress on digital service tax P.5

CYBERSECURITY CERTIFICATION SCHEMES
Event: How cybersecurity certification schemes can enhance Europe’s security and competitiveness P.6

E-HEALTH
European lawmakers and experts debate health applications of Big Data P.7

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Session on Blockchain at Interel Brussels offices P.8

The expertise so gathered. This will be done by implementing relevant parts of the Digital Europe and Horizon Europe programmes by allocating grants and carrying out procurements.

The Competence Centre is proposed to take the form of a European Partnership, meaning that both Union and Member State funds will be employed, as well as industry. The Centre will work closely with the Network of National Coordination Centres and the cybersecurity competence community (involving a large and diverse group of actors involved in cybersecurity technology development such as research entities, supply-side industries, demand side industries, and the public sector). The European Cyber Security Organisation (ECSO) will be invited to contribute to the work of the Centre and the network. In addition, Member States will have to designate a National Coordination Centre to support the work of the Competence Centre.

The Cybersecurity Competence Community presents an opportunity for IEEE to engage with the wider cybersecurity community and contribute in the shaping of cybersecurity priorities. Although this Regulation will become applicable as of 2021, the discussion leading up to its adoption presents IEEE with a chance to disseminate its thinking on cybersecurity and further boost its credibility in the eyes of policy makers and stakeholders.

(Source: Interel)
DIGITAL TAX

EU policymakers are keen to make progress on digital service tax

The introduction of an EU-wide digital tax seems to accelerate while discussions continue in Brussels.

The European Commission and the Austrian Presidency are very keen to make progress on the file. The Austrians planned three Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) meetings in the last quarter of 2018 (the latest one was held in early October) to discuss the digital tax aiming at reaching an agreement by the end of the year. If the proposal is not concluded by then, the file might not be concluded at all, since the Romanian Presidency’s capacity will be limited due to the European elections taking place in May 2019.

In relation to the current on-going debate, France’s initiative to include a sunset clause into the proposal has potentially been replaced by a so-called “review” clause, which EC officials had previously suggested. This new clause would allow the EC to revisit the tech tax by a specific date to consider whether it should “appeal, amend or prolong” the initiative.

This proposal has found support in countries like France, Spain and Italy, while many Nordic countries together with Ireland and the Netherlands refuse it. Germany is neither in favor nor against the compromise text.

Nevertheless, intelligence suggests that Member States against the proposal seem unlikely to oppose it in the Council, indicating that an agreement might be possible. The critical milestone to determine this will be the 6th November ECOFIN meeting.

(Source: Interel + PoliticoPro)
Last month, an event in Brussels gathered representatives from the EC, industry and experts to discuss cybersecurity certification schemes and whether these could enhance Europe’s security and competitiveness. Speakers included representatives from Orange, European Automobile Manufacturers’ Association (ACEA) Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and European Commission’s DG CNECT amongst others. The event came in light of the trilogue discussions on the EC’s proposal for a Cybersecurity Act, which aims at both revising the mandate of European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) and creating an EU framework for cybersecurity certification.

Some of the key points addressed during the debate were whether it would be better to apply mandatory or voluntary cybersecurity certification schemes while their respective effectiveness was discussed. Some representatives from the automotive industry were against mandatory schemes that certify entire vehicles, suggesting instead that this should be done for specific components.

In view of the upcoming discussions on the Cybersecurity Act, the role of the industry, the notion of self-assessment and cybersecurity information for products, services and processes will be key points to consider. Moreover, another point raised during the event was that ENISA must be given enough resources to carry out the tasks allocated to it. On the EC’s side, policymakers expressed their views on the difficulty to legislate accordingly, due to the fact that cybersecurity is still viewed as a national issue, whereas it is by default a cross-border, dynamic and flexible issue.

(Source: Interel)
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E-HEALTH
European lawmakers and experts debate health applications of Big Data

Earlier this month, in the event “Big Data for better health: hype or hope?”, hosted by POLITICO, EU and national policymakers alongside industry representatives and experts gathered to discuss the possible benefits of Big Data for the healthcare sector.

Policymakers and industry representatives flagged the numerous benefits that Big Data would bring to the health sector, such as improving and facilitating the management of patient records across the EU or providing more precise medical care by shifting to a more preventive approach.

In that sense, Clemens Martin Auer, Director-General of the Austrian Ministry of Health emphasized the importance of Big Data not only for the citizenship but for the sake of research on best practices. Moreover, Mr. Martin highlighted in his intervention the role of the European Commission in constantly working to transform healthcare, particularly through initiatives like the e-health network.

In addition, guest speakers raised other points during the discussion with regards to the lack of digital preparedness of the current healthcare infrastructure (e.g. hospitals), interoperability issues of healthcare systems in Europe and whether European citizens could trust public data management and collection of data in light of the recent scandals around data security.

(Source: Interel)

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