

Net Neutrality No More in US

Written by Marco Attard
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A Washington appeals court rules invalid the Federal Communication Commission's net neutrality regulations-- meaning US ISPs can start offering tiered internet services with faster connection speeds to companies willing to pay up.



Net neutrality rules were adopted in the US in 2010, and forced providers (such as Verizon and Comcast) to treat all content equally regardless of host. Their removal brings about a feudal era for the N. American internet, with content from those unwilling to cough up the cash appearing slower to consumers.

In the meantime consumers might also end up paying higher prices to access bandwidth-hungry services such as Netflix or YouTube. Netflix currently accounts for 32% of peak internet traffic in N. America, while Google's YouTube accounts for 19%.

"[Providers] are now in a position to not only make considerable sums of money but, in many ways, they are one of the most important arbiters of culture and speech and what is or isn't going to be on the Internet," BitTorrent CEO Eric Klinker tells the Wall Street Journal.

But how will such a decision affect us Europeans? [European Commissioner Neelie Kroes tweets](#) on whether she should invite "newly disadvantaged" US startups to open shop in the EU, but is the European internet truly neutral? In some ways it is... but also isn't.

The most recent European Commission telecoms market reform proposal does lip service to net

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neutrality (it bans internet content blocking and throttling) but also suggests “Providers[...] should therefore be free to conclude specialised services agreements on defined levels of quality of service as long as such agreements do not substantially impair the general quality of internet access services.”

In other words ISPs might promise to not "substantially impair" (interesting wording, that) internet access quality for non-payers, but since more investment will reach more profitable fast lanes the slow lane will inevitably suffer.

Such a situation might not be so bad in Europe, where broadband industry is still fairly competitive. However US-style scenario might still take place should a handful of titans manage to devour all smaller players.

Either way, time appears right to push the EC for tighter proposal wording-- and the implementation of actual net neutrality.

Go [Court Tosses Rules of Road for Internet \(WSJ.com\)](#)

Go [EC "Major Step" Towards Single Telecoms Market](#)