

'We Are Interested in Aadhaar and Make in India'

The Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) is working closely with its Indian counterpart on net neutrality, which it considers an issue related to democracy, said chairman Sébastien Soriano. In an interview to ET's **Gulveen Aulakh**, his first to the Indian media, he said he was impressed with the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's move to ban Free Basics and the Indian industry's dynamism, and was keenly watching the impact of Reliance Jio on the market, the cost-sharing model through tower companies and the digital enabler Aadhaar. Edited excerpts:

What brings you to India?

This is the first time that BEREC has come to India. First, there is a telecom momentum with the entry of Reliance (Jio), with a very interesting business model, but also reac-

tions from others, mergers and acquisitions, alternative models like Wi-Fi networks, and we are also interested in the cost-sharing model through tower companies that does not exist in Europe, which is very smart, and gives them the ability to price better. Second, we are responsible for net neutrality in Europe. We were quite impressed with the decision of Trai last year to ban Free Basics services and we wanted an exchange to understand if we have the same mindset about this in Europe and India. India is the most important democracy in the world; Europe is the second one. So, as net neutrality is a democratic issue, it's really important that the most important democracies stick together to see if we are considering this the same way. We had discussions with Trai.

Third, we are also interested in the IT and digital ecosystem in India. Europe is a little

some points we may have a common understanding about net neutrality. There is no agenda on converging, but just to understand what is happening on both continents.

IS BEREC likely to take a similar decision as India on zero rating or Free Basics?

In the European framework, zero rating is not banned in itself. Our regulation is quite new, and now one-third of us in Europe are concretely looking at practices of zero rating. Some of us have taken decisions, others are still in process, and so we will see the outcome. Some practices will be banned, others will be cleared. The idea is that we will make a panorama of this at the end of this year. BEREC will issue a report on how the net neutrality regulation has been implemented.

How do you view India's telecom sector?

Something that I found interesting, which is close to what we are trying to do in Europe, is what Trai is doing with MySpeed app. The Austrian regulator is doing exactly the same thing. When prices are low, it's important to give the ability to the consumer that gives more importance to quality. If the end user has the right information about the best network, then they will subscribe to that network, which in turn will make more money for the operator, which he can invest



bit upset about the fact that we were and are still good in telecom, but we totally lost the battle of smartphone and platforms, the Internet 2.0. So, how can we be back in tech, make it possible that a Google, Apple or Facebook is a European market player... so we are interested in

India for projects like Make in India. Start up India and the very impressive project on biometric - Aadhaar. So, we wanted to hear how the digital sovereignty issue is seen in India.

On net neutrality, what would you want Europe to learn from India?

We have decided with Trai to keep on discussing that, besides sharing, to see if on

into the networks.

What interests you most about Reliance Jio's model?

It's the impact in itself on the market which is interesting. In France, we had a new entrant in 2012, Iliad, offering prices that were much lower and it created some important moves. So, it's interesting to see similarities or differences between the situation you have in India and what we had in France.

The Federal Communications Commission has resorted to light-touch regulation to get operators to invest more. Has this change in stand had any impact on EU?

Big operators in Europe are lobbying strongly that there is too much regulation, which makes investments difficult. We strongly challenge these arguments. The question is, is there a necessity to change the regulation to make sure that it is totally incentivising investment, and how we can define pro-investment regulation. I am quite positive about the discussions we can have with some members of European Parliament, to find a good way to foster investment thanks to good regulation. The American debate is a different story. The change in FCC administration doesn't change the fact that we will go on having technical discussions with FCC.