

Editorial

OPEN DIGITAL TECH TO SECURE OUR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY



By Laure de La Raudière,
Chairwoman of Arcep

The report on the state of the internet in France that we publish every year is more than just a technical snapshot: it is a tool for measuring the vitality of an essential common good. It provides an opportunity to take the pulse of an ecosystem in constant flux, to identify the dynamics at work and, if necessary, to take action in our regulatory capacity.

The 2025 edition of this report lays out three findings.

The first finding concerns the deployment of the IPv6 protocol. If the situation in France made real strides this past year, and is among the best in the world, the situation around the global remains wildly disparate and progress has been far too slow. Even though there has been a shortage of IPv4 addresses since early 2019, the global rate of adoption for IPv6 has not yet overstepped the 50% mark (compared to 70% in France). Even though the number of objects connected to the internet continues to climb, if it were to continue, this sluggish rate of progress could impede the emergence of new use cases and compromise the network's proper technical operation.

The second finding concerns the durability of digital technology. If we want to ensure that digital services, and the infrastructures that underpin them, will benefit future generations, they will need to be ecologically designed. This finding was the impetus for our publication, in concert with Arcom, of the General policy framework for the ecodesign of digital services, and for the launch, again with Arcom, of the Stakeholder

forum to facilitate its appropriation. There is a growing awareness of the energy drain that today's generative AI systems represent, and we want to make sustainability and energy efficiency a measure of competitiveness for new "made in Europe" AI services.

Lastly, this year marks the tenth anniversary of Europe's Open Internet (i.e. net neutrality) Regulation that allows every user to freely access and publish the content of their choice. This framework has enabled the flow of traffic without unjustified blocking or discrimination, benefitting both users and innovation. But the ecosystem is changing: the large digital platforms that have taken hold as the new technical gatekeepers via their marketplaces, search engines and operating systems, and the explosive development of generative AI are challenging the very way we access online content. Although digital platforms were the subject of European regulation (the Digital Markets Act) aimed at making them more open, do we need to think about extending the scope of application for net neutrality in this generative AI era?

These three findings alone reveal the extent to which the promise of a lastingly open internet is by no means a foregone conclusion. It was with this in mind that we published our Ambition 2030 strategy back in January. It is driven by one clear aim: to ensure that France has the digital infrastructures it needs for the coming decades, while guaranteeing that the internet remains an area of freedoms.

These infrastructures — be they for fixed or mobile networks, cloud computing, AI services or data sharing — must be accessible everywhere, to everyone and for a long time to come.

This is not a purely technical vision. Guaranteeing open digital technology also means protecting our strategic autonomy. It means safeguarding our country, our businesses, our citizens, from having to depend structurally on a handful of, often non-European, actors, for what are vital functions of our economic and democratic lives.

Environmental performance can become a determining factor in European innovation and competitiveness, and so in our long-term strategic autonomy. This will only be possible if startups are truly able to enter digital markets and offer their services.

Some say that regulation is an obstacle to innovation. On the contrary: *ex ante* regulation can be a catalyst for innovation. It is pro-innovator, pro-new entrant, the same way it has been in the telecoms market for 25 years. Regulation helps open up markets, disrupt gatekeepers and lift barriers, it guarantees fairness, and expands the scope of possibilities. It allows new entrants to jostle entrenched positions.

Digital technology has become the bedrock of our economy, the foundation of our trade, the vector of our rights. It is up to us, collectively, to work to ensure that it remains a driver of emancipation rather than a factor of dependency. This requires lucidity, constancy... and sometimes, indeed, regulatory courage.