

Promoting an open and sustainable internet in the age of generative AI



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Last year, when publishing our Ambition 2030 strategy, we announced the start of our work on generative AI. The results of this work have now been published, with two complementary reports that, each in their own way, shed light on the profound changes at work in ICT and in shaping the future of the internet.

The first concerns the challenges that generative AI poses for an open internet. The second analyses its environmental footprint. Together, they deliver the same conclusion: that generative AI is not only a promising technological innovation, but potentially a systemic paradigm shift for the internet, affecting the circulation of information, digital market architecture, the conditions for accessing content, in addition to the challenges created by its consumption of resources and energy, and its environmental impact, starting with carbon emissions.

The first report reveals that generative AI services are steadily becoming new gateways to the internet. Unlike search engines, they do not direct users to content via traditional hyperlinks, but rather summarise, rank, filter and sometimes replace that content... This evolution raises a central question: how to safeguard the diversity and visibility of content, users' freedom of choice and freedom to innovate in an environment where a handful of intermediaries have control over access to content

and services? It calls for the development of open protocols for interconnections between AI providers and other service providers, to guarantee interoperability, transparency and fair conditions for accessing data and essential resources.

The second report delivers a reminder that generative AI has a very real material cost. Powering our now daily use of its services are data centres, networks, devices: smartphones, tablets and computers. So the development of generative AI cannot be conceived without paying special attention to its environmental impact! Here again, the conclusion is clear: we must better assess, better document, and better supervise these effects, and promote more frugal AI models, so that innovation does not occur at the expense of sustainability. We must not deprive future generations!

This work converges towards a single imperative: work to ensure that generative AI supports an open and sustainable internet, rather than accelerating its partitioning, if not privatisation. This is the very thrust of our work: raising awareness of these issues and informing public debate. This annual report acts as a thermometer: it reminds us that the internet is a fragile common good, that we need to watch over and protect it, to ensure that its ongoing transformations continue to benefit everyone.