SMARTPHONES, TABLETS, VOICE ASSISTANTS...

Devices: Weak link in open internet access

What if the internet you access depended on your brand of phone? Is your app store transparent? Is your voice assistant compatible with your music? In 2016, Arcep kicked off a series of meetings and workshops with stakeholders: equipment suppliers, developers, content providers… On 15 February 2018, Arcep is publishing its report and calling everyone’s attention to the influence that terminal equipment has on internet openness, and to what actions might be taken.

WAY IS ARCEP PUBLISHING A REPORT ON THIS TOPIC?

We can view the internet like a chain:

- Users
- Content providers
- Networks
- Devices
- Over

But there is a weak link preventing internet openness, end to end:

- Devices
- There’s nothing here!

Today, European net neutrally regulation protects internet openness on one section of this chain.

It’s protected here! Thank you, Europe!

L’Arcep, which is responsible for enforcing net neutrality on this section…

...investigates this section, in its report

DEVICES ARE A WEAK LINK BECAUSE THEY OFFER ONLY LIMITED INTERNET ACCESS

Yesterday? Internet access was via:

- The computer

But when we access the internet mainly through our mobile (and soon through a smart speaker), we are “locked into” Google’s or Apple’s or Amazon’s environment.

Today, it’s mainly through mobiles, via apps.

And tomorrow, it will also be via:

- Connected cars
- Voice assistants
- Smart speakers

In each environment, certain apps are showcased

Not all apps are listed on every app store

Connected products from different environments are not compatible

Users are free to choose the device they buy but, ultimately, that freedom is limited.
Several initiatives exist to address these limitations, and to give users back the power of choice.

For instance, apps that make it easier to transfer data from one device to another...

... and allow users to switch smartphones without losing:

- **Their contacts**
- **Their photos**
- **Their passwords**
- **Predictive text intelligence** (well, not yet)

And progressive web apps that are available directly in the browser...

... and which get around app stores' restrictions.

In its report, ARCEP is doing its part by offering concrete courses of action, such as:

- Cracking open the black box by requiring app stores to eliminate the opacity of their indexing criteria.

- Open APIs to all content developers so that they can access all of the functions of any device.

- Give users the freedom to delete pre-installed apps. It’s users who choose their content, not device-makers.

More broadly, we could create an expert and neutral referee, capable of settling economic disputes, and put an end to unwarranted practices by device manufacturers and OS...

Find the complete report on the ARCEP website:

« Devices: weak link in open internet access »:

- A thorough and open approach
- Impact on app developers
- International perspective
- Detailed courses of action