



Tech Talk

Is Internet a Vital need? ©

by Max Farrington

In the twenty-first century, the internet is everywhere, whether you're having lunch in a restaurant or at home. For today's civilisation the Internet is the answer to everything... or nearly. For example, if you want to know more about the Punic Wars you can look it up on Wikipedia or other websites. If you want to buy food you can order it online and have it delivered without even getting out of your pyjamas. Even if you need help pumping your bicycle tyre, you're certain to find an instructional video on YouTube.

French Minister of Digital Affairs, Axelle Lemaire, is requesting that the internet should be maintained even if a household cannot afford it anymore due to financial difficulties. This request will be added to the Digital Bill expected at the end of the month. The FFT, Federation Française des Telecoms, which includes 3 of the 4 main telecommunications companies, has shown strong opposition. This law questions whether the Internet has become a vital domestic need just like water, electricity and gas. It seems that for the French government it is. These 3, and soon to be 4 products are considered "Première nécessité" which means that even though a family cannot afford to pay for the services they are still entitled to receive them. This argument is also shared by the UN. In 2012, it declared that the internet was a human right. One year later, the Minister for Digital Affairs declared that to cut off the internet was like cutting off water.

It is true that today, every activity can be related to the internet. For studying, the internet is very important; many teachers give out homework that involves getting on a computer and using the internet for research. According to the Cisco Connected World Technology studies, 1 out of 3 students consider that the internet has become a vital need. However, just like electricity or gas, the internet needs infrastructure. Back in 2014, a small hamlet near Sainte-Anne-Saint-Priest in Limousin caused a small uproar by refusing to pay its taxes. The reason was that they felt like second-class citizens because they did not have the same means of communication as the rest of the country. This hamlet is not the only one concerned, much like in the past, when villages complained about their non-access to electricity or tap water.

The infrastructure for the internet is far better implemented in urban areas, than in the countryside. This affects all modern countries in the world, whether it's Britain, Germany or the US. For this reason smaller countries have a better distribution. Today, there are around 3.3 billion internet users in the world; this is 40% of the world's population. Before 1995 only 1% could claim to have an internet connection. The first billion was reached in 2005, the second in 2010 and the third billion in 2014.

We have never been as dependent on electricity than we are today and consequently, dependent on the internet. Today many administrative procedures such as filing your tax return, or renewing a parking permit, can be completed on the internet as well as off line.

But in the coming years, the internet will take over. The internet, just like our telephones and even electricity is not a critical need as people have lived, live and will live without it; however it remains an essential secondary need. Our primary dependency on it is increasing by the day...