WSIS Geneva 2015
Semantis Workshop
Initiative for Social Innovation & Development for Information Society

This is CECUA

The Confederation of European Computer User Associations or CECUA for short.

CECUA’s mission is to address and put forward the views and concerns of personal and professional users of information technology focusing on functionality over technology. In this way CECUA promotes the interests of users vis-à-vis citizens, politics, industry and the diversity of European Countries and Regions.

CECUA itself is an active member of EIF (European Internet Foundation) and EURid (European Registry of Internet Domain) which are both supported by and in close contact with the European Parliament and the European Commission. CECUA is also accredited to the WSIS (World Summit on Information Society). CECUA was present at the first WSIS meeting and is now presenting at this WSIS in Geneva. CECUA contributed to the Digital World 2030 Report published by EIF in 2014. Also CECUA is represented on the EURid Strategic Committee.

CECUA is a non-profit independent organization working on behalf of users of IT since over 30 years. CECUA has two types of members from several European countries: national associations and selected personal members. Membership is subject to stringent requirements. Thus CECUA provides highly competent expertise and has received special respect for integrity.
After and as a result of the CECUA and Partner Conferences “The Citizen and the Global Information Society” in Brussels in 1998, Paris and Riga 2004, 2005 Namur and 2014 Liège, CECUA started to move away from traditional paper communication and face to face meetings. CECUA was motivated to take this approach for 2 reasons: the lack of funds for meetings and the then already apparent trend towards using the Internet for communication replacing paper and face to face meetings. Over the years CECUA drifted more and more in this direction although formally it was not until 2014 that the old statues were revised to include the change. Also at the same time new categories for membership were introduced allowing for individual memberships besides association membership. Since then several new individual members have joined CECUA and also an association, ATI of Spain. With ATI CECUA has managed to close the geopolitical gap on its Mediterranean frontier.

Although time has gone by the issues remain the same or similar and CECUA continues to represent user issues at the European strategic level. This mission was published in a short document “CECUA in Brief” which is a part of this presentation.

**Major issues**

One major issue is security where users, consumers and citizens are very important stakeholders. According to our definition, those three groups, although overlapping, have different interests. Those three groups are not after technology as such. Rather they are after functionality and what good use they can make of it? As users of information technology we have long-term views and strategic interests with special regards to functionality over technology and the use of data. As consumers we buy products that should be inexpensive, serve our needs and provide benefits. As citizens we are looking for general conditions in life, state protection, freedom and social values. CECUA’s mission is to address and put forward the views and concerns of all those groups. In this way CECUA promotes the interests vis-à-vis citizens, politics, industry and the diversity of European Countries and regions. Therefore, we are serving the needs of users, consumers and citizens, but our special focus is on the user aspects. What is a user and what is a consumer? They are all citizens. But is there really a difference between user-citizen and consumer-citizen? Yes, there is. Generally speaking a consumer is a user and a user is a potential consumer. Consumer is in for products already on the market. User is a broader term, user is also in for product already on the market but he is in for more. He is also in for trends and developments, not only technology but also usability. CECUA is a user association reflecting the broader terms.
Many issues CECUA has been fighting for are now the subject of research for medical doctors, psychologist, social scientists and political scientists. Among those issues is the relationship between technology on one hand and user needs on the other hand and how the industry is responding to user needs. In general users are not looking for technology as such; they are looking for functionality or what you can do with technology. And the industry has to accept this. But it is not always easy.

Even one of the giants of the IT industry has had to roll back a new user interface to appease its users. How is it possible that an IT industry giant has to roll back? What kind of target group were they working with when they planned the product they now have had to roll back? Or did they simply follow the old rule that industry knows best? Talking to a broad user group would have saved this company not only time and money but also reputation and respect. Should be a good lesson for marketing people? Marketing has to learn that functionality is what sells, not technology alone. Working with users and meeting user requirements from early on will save both time and money and improve product acceptance in the market place and improve competitiveness.

But not only can the industry do better on user issues. Public administration also. Let me tell you a story from my native country of Iceland. 99.3 % of taxpayers use the Internal Revenue Service web-portal for submitting their yearly tax declarations. That is probably a world record. However, what about those 0.7 % who do not and hang on to the old paper format? The Internal Revenue Service now has a project to identify those people, contact them and offer help and assistance to use the web-portal for their tax declaration. That is probably a world record also? Next year the goal is that there will be no paper tax declarations in Iceland. CECUA has often pointed out that some people, particularly older people have difficulties migrating from scribe to screen. The response has often been that this is a generation issue and the younger generation has no problems and time will solve the problem for the older generation. The Icelandic Internal Revenue Service is not waiting for time. It is doing something NOW.

**CECUA draft Bill of Rights**

Bill of Rights for Citizens in the Global Information Society

CECUA and its partners recognized from the conclusions of the 1998 Brussels conference “Citizens in the Global Information Society” and supported by the EU that Europeans were failing to take advantage of the considerable benefits that are available from the Global Information Society because of doubts and fears arising from the “Information Age”.

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In particular, the Global Information Society was seen as benefiting large organizations and governments and is failing to recognize and protect the interests of citizens.

To address these fears, CECUA and its Partners proposed a draft set of basic rights in order to make policy makers and politicians aware of the issues so that they could address these fears and concerns.

The Draft Bill of Rights consists of 9 Articles:

• Article 1 DIGNITY: The Citizen of the Global Information Society will take care of and guard this as a basic right of this Society. (Personal Privacy and Copyright are protected by separate legislation).

• Article 2 – FREEDOM of PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: The Citizen has the right to develop his own talents so long as he is not violating the basic rights of fellow citizens and is not violating the basic rights of his government or the laws of morality.

• Art. 3 - FREEDOM of COMMUNICATION: Freedom of speech and self-expression, freedom of universal access and distribution of information and the right of knowledge to conduct this are fundamental rights to the Citizen of the Global Information Society.

• Art. 4- CULTURAL PRESERVATION: The Citizen shall have the right to communicate in his native tongue, and to work and conduct official business in an Official language of the sovereign state of his residence.

• Art. 5 - RIGHT OF ACCESS: The Citizen shall have the right of access to public information in a timely manner and shall not be excluded by lack of access for geographical or affordability reasons, lack of usability or lack of functionality. Art. 6 - RIGHT for RELIABLE and FUNCTIONING SERVICES: The Citizen shall have the right to access services and facilities, which have a stable user interface requiring basic skills that the facilities are secure, and with that data and information which is accurate and timely.

• Art. 7 - NETIQUETTE: The Citizen, Government and all other organizations have the responsibility to abide by and act in accordance with the rules of the Netiquette

• Art. 8 - RIGHT for ACCURATE and UNDERSTANDABLE CHARGING: The Citizen shall have the right to accurate, understandable and timely billing for Internet services and facilities.

Art. 9 - RIGHT FOR REDRESS
• The Citizen shall have access to protection and redress for acts of fraud, corruption of personal data, loss of privacy, and consequential costs arising from errors, bugs or failures of Internet services and facilities.

The Bill of Rights or BoR for short has often been referred to and used as a model. CECUA has always referred to BoR as a draft because of ongoing changes in the society. However, the draft has withstood time remarkably well. However, recently CECUA decided that time had come to review and update the draft and adapt it to new developments and challenges in the Information Society. A new draft is being worked on by a CECUA working group set up for this purpose. The work is progressing well and it will be published soon. I do not want to preempt the publication of the new draft. However, I will mention the major areas of change.

The importance of the Internet and the rights and responsibilities of the stakeholders have been included going back to the roots of the Internet with its philosophy of three principles:

1. “Best of effort” means guarantees that every internet-provider will do his best to let the data flow run as efficiently as possible.

2. “Innovation without permission” means every participant is able to be creative without the explicit permission of someone else or any bureaucratic organization.

3. “End to end” principle concludes that every net cell is able to communicate with every other net cell.

These three principles are together understood as net neutrality and are the leading principles for an open and free internet as perceived by CECUA.

Additionally the distinction between users, consumers and citizens has been amplified as mentioned above.

CECUA hopes that the new draft BoR will help to guide us through the near future.

**Internet Governance**

To the user-consumer-citizen Internet Governance is all about trust and confidence. This group must trust and feel confident about that doing banking on the Internet is safe and without risk of being the victim of hackers or other actors using the Internet for criminal purposes. Internet legal issues were for a long time largely neglected by the politicians and the users-consumers-citizens have suffered. From early on CECUA has maintained that crime is a crime
regardless if it is perpetrated in cyberspace or not. Only when big business started losing billions due to Internet crime, EU issued last year the “Cybersecurity Strategy for the European Union, An Open, Safe and Secure Cyberspace” finally putting Internet crimes on the same levels with other crimes.

The Cyber-security Strategy of the European Union falls short when it comes to users-consumers-citizens and their issues. It contains only some general statements but seems to leave any action to the member states. Users and their use of technology is the key to innovation and growth. It is not enough to leave everything to the “industry who knows best”, an old EU 8terminology. This is 20th century thinking; we need a 21st century one. Do we need an Internet Ombudsman? Some countries have already installed such an ombudsman to resolve disputes between consumers and business, an important part toward building trust and confidence between parties.

Global Communication

It has been a dream of many that Information and Communication Technologies or ICT for short would help to bridge the gap between people created by the different languages spoken around the globe, bridging by providing real time translation between different languages. Now the translation is there thanks to Google and some other companies. The Real Time Translation is a user issue, something CECUA has long been wishing for. But how good is the translation? CECUA has started a pilot project to get some feeling for the present situation.

For some time we have been able to have computer translation of written documents and also webpages, two ways of how we exchange information and communicate with each other. But the most popular method of human interaction has been missing: the spoken word. That is changing now with the addition of real time translation of voice. What a marvelous thing. I call somebody in China and speak English into my smartphone and at the other end the Chinese person I called does not hear English from his or her smartphone, no this person hears what I said in English in Chinese thanks to real time translation. This is not an evolution; no this is a revolution, nothing less. One of the big barriers in Europe and not only Europe, a global barrier indeed is disappearing. And this person replies in Chinese in his or her smartphone and I hear what was said in English on my smartphone. That is really cool.

Europe has often looked to the USA with some envy for having only one language, English, used by everybody, while EU now has 28 languages. The
language diversity has been as a stumbling block for the EU internal market. Consumer and business information has to be translated into different languages costing money making it more expensive to do business in Europe than in USA. But to others the language diversity is a part of European cultural richness. With real time translation we can keep both.

The applications are endless. First of all it will help the citizens to communicate with each other with ease across borders and boundaries. Also business men negotiating a deal can use respective mother tongues in addition or instead of some compromise language like English or having to use expensive translators. Same applies to politicians and diplomats. Anybody will be able to talk to anybody using his or her mother-tongue.

The availability of an internet-connected smartphone itself will not be a problem; it seems that almost everybody will have one regardless of living in rich or poor countries.

Another issue is the survival of so-called endangered languages, particularly languages spoken by few people, small nations. The real time translation will certainly help those endangered languages better to survive.

Video conferencing is on the rise. Now it should be rather easy to equip them with real time voice translation. Again the possibilities are endless.

This does not mean that we shall stop learning languages. It is still far away that real time computer translation can catch all the nuances of the language, particularly cultural language. But the bulk of daily human interaction can be handled by computer voice translation. Furthermore, electronic language translation is a useful supplement to knowledge of foreign languages and could also support learning.

Other issues.

There are many other user-consumer-citizen issues there or almost there. Among those are Internet of things, Big Data, Smart Cities, Trust and confidence, etc. The list is long and CECUA Vice President Didier Carré will address some of them in his following presentation.

Internet des objects

Since its creation, Internet has been data oriented. The pervasive development of Internet in business and industry induces an unequaled dimension of the use of the Internet though the objects. Objects data flows are contributing to the growth the Big Data with issues regarding the governance, Internet capacity...
infrastructure, energy consumption, trust and confidence. The resolution of these issues will foster the new usages in energy, transport, health in connections of the essential infrastructures.

**Big Data**

With cheaper data storage and increase of the processing power, information is becoming the new Eldorado. The enormous amount data collected is the new resource to mine. The FAGAM (Facebook, Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft) among others have understood the value of this new commodity. The skills of the new profession of Data Scientist can bring a lot value to users and citizens. Development of predictive algorithm has existing and potential applications in almost all domains: transportation (travel time prediction...), Energy (Smart grids...), Healthcare (Epidemiology...)... Users can be afraid of the use of their personal information (“Big Brother” syndrome). The value of the use of their data has to be well explained and the privacy guaranteed so they can enjoy the full benefits of Big Data.

The value of Big Data has also a very high commercial value which control can create dominant position for a limited number of firms. Free access to the data (Open Data) and the vigilance of regulators at national, regional and global levels are critical to ensure a plain level field for creation of new usages for the benefit of the citizen and users.

**Smart Cities**

Cities are the most wonderful invention of mankind. Place of exchange, creation, production of wealth and prosperity, cradle of most of the other inventions, Cities are places of opportunities.

Few numbers to put them in perspective: 90 % of the growth of the population is urban. 70 % of energy consumption and 80 % of the CO2 produced are in the cities. It’s a good idea to deal with cities to meet the challenges of the XXIth century

Information and Communication Technologies are playing key roles along the life cycle of the cities.

As for the Building Information Management (aka BIM), digitalization of the infrastructure is creating new ways to design the cities. These new tools help a better use of the resources, better optimization of the usages fostering innovation. The collaboration and Augmented Reality features of these tools will encourage the “co-engineering” of the cities to better responds to the citizen needs and concerns.
Smart grids are another example of support of the ICTs to optimize energy consumption. The introduction of renewable energies such as solar or wind cannot get a significant part of our energy mix without Smart grids balancing production and demand.

The modal transfer from cars to public transport, the resolution of the long standing “Last km” issue, the maximization of passengers in private cars are all relying on Intelligent Transport Systems and other ICTs services.

Last but not least, dematerialization is improving the productivity of the administration. Giving a better service to the citizen whilst reducing the administration cost hence the taxes, e-administration can be used as in Issy-les-Moulineaux (France) as the first building blocks of the Smart city. The demonstration of the efficiency of dematerialization has created a dynamics in this city where the citizens understands the benefit of the innovations and adopt them quickly (Issygrid smart grid, Fort d’Issy Eco district...).

In the past, most initiatives were coming for the Public. While the Public debt has increased, Private is involved in the so called Private Public Partnership providing funding and technologies to speed up the implementation of new infrastructures. A new trend is coming with, for example, the development of Community Broadband Infrastructures where the ordinary people are setting up their own Internet connectivity (30 % of the American household don’t have a high speed reliable connection). With the support of mass collaborative tools such as Imagination for the People, the Public, Private and Citizen are able to develop together the solutions of efficient, sustainable, resilient and comfortable Smart Cities.

**Trust and confidence**

The Europe Internet Forum’s Digital World 2030 report has confirmed the contribution of Information and Telecommunication Technologies to the economical and social development.

Information Society Trust & Security issues and Europe contribution to the Economic & Social development have to have to be addressed against the following axes: data protection enforcement, confidence in/between companies and of course the voice of the citizen conveyed by organization such as CECUA. The potential impact of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is also to be understood.
Conclusions

The Information Society has 3 main stakeholders: users-consumers-citizens, enterprises and public authorities. Each stakeholder has its own needs and views on this society. Only if they all manage to work together in harmony respecting each other needs and visions will we reap the benefits of the Information Society. Let us all hope they will.

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