Confederation of European Computer User Associations
Confédération Européenne des Associations d'Utilisateurs des Technologies de l'Information

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Internet Governance – Europe has to contribute

CECUA and Internet Governance till now

CECUA is a non-profit independent organization working on behalf of users of IT since over 30 years. CECUA's mission is to address and put forward the views and concerns both of personal and professional users of information technology and the use of technology in modern society. **Internet** is a cornerstone of our modern society today, just like water and electricity. Everything happens on or around the internet. The Internet is quite young and has developed at racing speed. Many things have been done well, others less well or wrong. When planning for the future it is good to reflect on the past as done in the first section of this paper.

The **governance and future of the internet** are a basic element for our digital future. Starting from an US Department of Defense project the Internet gained popularity and opened economic opportunities. Therefore administration and management was outsourced to ICANN, a private Californian company under California law. However, the Internet operation itself remained under control of the USA Government until now when the Government wants to give up its control of the operation. Who will take over? Many stakeholders have different perspectives and interests. Users are one of the stakeholders. Who speaks for them? One of the issues is Internet neutrality "**EU Parliament protected Net Neutrality, No two – tiered internet within the European Union"** www.cecua.eu

Within the given structure ICANN has tried to adapt to rapid global growth of the Internet now with users counted in the billions. It has set up regional offices with international staff and tried to be a bottom up organization, giving the billions of users a say on the status and development of the global internet. A lot of committees deal with various issues. Still many people believe that the bottom up approach has failed and most decisions are taken in the top down manner. **CECUA** has been criticizing ICANN for neglecting local cultural and language issues, like national character domain names. ICANN´s first reaction was that this was "a trumped up nationalism" as the ICANN CEO put it. Later ICANN changed its mind.

One of the committees set up by ICANN is the Government Advisory Committee, GAC for short, to advise ICANN on government issues. GAC can only advise, ICANN decides. GAC activities are coordinated by the GAC secretariat hosted in alternative countries. During EU´s turn in Brussels GAC successfully brought on board countries from the developing continents. After that EUs interest in GAC has been limited. GAC has been criticized for being late in reacting to issues arising, slow in comparison the private company ICANN. But it is not easy to reach consensus among tens of Governments located around the globe with different cultures and traditions. While ICANN is funded from user fees GAC is relying on Government contributions. It has long been **CECUA´s** position that GAC needs strengthening to be able to fulfill its role as intermediary between Governments and ICANN in cases of conflict of interests.

While ICANN became more and more commercially oriented scrupulous individuals and companies have started to use the internet for criminal purposes. Present estimate is that the profit from Internet crimes is more than drugs and prostitution combined. But it was left to the local/country Governments to follow up on those criminal issues. At country level some people claimed that new laws, Internet laws, were needed, others said that present laws were adequate, only had to be interpreted differently for the Internet. The second one seems to have won the overhand. Furthermore different countries have different laws. Also most internet crimes are not local, not limited to one country but have their origins in many countries. Who is then responsible for the follow up? This is also the case with the EU. This global issue needs to be attended to at global level. **CECUA** has been maintaining that this is an issue for G9 to discuss and agree upon.

Internet legal issues were largely neglected by the politicians. The users/citizens have suffered. From early on CECUA has maintained that crime is a crime regardless if perpetrated in cyberspace or not. Only when big business started losing billions due to Internet crime, EU issued last year the Cyber Security Strategy of the

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European Union finally putting Internet crimes on the same levels with other crimes. "**Cybersecurity Strategy for the European Union, An Open, Safe and Secure Cyberspace**" www.cecua.eu .One issue is crime reporting. While it is normal for companies to report break-ins to the police and their insurance companies this has not been the case for Internet crimes to avoid bad image of the company. Recently companies can buy insurance against Internet crimes which means Internet crimes have to be reported. **CECUA** has supported this approach. "**Cybersecurity Strategy for the European Union, An Open, Safe and Secure Cyberspace, Cyber-incidents and Cyber-insurance**" www.cecua.eu

The Cyber-security Strategy of the European Union falls short when it comes to users and user 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 terminology. This is 20th century thinking; we need a 21st century one. **CECUA** maintains. "**Do we need an Internet Ombudsman**?" www.cecua.eu

The explanations above show some issues and a strong need for further action. The requirements and recommendation listed below could be a contribution for improvements of the given critical situations.

Present situation and further needs for Europe

At present important political and economic stakeholders try to implement the necessary new structures in line with their own interests. But Internet Governance is far more than a simple technical or organizational problem. It affects heavily a lot of further technical areas and resulting services and markets. **CECUA** appreciates it as crucial for European citizens as well as for European political and economic power. Therefore, the technical and organizational solution for the Internet Governance of the future has to match those interests. Unfortunately, because the matter is very complex and rapidly evolving, individual citizens as well as politicians have problems to understand it and to pursue their interests. On the other hand, the progress of technology and markets will not wait for hesitating stakeholders.

CECUA appreciates the ongoing European efforts. But the issue deserves a lot more attention. Therefore, with a view on the future of European citizens and society CECUA states the following requirements:

- **European Parliament and European Commission** as well as national governments must take Internet Governance and the resulting concerns more into view and must step up their efforts. Ongoing national and European activities should be in a comprehensive dialogue.
- The concerns and the benefits for **European citizens** have to be considered carefully. The solution for the world-wide Internet Governance has to allow useful services in an environment they can trust in.
- The sufficient openness of the solution has to provide useful opportunities for technology, markets and society. At the same time world-wide and private security are a necessity as well as sufficient security and privacy of data.
- The needs and the behavior of developed and evolving societies and their future stability all over the world have to be taken into account.
- The results of the recent NETmundial at Sao Paulo and of further events should be evaluated carefully at European level. Some fundamental issues have to be solved: the role of governments, international organizations and other stakeholders, the structure of basic processes for decisions and others. Issues like net neutrality, rules for included players, data protection have to be taken into account.
- The needs and concerns of European IT users and citizens must be considered as well as the input from other stakeholders. Special care is required for European values and European diversity with respect to language, culture, education and others.
- European politicians and citizens have to be encouraged to care about the digital future with special attention to the internet and its structures.

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