



Annual Report

for

2013

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Confederation of European Computer User Associations

Confédération Européenne des Associations d'Utilisateurs des Technologies de l'Information



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CECUA Report for the year 2013

CECUA President's Message

Dear Colleagues,

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 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 interaction between technology and users and how the industry is responding to user needs. 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 for them. Even one of the giants of the IT industry has to roll back the user interface to appease its users. How is it possible that an IT industry giant has to roll back? Were they canvassing the wrong target group 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 European competitiveness.

But not only the industry can do better on user issues. Public administration also. Let me tell you a story from my native country of Iceland. 98.3 % of Icelanders use the Internal Revenue Service web-portal for submitting their yearly tax declarations. That is probably a world record. However, what about those 1.7 % 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 been that this is a generation issue and the younger generation has no problems and time will solve the problem for the older

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generation. The Icelandic Internal Revenue Service is not waiting for time. It is doing something **NOW**.

Early in 2013 CECUA was invited to join EURid, the commissioned manager of the dot eu domain www.eurid.eu CECUA was already involved at the .eu conception and planning stage. CECUA strongly supported the creation of a new European domain as a sign of European unity and strength and also technical quality excellence. And EURid has lived up to its expectations. Presently there are close to 4 million registered .eu users and 60% of those are non- business users. CECUA was also asked to join the EURid Strategic Committee advising the EURid Board on strategic issues. .eu faces and will face competition from other cross-national domains. So far it has done well and we hope it will continue to be so. CECUA is represented by your President. And CECUA can now also be reached under www.cecua.eu

In 2013 the Commission finally turned its attention to security issues and published Cyber Security Strategy for the European Union. This document is a good step in the right direction. CECUA has already commented on the strategy on its website www.cecua.eu However, the Strategy is really a draft of what is needed. Fraud in Cyber Space has reached such dimension that it has become a real malice resulting in threats for users, society, general infrastructure and economic production. And the Commission is still only groping with the issue slowly accepting that Cyber-crime is a crime and has to be dealt with as such. This includes reporting the crime, something the Commission is still hesitant about. The strategy is also hesitant on user issues. Yes, the Commission acknowledges that the users need somebody to turn to if they have problems. But who? The Commission leaves it open. CECUA hopes that the Strategy is only a first draft of what will come from the Commission. Maybe all the discussion about data collection and privacy will spill over to user security issues also.

CECUA faces numerous tasks calling for high caliber resources. Therefore, I am happy to report that Dr. Bruno Vogel has come to help. Dr. Vogel is one of the CECUA pioneers and has served CECUA in various positions and for many years as Chairman of a very active and important Working Group. For a while, due to other professional commitments, he had to keep CECUA in the background. However, he has now returned and joined the CECUA Board as Director of Technology. CECUA welcomes Dr. Bruno Vogel back.

We need to maintain the interest and support of our dedicated colleagues and also recruit new ones. If we manage both successfully we will be able to sustain and continue to develop a truly unique organization that CECUA is and also the CECUA Academy.

And I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the CECUA Executive, Board Members, Members and CECUA EIF high level expert Group for their excellent work and continued support.



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Net Neutrality – The ongoing battle!

Recalling my contribution to the CECUA Annual Report 2011 you will find that continuation has taken place. Leaders and Managers of IT are now mostly not getting together after work to exchange thoughts and ideas but virtually through email, chat and videoconferences. The world of Reality has changed to Virtuality. Just like CECUA, the Confederation of European Computer Users Associations, is working since mid of the 90th thanks to our President Jon Thor Thorhallsson who tirelessly and inexorably but encouraging keeps the staff, Directors and Members using the virtual world instruments to get consensus by Internet. The same happened in 2011 up till 2012 with CECUAs participation at the work of the commission of inquiry for "Internet and Digital Society" serving the German Parliament solely using virtual tools like emails. The expected high level involvement on national basis in Germany by participating in the IT-Summit at the Federal Ministry of Economy and Energy was postponed for political reasons to October 21 2014 in Hamburg but CECUA as a user organization is invited and this gives hopefully a good opportunity to call attention to User Issues.

Political events like parliamentary elections also give advantages especially if different parties have to get together by forming a new government and to agree on contentious opinions. So in 2013 the major German political parties settled to include the net neutrality in their working program on behalf at one of the party's request. It was quite a time before the European Parliament took the decision to retain the net neutrality.

Also another national German incident was watched very closely by other European and US providers when the Telekom, the major German internet provider attempted to undermine the net neutrality through chopping off the granted high transmission speed for internet users by modifying the contracts for new users to their disadvantage. This led to a spontaneous general contradiction of many many internet interested people and lead to a petition addressed to the German Parliament by collecting more than 200.000 signatories. In the fall of 2012, the interest in net neutrality was significantly increased by awaited decisions on this issue at the European Parliament. Several socio-politically interested organizations lead over many months throughout Europe internet campaigns and more than 170.000 faxes, emails and calls of internet users to the Members of the European Parliament made the desired impression. The result is known and it demonstrates the influence of the user in democratic structures, not least in regional bodies such as the petition in Germany. Also CecuaMedia from the Confederation of European Computer Users Associations, which is fighting for users interests at the Commission in Brussels since May 27 1982, was one of them.

We always need to remind us 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 run the data flow 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 understandable as net neutrality and are the leading principles for an open and free internet and always in mind of CECUA.

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Relations with Brussels

Activity began in summer 2013 preliminary explorations of further suitable items at the European level. The report of European Internet Foundation (EIF) on the digital future of the year 2030 in preparation for the European Parliament seemed to be well advanced. But further evaluation of the project and of its environment still showed important outstanding opportunities for comments. In this way there was a good chance for CECUA as a member of EIF to contribute to a broad range of items relevant for European IT users. Further on, the report to be finished in early 2014 CECUA did a lot of relevant work on the project, in particular via personal attendance at a meeting in the premises of the European Parliament, via submission of a position paper of CECUA and further exchange of comments and via efforts to virtual attendance at a further meeting. The position paper was also distributed to some members of the European Parliament and of the European Commission.

The activity as described above fits very well to the long-term permanent involvement and contributions of CECUA to EIF and European Parliament going on for several years.

Furthermore, a very useful talk in Brussels with relevant persons at the European Commission (DG Connect – Stakeholders) accompanied by an exchange of information with other persons was devoted to the improved visibility of CECUA at the Commission and to the exploration of the situation at the Commission with respect to strategic items.

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