Richard Delmas, President Semantis, refers to the recent WSIS event (World Summit on the Information Society) in Geneva. The WSIS Forum represents the world's largest annual gathering of the ‘ICT for development’ community. The WSIS Forum is co-organized by ITU, UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD.

In Geneva on 6 May 2016, at the WSIS FORUM 2016 of the United Nations, SEMANTIS chaired a session with representatives from CECUA, EUROLINC, ISCC-CNRS, LACITO-CNRS, MAAYA, and the University of Paris 8 FMSH.

“ICT Language Issues for Education, Innovation, Culture and Development - The path towards a society based on digital humanities”

Participants first reaffirmed the basic principles for human rights, ethics and dignity as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter for Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Unesco Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

The vast problematic of ICT multilinguism and cultural diversity was then addressed specifically. How it deeply impacts our patterns of thinking and creating, the fostering of innovation and transmission of knowledge, of inclusive development. It was also stressed that multilinguism and the respect of cultural diversity has an ethical dimension of dignity and equity. It implies a level of public policy, notably in education and training schemes, administration, libraries, city planning, culture, e-heath, etc. ICT language facilities are key for basic education, training and lifelong learning, as well as for creativity and content creation. The use of native languages on the Internet stimulates local innovation, new educational schemes, new forms of solidarity, including for tackling migration issues worldwide. With the increased pervasiveness of ICT, ordinary citizens are now faced in the cyberspace with issues such as big data, data protection, renewable energy, smart cities, e-health, migrations, crisis management. For all these issues localisation of ICT content and services, notably in native languages, will be a key factor for development.

More generally, participants agreed on the following principles:

1. The UN WSIS process in line with Sustainable Development Goals should pave the way for a world of peace, security, dignity and mutual understanding. ICT multilingual tools and services are crucial to address these societal challenges.

2. Civil society should cooperate on concrete steps leading to more open and participative actions for non-discriminatory access to knowledge and for effective multilinguism and cultural diversity on the Internet. Besides participating actively in the WSIS process, civil
society should be invited to be part of the follow-up of the Unesco Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

3. There is need to improve communication and coordination between technical and non-technical communities. WSIS should intensify its involvement in this by managing the process and developing research and labelization, notably on the semantic web, DNS, data classification and archiving in multilingual forms. A universal digital classification of human activities should be undertaken.

4. To promote more inclusive development, education and capacity building, language acquisition for all citizens. Urgently there is a need to offer ICT based opportunities particularly for young people and women, older generations, emerging and less favoured economies, migrants and diasporas.

5. The necessity to develop future common activities in close and clear consultation with civil society associations, in liaison if necessary with relevant academic institutions. The ISIDIS Cooperative Agreement of 2015 constitutes a reference model for further cooperation in the field of multilingualism and cultural diversity.

6. Reaffirm the urgent need to initiate a universal digital "social contract” as politics, economy, culture and science are intrinsically associated in the Information Society. Therefore it is necessary to improve cooperation between civil associations sharing the same values for a world of peace, prosperity, ethics and dignity. The dynamics of the civil society should also apply to the digital "territories” of the “South”, which reveal new ICT use patterns.

7. Agree to meet again during the WSIS process to evaluate progress in principles and actions as referred to above. All these issues will be further discussed during the Colloquium on “Digital Humanism” in Paris, 25-28 October under the auspices of the UNESCO Chair "Innovation, Transmission and Digital Publishing". The event will present high level lectures and panels with academics and representatives from government, industry and civil society.

We hope CECUA could support these views and pave the way for further actions at EU level.

Yours sincerely

Richard Delmas

President Semantis

www.semantica.fr

http://humanismenumerique.fr/fr/accueil