➔European Standardization to support a common approach to accessibility in the public procurement of ICT products and services

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Some abbreviations to start with

→ CEN – the European Committee of Standardization

→ ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

→ ESOs – European Standards Organizations

→ EC – the European Commission

→ But do not despair – many more will come later in this presentation

The Mandate M/376

→ Asks the ESOs to produce the standards that will a common approach to accessibility in the public procurement of ICT products and services

→ But before addressing the contents of this Mandate in more detail:

→ Which development led (among others) to the idea for this Mandate? COM(2005)425

→ Where there examples from outside Europe?

→ What is a Standardization Mandate?

Policy objective in COM(2005)425

→ EC Communication on eAccessibility

→ Based on on-line consultation early 2005

→ The EC "will foster the use of three approaches not yet widely used in Europe":

- (i) accessibility requirements in public procurement,
- (ii) accessibility certification, and
- (iii) better use of existing legislation.

From the "FAQs" on the COM (1)

→ **How can public procurement have an impact on eAccessibility?**

- "Public procurement" accounts for an estimated 16% of Europe's gross domestic product (GDP). Significant contracts are usually only signed after an open and competitive tendering process has been completed.

- The use of eAccessibility criteria in the technical specifications for public procurement would be of great benefit not only to disabled and elderly users but the general public, too. It would boost the market for accessible goods and services, thus reducing costs and increasing choice. A European Standard for accessibility requirements of products and services using ICTs could in the future be specified for all public procurement initiatives.

From the "FAQs" on the COM (2)

→ **What are certification schemes?**

- Certification and accessibility "quality labels" offer guidance to customers and recognition to manufacturers and service providers, regarding the accessibility of their goods and services. It is important to gather data on the advantages and disadvantages of "quality labels" so that their use will actually promote innovation and improved accessibility of products for disabled users.

- Note: the use of accessibility "quality labels" reflect only one opinion
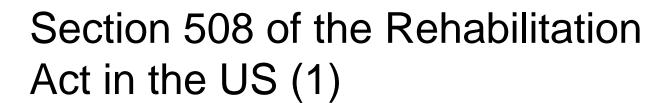
From the "FAQs" on the COM (3)

→ **How can more standardisation help?**

- In general ICT standards help to avoid fragmentation of markets and facilitate mass production. Economies of scale for manufacturers should mean price reductions for the consumer. Agreeing common accessibility standards for ICT in Europe should also ensure compatibility and interoperability amongst accessible products.

- Characteristics of a European Standard will be addressed later in this presentation

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act in the US (1)

→ http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/act.htm

→ Federal agencies must ensure that [ICT] is accessible to employees and members of the public with disabilities to the extent it does not pose an "undue burden

→ Supported by published "standards" that contain the technical and functional performance criteria necessary to implement the above requirements

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act in the US (2)

→ "standards": part of the regulation

→ Examples of such criteria:

- Color coding shall not be used as the only means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element

- At least one mode of operation and information retrieval that does not require user hearing shall be provided, or support for assistive technology used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing shall be provided

→ Section 508 Review

- http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/update-index.htm

On-line "Toolkits"

→ US

- https://app.buyaccessible.gov/baw/
A web-based tool to help users determine and document Section 508 requirements that apply to a particular ICT acquistion

→ Canada

- http://www.apt.gc.ca/

- The Accessible Procurement Toolkit is a Web-based application that delivers accessibility requirements and standards to apply to a purchase of mainstream products and services. Applying these standards will ensure that products meet "Universal Design" principles and help the procuring organization meet its mandated obligation to purchase more accessible goods and services.

What is a standardization mandate?

→ A political request from the EC (and EFTA), agreed upon by the Member States (generally via a decision of the Standing Committee of the Directive 98/34), addressed to the ESOs, in support of an action from the EC (for instance a Directive or an industrial policy action from the EC).

→ Request has to be approved by the ESOs

→ Mandates <u>can</u> receive financial contributions from the EC and/or EFTA

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The European Standardization landscape

→ Before proceeding on the Mandate, please realize that there are

→ <u>Three ESOs</u>, each with a range of publications, one of which is

→ <u>the European Standard (EN)</u>

The European Standardisation System
The European Standards Organizations

→ **CEN**

European Committee for

Standardization

→ **CENELEC**

European Committee

for Electrotechnical Standardization

→ **ETSI**

European Telecommunications

Standards Institute

What is a European Standard (EN)?

→ A standard agreed through the processes of one of the 3 ESOs

→ Has to be implemented by the National Standards Bodies from Europe as a national standard; conflicting national standards have to be withdrawn

Thus, an EN published by CEN

... replaces 30 different national standards in Europe

... creates access to a market of 490 million people

Because of the European Standardization landscape

→ An EN describing requirements for use in public procurement will lead to identical national standards for use in public procurement

→ Will therefore assist the harmonization of public procurement requirement throughout Europe

→ Will therefore create a big market for accessible ICT

→ But note that ICT is within the scope of each of the 3 ESOs

Mandate M/376 – its contents

→ Addressing both (remember COM(2005)425)
  - ▪ (i) accessibility requirements in public procurement,
  - ▪ (ii) accessibility certification

→ "Phase I – Inventory of European and international accessibility requirements and assessment of suitable testing and conformity schemes"
  - ▪ fact finding, study the area
  - ▪ detail work plan for Phase 2
  - ▪ Most of the work between 2007/09 and 2008/10

→ Phase 2: the EN, supporting publications, the toolkit

M/376 – Phase 1 – the task

→ A report that covers among others

- an overview of existing functional accessibility requirements PLUS any additional ones identified
- An overview of existing standards which may comply with those requirements

→ A report that presents

- "an analysis on testing and conformity schemes of products and services meeting accessibility requirements. ... consider the full range of possible solutions, including supplier self-declaration, certification/ accreditation of suppliers, and third party certification schemes ... address existing or propose requirements for suppliers' technical capacities and abilities in the accessibility domain, which can be used for the selection of suppliers or in support of the conformity process."

M/376 – phase 1 – bodies involved

→ ETSI Technical Committee Human Factors (direct representation from ETSI Members)

→ CEN Technical Board Working Group 185 and CENELEC Technical Board Working Group 101-5

- Participation from representatives of the National Standards Bodies and from ANEC (consumers in standardization)
- Observers from US and Japan

→ Reports from phase 1 have to be accepted by all 3 ESOs

M/376 – Phase 1 – the results

→ ETSI Technical Report addressing the overview of requirements and standards

- Identifies 120+ functional requirements following a review of existing documentation, identifying some requirements that were not identified in the Section 508 refresh
- Identifies existing relevant standards

- (Note: the split in the Mandate between functional requirements and standards seems not to reflect reality: the standards are often the source of the functional requirement)

M/376 – Phase 1 – the results (2)

→ The CEN report

- Situation before the start of the work:
- Manufacturers wish to follow the same approach as they do for e.g. safety requirements: a supplier's declaration of conformity [Note: currently in the US: VPATs or Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates: how industry documents that (or to what extent) products meet Section 508 requirements.]
- User representation wishes third party certification, as is for instance the case with many Web Accessibility labels

→ The CEN report intended to take a fresh look beyond these known positions

M/376 – Phase 1 – the results (3)

→ Approach taken:

- Break down the conformity assessment (a more neutral term than certification) schemes into their properties – called "dimensions"

- An example of this on next slides

- Define a set of properties that describe public procurement contexts, called "criteria" (the procurement of a complex system as opposed to the procurement of off-the-shelve products e.g. printers)

- To model the influence between criteria and dimensions

M/376 – Phase 1 – the results (4)

→ **TCO Label:**

- TCO Development, a subsidiary of a Swedish office workers' union, issuing quality (ergonomics) and environmental office equipment labelling (primarily computer displays).
- Selection:
  - International standards (ISO and IEC)
- Determination *(eg automatic evaluation of web-sites)*
  - External testing by a Testing laboratory accepted by TCO
- Review and Attestation *(eg SDoC)*
  - By a Testing laboratory accepted by TCO; TCO label
- Surveillance: yes
- Other – "is it Mandatory?": No

M/376 – Phase 1 – the results (5)
A number of "hypothetical" scenario's

→ E.g. procurement of 50 desktop laser printers

→ The paid experts that draw up the report suggest that the following systems match this hypothetical scenario:

- *Generic first party assessment, because the potential value for the type of party*
- *Supplier's declaration of conformity, because the value for the type of party*

M/376 – Phase 1 – the results (6)
A number of "hypothetical" scenario's

→ E.g. procuring the development of the new version of the official web site of a national ministry

→ The paid experts that draw up the report suggest, implementing the model that they elaborate in the report, that the best two candidates are inspection or certification.

M/376 – Phase 1 – the results (7)

→ The Report therefore argues in favour of an approach where the conformity assessment depends on the procurement

→ Is this an accepted approach?

- CEN agreed to accept the report as Phase 1 deliverable, but comment from "ICT Industry" :

- "The suggested determination of the appropriate reporting scheme for accessibility on a procurement by procurement basis is not working in practice for tenderers and procurers in a European market. One reason is, among many others, that products or services (or parts of them) have to be assessed several times in different procurement contexts"

M/376 – Phase 1 – the results (8)

→ Other ("ICT Industry") comments on the report:

- Although accessibility is an important specification parameter for ICT products and services, it is just one of many. Therefore, the development of unique conformance schemes for accessibility is inadequate and there is no reason to treat accessibility different than other criteria

- More work needed:
  - The analysis model for public procurement in the report is not commonly agreed and seems to require more scientific evaluation and improvement.
  - Future business models ("software as a service") and procurement strategies in the ICT domain and their influence on accessibility were not considered
  - Etc

M/376 – Phase 2 – the task (1)

→ Develop the EN that contains the functional requirements

- From CEN report: requirements have to be written in a demonstrable/testable form

→ An (optimistic) time frame:

- IF necessary funding can be obtained in the period till June, THEN start of the technical work in October

- Note: the formal process for an EN, starting from the availability of a fully agreed draft, requires 5 months for Public Enquiry plus 2 months for Formal Vote. In between both steps there is the need to organize a process that considers the comments from the Public Enquiry (count in at least 2 months).

M/376 – Phase 2 – the task (2)

→ CEN will create a new structure: a dedicated CEN Project Committee (but similar membership as in BT/WG185)

→ ESOs will organize themselves in a joint working group, and outcomes have to approved by all ESOs

→ Other deliverables of phase 2 (already identified in M/376):

- Guidelines, standards overview
- The on-line toolkit

Some further information from CEN

→ A similar Mandate exists for the Built Environment (construction) domain

→ CEN participates in the USEM project (FP6)
- User Empowerement in standardization
- Objective: towards participation of experts with disabilities in ICT standardization

→ Successor project: STAND4ALL: EC funded
- key objectives: developing and implementing training courses for persons with disabilities and to promote the use of CEN/CENELEC Guide 6 within CEN/CENELEC/ETSI Technical Committees
- Participation from 2 National Standards Bodies (ES and NL)

THANK YOU

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