

Probing political correctness: EU policy on users in ICT standardisation

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Lack of user representation

- Democratic deficit

However

- Should users always be involved?
- Why should users be involved?
- Do users always want to be involved?

Concern: Do we want an elephant to climb a tree?

Background

- EU project on “ICT standardisation policy”
 - 24 May: Workshop in Brussels
 - Final report in July 2007
 - Input for new policy

Task:

- Unsettle policy makers
- Question what seems obvious

Article is part of this effort

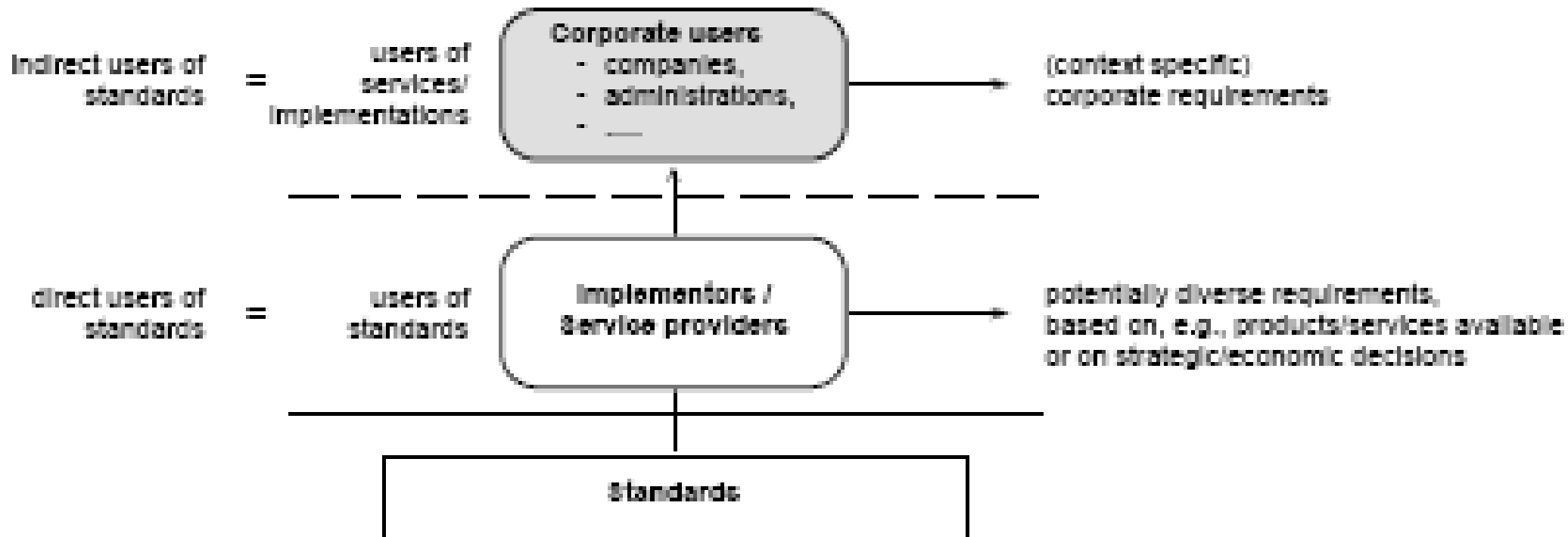
Focus article

- *Which assumptions about users underlie EU ICT standardisation policy?*
- Aim: make explicit what is implicit to clarify policy choices

Overview

- Which users?
- Participation
- Assumptions
- Conclusions and recommendations

Users (1): Which users?



(Jakobs, 2005)

Users (2): Proportional Participation

Category ICT stakeholders		Involved in Standards Development	
ICT producers (Direct users of ICT standards)	Large enterprises	100	
	SMEs		15
ICT users (Indirect users of ICT standards)	Large organisations (e.g. e-business)		10-20
	SMEs		5
	Consumers		5
	Authorities		25-30

(Proportions estimated by Posthumus, Normapme, 2007)

Users (3): 'Minorities'

- SMEs: 23.000.000
- Consumers: 450.000.000

EU Policy Assumptions

- Fiction of balanced national representation
- Default regulatory regime for ICT
- Normative representative democracy
- Do users always want to participate?
- Delegating responsibility for the public interest to stakeholders
- Participation implies acceptation and implementation?
- Overemphasis on standard development in Europe

Fiction of balanced national representation

- lack of minority participation in European standards committees
- 'balance of national interests' cannot serve as democratic legitimation of European standardisation

Default regulatory regime for ICT

- Standardisation in support of regulation and other EU policies
 - New Approach: co-regulation with ESOs
 - Accountability and political legitimacy
- Regulatory context hardly relevant for ICT
- Nevertheless, regulatory regime is default regime

Normative representative democracy

Is user involvement always desirable?

- Needs to be argued.
- Pro
 - Regulatory context
 - Mediate impact of standards on indirect users (quote WSIS)
 - Increases use and support for standards*
- Contra
 - Users slow down standards process / dependence on industry
 - 'Industry have user interests at heart'
 - Closed groups may also develop user-friendly standards
- Danger: Normative democracy reinforces symbolic user representation

Do users always want to participate?

- Lack of a direct stake in standards
- Lack of awareness > education
- Participate during the whole standards process?
 - Requirement setting
 - Validation
 - Standard maintenance

Delegating responsibility for the public interest to stakeholders

- EU authorities absent in committees
 - Large ICT user interests
 - Public interest issues
- left to European standards bodies and 'minority' stakeholders
- Does not work (weak negotiating positions & absent)

Participation implies acceptance and implementation?

- Participation: de facto standard
- Acceptance: awareness & usability
- Implementation: ... for direct users

- Adoption standard compliant products/services: too many contingent factor for indirect users

Overemphasis on standard development in Europe

- Policy overemphasises standards development
- No policy on implementation and maintenance
- European interests, in what way and where are they best served?

Stand. Stage	Standards Development	Standards Implementation	Use of Standard-compliant products
Standard Body Identity			
European (ESOs)	A	B	C
International / other	D	E	F

Conclusions & Recommendations: EU ICT standardisation policy

- Differentiate users, differentiate policies
 - Specify necessary and desirable/optional democracy
 - Necessary, then more substantive and inclusive
 - User involvement: which phase of standardisation?
- Lack of user awareness: education on standardisation