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# USEM trainees at work – first experiences

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**Abstract.** Within the EU funded project "USEM" users with a functional impairment or a handicap are trained to be able to participate in the ongoing standardisation activities focusing on the ICT related subjects for which these users can be considered as both technical and personal aspects.

A major training session took place in September 2008. Afterwards some 15 trainees agreed to get involved (with the help of USEM trainers and coaches) in practical standardisation work.

This contribution describes the first trainees' experiences gathered up to May 2009.

**Keywords.** Standardisation, Stakeholders, user involvement, CEN, ETSI, Mandates

## Introduction: the USEM project

The USEM project (FP6-IST-SSA 022751) seeks to increase the participation of users with a functional limitation in the area of ICT related standardisation actions. This EU funded project started on April 1, 2007 and lasts until November 30, 2009. This project, and the related STAND4ALL activities were discussed in greater detail at AAATE 2009 [1].

## 1. Training the users

During the Bonn USEM training event (Sept. 2008) several experienced persons came forward to act as contact persons for different standardisation initiatives. A number of interested participants ("trainees") agreed to continue their formation. USEM consortium members have engaged to support the trainees' involvement in individual standardisation projects.

The following ongoing standardisation projects were identified:

- The Mandate 376 on Public Procurement [2]
- DATSCG/ICTSB, the DfA & AT coordination standardisation group [3]
- ETSI/TC, the Technical Committees related to Human Factors[4]
- W3C/WAI on Web accessibility guidelines [5]
- NEN initiative on the Creation of a CEN/CLC/BT/WG 'Accessibility for All', as a follow-up action to previous CEN Guide 6 work [6]

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## **2. Follow-up**

To support the participants in each of these projects, a trainee network was set-up and tools were made available to them in order to improve the collaboration. Networking was initiated using a specific USEM portal running on the HERMES-EDEAN platform by initiating a discussion thread for each project. However, information exchange proved to be a one way activity (from the USEM partners to the trainees) and it became clear quite rapidly that we should determine where the barriers for active participation are and how they can be removed.

## **3. The different actions**

The lack of response by several trainee groups is also due to some complex situations outside the remit of USEM. Sometimes, the suggested standardisation project is not yet active or currently not interesting enough to motivate the trainees. Sometimes the trainees' employers were reluctant to the time spending involved in participation. Direct travel and accommodation costs have been offered (for the duration of the USEM project) to support participation. Therefore financial reasons alone cannot explain the limited success of the trainings.

Below we discuss the status and the activities in the five planned training areas mentioned above.

### *3.1. Mandate 376 Phase II and DATSCG Mandate 376 Phase II (projects 1 & 2)*

Phase I work on the mandate was delegated to two working groups, one within CEN/CENELEC, the other within ETSI. It was finalised in autumn 2008 and the documents were approved by the authorised bodies of the CEN/CENELEC & ETSI. However early 2009 some differences in opinion between the ESOs still seemed to persist and a special Mandate meeting was organised on March 18, 2009. Several USEM members and one USEM trainee participated in that meeting.

The start-up of Mandate 376 Phase II is being delayed, probably until late autumn 2009, probably too late for USEM supported trainee participation.

A DATSCG meeting with focus on the Mandate is now scheduled for September 22, 2009. All USEM trainees have been invited for this meeting. The USEM project is still in a position to be able to fund their participation.

### *3.2. ETSI/TC on human factors*

The ETSI committee on Human Factors has organised in the beginning of 2009:

- an open Workshop on Personalisation [7] and
- a call for experts for a Specialist Task Force (STF) on Inclusive e-Services

The trainees' response to these possibilities however was very low and USEM plans to organise a telephone enquiry with those trainees that have shown interest in ETSI work. Over the next period, observer type participation in the regular quarterly ETSI/HF meetings will be promoted.

### *3.3. For the W3C/WAI project*

USEM originally focused exclusively on European standardisation organizations (CEN, CENELEC and ETSI) but decided to add the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) to the list of activities for trainees. WAI working groups have a very regular meeting schedule, so they are an interesting alternative track if the targeted working groups in European standardisation organizations should have large gaps in their content-related activities due to procedural or other reasons.

WAI working groups meet by phone on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and use a very specific jargon. It is therefore important to ease the trainees' entrance into a working group by preparing them for this kind of discussions. This led to following activities:

- Early 2009, trainee Carmen Bonet joined the Education and Outreach Working Group (EO WG), where she represents the Spanish organisation COCEMFE [8]. Because the EO WG's teleconferences take place during working hours, she does not attend those but she follows up the mailing list and the meeting minutes (which are all public). Some time earlier, she also joined the WAI Interest Group mailing list [9].
- On March 23, 2009, the e-Inclusion group at the European Commission organised an "Expert meeting on web accessibility in Europe and the implementation of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0", which was attended by almost 50 participants, including two USEM project partners (FTB and K.U.Leuven) and two USEM trainees (representing AnySurfer and EDF)[10]. One trainee also wrote his comments on the AnySurfer blog [11].

### *3.4. NEN-Initiative on the Creation of a CEN/CLC/BT/WG 'Accessibility for All'*

The project NEN-Initiative on Accessibility, based on Guide 6 work [12], got several trainees on board. Further work however requires participants to be a member of their national standardisation institute. To avoid this administrative burden trainees might be delegated by ANEC or EDF as these organisations are automatically accepted in any European standardisation work.

The NEN initiative is currently focussing on the set-up of a CEN Workshop Agreement; a first meeting to draft the Memorandum of Understanding took place on April 8, 2009. Several USEM partners have contributed to this Memorandum. One USEM trainee planned for participation but could not make it due to illness.

### *3.5. Other standardisation actions that have been explored*

Early 2009, we became aware of a couple of EU actions related to standardisation where the participation of USEM trainees could have been envisaged but did not happen due to timing (first example) or lack of communication (second example).

#### *3.5.1. EU study on the specific Policy needs for ICT standardisation (July 2007)*

This is an overview report [13] commissioned by the EU and produced by a consortium including DLA Piper, TUDelft and Uninova. It contains a special chapter (#7) on the (lack of participation) of users in the standardisation process and refers to comments

made by ANEC (the User forum in Standardisation) and NORMAPME (the SME voice in Standardisation). Actually not a single reference is made to users with a limitation but many recommendations from chapter 7 on the lack of involvement of stakeholders are actually valid in the USEM context too.

As there is apparently no follow-up planned to this document USEM trainees cannot get involved here.

### 3.5.2. *EU Study on Access to Standardisation (March 2009)*

This study [14] was commissioned by the Directorate General Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission and was produced by EIM. A large part of the document is devoted to the opinions of the different stakeholders (companies, sector organisations, national standardisation bodies etc.) but some attention is also given to the fact that standardisation activities should be opened up to people with reading impairments and consequently that accessible document formats (in the WAI-WCAG sense) should be made available.

This resulted in two recommendations that are particularly relevant for users with limitations:

#### *Recommendation 11*

In designing the various communication tools used by standard organisations – and stakeholder groups for that matter – the need to make these communication tools accessible for people with impairments should be better taken into account.

#### *Recommendation 12*

The use of ICT tools should be further encouraged in.

- Organizing the standards developing process.
- Distributing information on the standards documents.
- Distributing the standard documents themselves.

During the public meeting of April 27, 2009, Jan Engelen, on behalf of USEM stressed the fact that recommendations 11 & 12 should be considered together if one wants to really improve users' participation in standardisation work.

It is not clear if this document will be updated in the near future nor if USEM trainees could be involved in this process.

## **4. Conclusion**

As can be seen from the different actions described above, motivating users with limitations to participate in standardisation work has proven not to be a trivial task. Despite some positive engagements that have been recorded, we cannot claim great successes although part of the problems are inherent in the standardisation processes. For the rest of the USEM project, we have to find out how to improve the situation.

## **References**

- [1] cf. other presentations and papers in this AAATE2009 session:  
Thijs Soede: *Introduction on Users with disabilities and standards* (Vilans, Netherlands)  
Nienke Blijham: *Participation of users with disabilities in Standardisation* (Vilans, Netherlands)  
Christian Bühler: *Educational approach for user training in Standardisation* (FTB, TU Dortmund,

Germany)

Charlotte Mosies: *STAND4ALL: Training of stakeholders on consultations on standardisation* (NEN, Netherlands)

Further details on <http://www.usem-net.eu>.

- [2] link: [http://www.ictsb.org/Working\\_Groups/DATSCG/DATSCG\\_M376\\_started.htm](http://www.ictsb.org/Working_Groups/DATSCG/DATSCG_M376_started.htm)
- [3] link: [http://www.ictsb.org/Working\\_Groups/DATSCG/Index.htm](http://www.ictsb.org/Working_Groups/DATSCG/Index.htm)
- [4] link: <http://www.etsi.org/WebSite/Technologies/HumanFactors.aspx>
- [5] link: <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>
- [6] link: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CEN/CENELEC\\_Guide\\_6](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CEN/CENELEC_Guide_6)
- [7] more info at: [http://portal.etsi.org/STFs/STF\\_HomePages/STF342/STF342.asp](http://portal.etsi.org/STFs/STF_HomePages/STF342/STF342.asp)
- [8] <http://www.cocemfe.es/>
- [9] <http://lists.w3.org/Archives/Public/w3c-wai-ig/>
- [10] The report is available at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item\\_id=4905](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=4905)
- [11] <http://blog.anysurfer.be/2009/05/15/implementatie-van-wcag20-in-europa/> (*in Dutch*)
- [12] A copy of Guide 6 can be found at:  
<http://www.cen.eu/boss/supporting/reference+documents/cclcgd006.pdf>
- [13] This document can be downloaded from: [http://www.ictstandardisation.eu/full\\_report.pdf](http://www.ictstandardisation.eu/full_report.pdf)
- [14] This document can be downloaded from:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/standards\\_policy/document/access\\_to\\_standardisation\\_11032009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/standards_policy/document/access_to_standardisation_11032009_en.pdf)