The European perspective

Dr. Walter von Pattay

Leader for the section on Home Networks and Media of the European Code of Practice for Smart House

Europe has wide experience and a well established business with Smart Buildings and is in a leading position when it comes to the implementation and use of Smart Homes.

Although technology and products are available for many years now, the market is only developing slowly.

There is no single killer application, rather each user has his own preference. The secret to success is to provide him with a chance to start with his personal and favourite application and to allow him to enhance his system with help of seamless communications of all applications within his home. There are three groups of applications that gradually converge and use a common infrastructure: home automation also called Commands Controls and Communications in Buildings (CCCB), Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), and Broadcast Communications Technologies (BCT). At the same time the barriers to the mains network get lower.

Where does Europe stand today?
o   BCT is a commodity
o   ICT is on the way from wide use to be a commodity, (telephone, cellphone already are).
o   Europe has a broad experience with CCCB:
    •   Products that started in buildings reached the home.
    •   Products originally designed for the laymen provide professional functions.
    •   High end users, early adopters, investors implement Smart Homes.
o   Europe has well trained professionals for all application groups.

As far as specifications for subsystems are concerned Europe takes the best ones one can get anywhere in the world:

> Standards for communications from ITU and ETSI; for LANs from IEEE; for TV from CENELEC and IEC; for CCCB from CENELEC (CENELEC has published an impressive series of standards for building controls that are used worldwide. Some of them have already been adopted by standards bodies outside Europe.)

The slow pick up of the market for Smart Homes is not due of prices being too high, or a lack of standards or products but due to the fact that the user often does not understand the benefit he would get and the lack of planning confidence that is caused by the lack of an all encompassing and widely accepted systems architecture. [The success of public services like the telephone to a wide extend has been supported by the planning confidence created with help of ITU recommendations and their support by regularity bodies. Such "marketing aid" is not available for Smart Home. Therefore suppliers need to be patient and co-operate in the support of seamless systems architecture, need the help of a code of practice (CoP).]

Among others the CoP being developed by CENELEC brings planning confidence and explains user benefit. It will increase transparency, promote the development of services, widen the bridges between CCCB, ICT and BCT, and promote an all encompassing systems architecture.

The European CoP will bring planning confidence to users and suppliers and by that supports the objectives of e-Europe where every citizen uses a wide range of electronic services.

The citizens using new services will get equipment, systems and networks in their "Smart Houses" that are:
o   easy to use, interoperable, providing intuitive interaction.
o   secure, safe and conforming to open and transparent standards.
o   compatible with public procurement rules, since a significant proportion of the "Smart Houses" of the future will be equipped with help from public funds, e.g. social housing.
o   intuitive, since many people are disadvantaged by disability, poor health, poor education or age.

Similar requirements will be met by the services and applications provided by Service Providers guided by the CoP.