EUROLINC

COMMENTS ON THE REPORT OF THE WGIG

OPENING THE INTERNET STANDARD MAKING

EUROLINC wishes to express its appreciation of the report produced by the WGIG. It offers synthetic perspectives that should contribute efficiently to the work of the coming Prepcom 3. Our comments focus on the specific topic of internet standard making.

1. The WGIG report (« the report ») mentions in multiple contexts the role of standards, as critical components of Internet Governance (IG) functions. As noted in the report, standards are unfortunately often lacking or insufficiently developed.

2. As a general concept, standards differ from regulation or jurisdiction. They reflect a level of consensus among experts in a specific area, but are only offered as possible options, without any enforcement provision. Unless enforced by some other bodies, standard adoption is voluntary.

3. Some internet standards are intrinsically technical, e.g. the IPv6 packet format. Since it is stated in the report that we need « global standards for privacy and data-protection rights » or « for consumer rights », it appears that the term « standard » is also used in larger domains than just technical aspects.

4. By opening such vistas the report recognizes present limitations and weaknesses of the internet standard making process. Indeed, a technical body, the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), produces internet standards, which are undoubtly screened by excellent technical experts. Nevertheless, this process does not seem to involve a further level of screening for potential implications of these standards in other domains than technical.

5. Technical standards may have far reaching implications e.g. on security, privacy, multilingualism, or intellectual property, which belong to societal and public policies issues, and therefore concern all stakeholders, specially when technical requirements happen to be illegal in some countries.

EUROLINC FRANCE
Écrire le monde dans sa langue
Writing the world in your language

6. Actually, as it stands now, active IETF members are primarily experts delegated by the USA business sector. Documents produced in the standard making process are in 75% to 80% of cases written by USA corporations [1]. While this should not impair their technical validity, it may be inferred that the needs and constraints of other regions of the world are not sufficiently taken into account. In addition it maintains and reinforces an unfair dominant market position.

7. Whether or not the « Forum » proposed in the report should come to existence, and whatever IG structure should be adopted, there is a pressing need for more balanced internationalization and effective multi-stakeholder **validation** in the internet standard making process.

[1] - Figures derived from 600 RFC's (Request For Comment) issued from January 2003 through May 2005.
- - -
version 1 - August 2005

∗○∗○∗○∗

EUROLINC is a non-profit organisation founded for the promotion of **multilingualism** in the internet. It is accredited to WSIS.
mailto: eurolinc@eurolinc.org