Activities of the US-EU ICT Standards Dialogue on e-Accessibility

April 2006

This activity plan is focused on the exchange and sharing of information regarding the planned use of ICT standards in support of regulatory and public policy goals, especially on advancing bilateral cooperation on e-accessibility. It is a "rolling" plan which will be up-dated regularly.

On-going activities

A. e-accessibility regulations and policy work

1. UNITED STATES. U.S. Access Board update of the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Section 255 of the Telecommunication Act

- The U.S. invites the EC to participate in the Advisory Committee to help to create internationally compatible regulations and policy in the area of e-accessibility.

- *Action: Discussed how to approach such participation at the February meeting in Washington D.C.*

  Formal Invitation expected for June 2006

- Monitor progress

2. EUROPEAN COMMISSION. The European Commission recently launched a mandate to the European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs) to develop the European accessibility requirements of products and services purchased by public procurers in the ICT domain. The mandate shall identify a set of requirements considering those already identified on the international level, analyse appropriate conformance schemes and produce a European standard.

- The execution of the mandate will be complemented via both the bilateral dialogue and through consultation with key stakeholders.

- *Action: Discussed how to approach such consultation at the February meeting in Washington, DC and the March meeting in Brussels.*

- Monitor progress

B. **March 2006 International workshop on "Demonstrating Conformance with e-accessibility Requirements in ICT Products and Services"**

- The U.S. General Services Administration presented at the workshop information on its assistance to federal contracting and procurement officials in implementing Section 508 and other purchasing requirements.

  The U.S. Access Board chaired the panel discussion on web accessibility.

- *Action: Envisage a meeting with industry on specific issues related to conformity assessment.*

C. **Dialogue on conformance issues**

- At the meeting in March 2006 in Brussels the discussion on the different conformance and accreditation schemes was launched with the objective to get a better understanding of the their application and impacts.

- *Action: Increase the exchange of information to gain practical experiences during a visit to Washington, probably in June 2006 with demonstrations of the U.S. General Services Administration's technologies and practices and visits to industry/private sector laboratories looking at their practices on conformance.*

D. **Cooperative approach with ISO/IEC JTC1 on identifying relevant e-accessibility standards**

- Explore whether the work undertaken in ISO/IEC JCT1 Special Working Group on Accessibility is useful and applicable to the work of the revision of Section 508 and to the mandate.

- *Action: Discussed how to facilitate an exchange of information between the different activities and organizations at the February meeting in Washington and March meeting in Brussels to ensure coherence.*

- *Action: Facilitated the dialogue between JTC1 and representatives of the ESOs at the March meeting in Brussels.*

- *Action: Exchange views on the usability of the deliverables produced in the different bodies.*

- Monitor progress

E. Cooperation on the accessible online toolkit to be developed in the framework of the mandate

- This toolkit is one of the deliverables expected in the mandate. Its objective is to facilitate for public procurers the application of the European standard

developed in the mandate. The U.S. will share best practices, experiences and appropriate training material for consideration.

- *Action: Discussed how to approach such consultation at the February meeting in Washington. As soon as the work on the mandate reaches the phase of development of the toolkit (phase II), this information shall be fed into the Dialogue appropriately.*

- Monitor progress

F. Contribution to the EU-US summit in June 2006

- *Action: Prepare a common contribution to the preparatory work for the summit*

Longer -term activities

G. Measuring progress

- Discuss how each party approaches measuring progress in providing access to ICT.

- *Action: Commission provides U.S. colleagues with the Terms of Reference of the study on "Measuring progress in e-accessibility in Europe" and the names of the contractors.*

H. Involvement of user in policy discussions

- Exchange of experiences on approaches to involve different stakeholders in policy discussions.

- *Action: Facilitate the dialogue between user groups on both sides of the Atlantic (e.g., organize common workshops, meetings or video conferences).*

I. Assistive technologies

- Exchange information on the range of assistive technologies available and how to foster their use and development.

- *Action: Identify relevant conferences and consider opportunities to highlight assistive technologies to promote them to a wide audience.*

- *Action: Provide information on existing data bases.*

J. Research

- Investigate research on e-accessibility.

- Identify institutions and organisations that carry out such research and funding mechanisms.
- Carry out gap analysis.
- Determine how to foster research.