

## TRACK 18

### ENGLISH VERSION

# The 'Third Estate' in ICT Standardisation

#### Convenor:

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“Standards are not only a technical question. They determine the technology that will implement the Information Society, and consequently the way in which industry, users, consumers and administrations will benefit from it.” This quote conveys two important insights that are overlooked all too often. The first one is that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) systems simply would not work without underlying standards. The second one is that today’s ICT standards are tomorrow’s technology. That is, those who lead the standardisation initiatives today are likely to also be in the driving seat when it comes to the actual technology development, implementation and commercialisation.

Today, standards setting in the ICT sector is very much dominated by large vendors with deep pockets. As a consequence, there is the real danger that standards and thus, ultimately, technologies are based on the needs and requirements of a comparably small – albeit powerful – group of stakeholders.

Those few representatives of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) typically come from highly specialised vendors or from consultancies. Pure ‘user’ companies, i.e. those who will eventually have to live with and deploy the implemented standards are dramatically under-represented. Likewise, consumer representation is virtually non-existent. Together, these groups of stakeholders may be considered as the ‘Third Estate’ in ICT standardisation.

The need for standards setting bodies to reach out to all stakeholders has frequently been identified. Perhaps most notably, a recent European Regulation highlights the need to specifically include SMEs in the process. Things look slightly different for consumer representation, since only select issues in ICT actually call for such representation. Users are not really mentioned at all. This is particularly disastrous given the unprecedented impact future ‘smart’ technologies (smart cities, manufacturing, grid, etc.) will have on each and every citizen.

This Track aims to explore ways to include the broadest possible range of stakeholders in the ICT standards setting process. Moreover, it aims to discuss potential approaches to creating a level playing field for all participants while not overly compromising the speed of the process (which may be next to impossible). Questions to be addressed include, but are not limited to:

- How could a proper stakeholder identification for a given technology to be standardised be performed?
- How can imbalances in power distribution in a standards committee be overcome (if at all)?
- What could the regulator (or any other entity) do to create a (more) level playing field in ICT standardisation?
- In which fields (e.g. privacy and security) is adequate consumer representation essential and why, and how could it be achieved?
- Which specific aspects (if any) need to be considered for the standardisation of ‘smart’ applications?
- Are there any meaningful alternatives to a committee-based consensus process?