

TCeurope helps to develop European guideline

TCeurope, the umbrella organization of European associations for technical communication, is helping with the development of a European guideline on user education for mobile terminals and e-services. The European Telecommunications Standards Institute invited TCeurope to hold the 6th European Colloquium for User-friendly Product Information together with ETSI in French Sophia Antipolis, where the draft was discussed intensely.

Although a common-sense statement often heard is that the user guide for a product would be superfluous if the quality of the product's user interface was sufficiently good. While this is undoubtedly true, it is unlikely that there ever will be fully self-explanatory ICT products. The average mobile phone today exceeds 200 functions. If one wants to comprehend all functions of his mobile, he needs to study the manual intensely. Compared to a personal computer the small display and the small number of buttons on the mobile phone don't allow much information to be provided right on the product. Most users will report that they manage to set up and use a new product without the need for a user guide. However this doesn't apply to new functions. If a user doesn't know or understand a function, he or she is unlikely to use it, thus missing out on the opportunity of benefiting from what the device or service has to offer. This will also mean that the service provider will miss out on the chance of earning revenue. Hence, user education plays a crucial role in service discovery.

ETSI came across TCeurope's "Secure Doc"-guideline: "Usable and safe operating manuals for consumer goods" while preparing the guideline's draft. During the joint workshop TCeurope members of five countries made suggestions as to how the draft could be improved. These recommendations will be included in the further development of the guideline, said Bruno von Niman, who moderated the workshop for ETSI.

After the final draft has been developed, the 688 ETSI member companies of 55 countries will vote on it. If it is accepted, you can download the guideline for free from the ETSI website (www.etsi.org) in September.