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The mission of ANEC is to ensure the highest level of consumer protection, and also to ensure public interest representation in standardization and especially to counterbalance the industry view. We know that standards are a tool for accessibility, so we can consider them as a tool for public policy objectives but we don't think they're the only possible way. Standards can address the issues of accessibility, quality of service, and reliability of ICT services, but they are not the only tools.

I would like to share with you our experiences in standardization. ANEC is active in the web accessibility initiative of W3C, and we are representing the consumers views. ANEC is also monitoring the JTC1 activity on accessibility. We are a European association, and therefore we follow more closely the accessibility activities at the European level. We also hope to start soon working on the European Mandate on eAccessibility and Public Procurement in ICT Sector.

ETSI standards on access symbols are examples of our contribution to the development of accessibility standards. This is a standard published in Europe and the symbols are meant to indicate to consumers the very basic accessibility features that some ICT products and services could support, and an example could be a feature, such as sign language or audio description that can be used by consumers. We believe very strongly that public procurers could also be interested in this kind of information provided in that way, and we hope very much that industry will be able to use the set of symbols.

Our experience made us realize that there are several challenges in the process of consumer participation in standardization. First of all, the accessibility standards are informal standards. What does that mean? It means that it can be very difficult for a consumer's voice to be heard. Stakeholder balance in the standardization working groups is really an issue as well. Most of the industry is participating in standardization but there are not so many consumers. Then, the last factor is to be able to assess the priorities and also to be able to have the possibility of initiating in certain ways, and that's linked to

budget availability. Therefore, technical expertise, budgeting and time are needed in order to influence standardization. This is the most problematic aspect for stakeholders in standardization committees.

Standardization is essential in implementing Article 9. Standards are essential, but they are not sufficient to achieve accessibility. Why? Because there are already many accessibility standards that are not implemented. We need an implementation mechanism. We also need public funding for consumer participation, and the suggestion, from a consumer point-of-view, is to propose implementation mechanisms that are contained in a legislation tool in order to implement article 9. In order to accomplish this, national legislation will have to give an incentive for implementation of the accessibility standards.