



Report from ACTA project on-line discussion

<http://evropske-razprave.si/active-citizens-take-action>



Ljubljana, October 2013

I. Objective: drafting ACTA project recommendations for decision-makers

Drafting process:

- project aim: to prepare ACTA project recommendations for decision-makers based on discussions implemented during the project (face-to-face & on-line);
- Kranjska Gora participatory design workshop for on-line discussion set up and topics identification;
- implementing on-line discussion focusing on two topics (Internet privacy and On-line forums as democratic tool?) <http://evropske-razprave.si/active-citizens-take-action/>;
- inviting ACTA project partners to provide contributions.

II. Discussion: On-line forums as democratic tool?

Starting question:

- 1. Which aspects of internet forum are motivating you to use them as democratic tool and which aspects are discouraging you?*
- 2. How would you like to see internet forums as a democratic tool in the future?*
- 3. If you were a decision-maker, in which way would you use internet forum as democratic tool?*

Contributions:

Limitation of on-line forums

- less attractive medium of on-line communication in relation to other web pages;
- difficult to attract attention from internet users;
- heavy moderation is required for keeping the focus;
- problems with complex discussions having lost of sub-topics (unappealing to a new participants).

Alternative proposal: Reddit

- Reddit is ideal for boosting communication and keeping people interested;
- Reddit has a lot of content - participants will be returning to the site due to a large number of topics that interest;
- similar to Facebook;
- "vote up/down" option quickly creates a "best of" hierarchy in every thread making the most appealing information also the most accessible;
- Reddit replies options allows for an organic division of sub topics without any need for the moderator to step in constantly.

III. Discussion: Internet privacy

Starting questions prepared by project partner Metamorphosis:

- 1. Which aspects of internet privacy you consider positive and which aspects are discouraging you*
- 2. Which challenges you see in the future for internet privacy?*
- 3. To which extent would you give up your privacy in order to feel more secure?*
- 4. If you were a decision-maker, for which area of internet privacy would you construct new laws*
- 5. Can self-regulation successfully address privacy concerns? Would you feel more secure if privacy is regulated by governments?*

Proposal: keep individual as private and common as public

Data that concerns individuals, like emails, pictures, search words etc. should be private and data that concerns whole society should be public. Because personal data influences only personal well-being, while data that concerns society influences well-being of the mass of people and should be disclosed, if it doesn't do more harm disclosed.

Issue - awareness rising

Creating a critical mass of people in society who take the idea of internet privacy seriously is needed. An alarming number of people consider their privacy on the internet to be a lost cause and do not even see this as a reason for concern.

Observation

- we are all using the internet as if we know and understand the future implications of the information that we share;
- we can not see even in the near future and we do not understand how privacy questions are going to develop;
- we see a lot of info and pictures that should not be available to all.

Viewpoint

- the principle of anonymity is a certain part of internet privacy which is making people feel more secure when posting and expressing opinions publicly;
- internet privacy issues due to the need of governments and larger corporations to have insight to private lives of their citizens (violating principles of anonymity and principles of unconditional internet freedoms).

Issue (seeking the freedom - security balance)

- the challenge will probably be how to protect freedoms and anonymity and privacy of individuals on the internet;
- there is no guarantee that giving away our freedoms will directly lead towards more secure and safer society, or internet environment.
- the only law considering internet that should be imposed would be the one considering paedophilia. Those, and similar spheres of the internet are the ones that should be regulated as in the real world.

IV. ACTA conference discussion relating to on-line forums and internet privacy:

1. Young people do not have a lot of time to write long text or read responses in on-line forums. Frequent communication in an on-line forums requires lots of time. It is better to use questionnaires or to let young people to choose among existing proposals. Young people do not like to post a lot or read a lot - not having attention for more than 5 minutes. Also, young people do not concentrate on one single forum as they are often multitasking their on-line communication.
2. On-line forums are rarely used as a communication tool by young people due to low amount of users. On-line forums are mostly used by geeks or experts as support tool for solving practical issues and for engaging in policy debate. Registration and log in can represent an obstacle to on-line forum participation.
3. However, on-line forums are still recognized as a democratic tool and should be used more often. They should be better promoted.

4. Web blogs are presenting an alternative to web forums as they are becoming technologically obsolete. Currently, there are better solutions for sharing and discussing knowledge such as Redit which are more interactive and user friendly. On-line forum is to old for new generation of social media users.
5. We should not only understand internet forum as a technical application only but also as a type of communication which can based on different applications. It can still serve expert discussion and be very relevant. In policy-making we can not expect from citizens to have knowledge but they can have an opinion. Social media like and dislike is not enough in this regard. Inviting experts into on-line discussion is needed as well letting people to express their positions.
6. It is very important to received feedback from decision-makers after participating in an on-line forum because this is motivating young people to participate. Also, more awareness raising is needed in order to engage young people on-line.
7. On-line forums should be very user friendly with simple interface and no personal data requirements. High school students want to have fun when discussion is on-line. Topics have to be funny and policy issues presented in an engaging way.
8. High school teaching programmes should include lectures about internet privacy via storytelling. Young people are considered vulnerable group of ICTs user. Currently, there is no education curriculum about rising awareness about internet privacy issues.

Report prepared by Simon Delakorda, M.Sc.,
Institute for Electronic participation
<http://www.inepa.si/english>