

Request for comments on the Future Internet report

Future Internet Task Force, 13/7/2009

The "Report of the Task Force on Interdisciplinary Research Activities applicable to the Future Internet" ("the report" from now on) has been drafted by the European Commission - DG INFSO with the help of a team of external experts, and after extensive consultations with many interested external parties.

The report is not carved in stone: it is intended to be an evolving working document resulting from informal discussions to structure possible future initiatives on the Future Internet.

At this stage, we propose an open consultation to verify the overall direction and content proposed by the report, and to identify adjustments necessary to drive European research in this area towards the most important objectives. **We ask for comments** on the report, and we propose below some **discussion points** to stimulate constructive criticism. These points should not be considered a limitation, but only a starting point: please feel free to comment on any part of the report and of the ideas it describes.

It should be clear that the report attempts to describe something that does not exist yet. As in a science-fiction movie, we simply do not have the right words and concepts to describe the future, so we try to use familiar words and ideas, but we know that the description will not be accurate.

The first example is the main concept of the report: the FOT platforms.

We believe that the "*Federated*" word should express the idea of different independent platform with different characteristics, which can be used independently, but also in a coordinated way, without the need for a strong central control. **We would like to know if you share this concept**, if you think that it is correctly described, and if you believe that it has negative implications which could allow the Future Internet to evolve in an unwanted direction.

The concept of "*Open*" platforms is probably simpler, or at least more commonly used. It should be clear that, as it is expressed in the report, it has very strong policy implications: it does not make much room for proprietary solutions, which could favour specific vendors locking out competitors, and it is strongly oriented towards what is normally called "net neutrality", meaning that platform should not enforce restrictions on content and services provided. **Would you agree with this approach?** Do you think that it should be more clearly stated, or on the contrary that it should not be part of the report?

The concept of "*Trusted*" was considered extremely important by the task force. We all know that today's Internet is not in general a "trusted place": we have to worry about malware, identity theft, spam, and many other problems. Also, we have to worry very much about our privacy, which can be attacked in many different ways. The task force believes that **trust by design** should be a key feature of the platforms composing the Future Internet, and that failure to implement privacy protection and reliable trust mechanisms would prevent the development of a healthy and safe Internet market. **What do you think about this?** There are

of course many alternative approaches possible (for example, trust and security could be offered as paying services); **do you believe that other solutions would be better, and why?**

Another key part of the report is the description of the research activities.

In the report, FOT platforms development is based on research, experimentation and engineering. The reason for this is that, working on complex platforms, engineering activities are necessary to go from the initial idea up to something that is proven and can really work. And, of course, experimentation is needed to make sure that research is not only theory. **Do you believe that this is correct?** Or, on the contrary, do you think that we risk financing product development, while EU role should be to help research, leaving development activities to the entrepreneurs who can make a business out of it? Of course, both positions can be justified, so please give your views.

R&D activities are grouped around several challenges (see chapter 3.4). The description of the different areas was drafted to identify what we believe are the real problems, in order to focus on research themes that can be fruitful and cover all the important issues for the Future Internet. **Are all important areas covered?** Do you think that something is missing, or that the list should be simplified?

The representative examples of FOT platforms are another point open for discussion.

In the report some possible platforms are described (chapter 4.1). **Do you think that there is something to be added?** On the contrary, do you think that something should not be there, because we are maybe simply describing products that will be developed commercially, and there is no need to support research on this? Please explain your reasons.

The hidden assumptions should be challenged

There are several key concepts which are not clearly stated in the report, but embedded somewhat in the overall document. For example, we believe that the different FOT platforms should be able to intercommunicate, and "walled garden" applications should not be encouraged. We believe that research in this area should reinforce the key shared values of European Union, like privacy and cultural diversity. We believe that research should provide opportunities for a better life for citizens, and also opportunities for businesses in a competitive and healthy market, with clear and common rules for everybody. What other more general ideas and comments would you have at this stage? **Do you have any comments about this?** Should these ideas be expressed explicitly in the report?

Above you find several questions on specific subjects discussed in the report. Please do not consider the questions highlighted as a finite list, but feel free to comment on any part of the report, focusing preferably on concepts and ideas more than on small corrections and adjustments.