Editorial

The 6th ERCIM Workshop "User Interfaces for All" builds upon the results of the previous five Workshops held at: ICS-FORTH, Crete, Greece, October 30-31, 1995; Prague, Czech Republic, November 7-8, 1996; Obernai, France, November 3-4, 1997; Stockholm, Sweden, October 19-21, 1998; and Dagstuhl, Germany, November 28 – December 1, 1999. The electronic proceedings of all workshops, including this one, are available at http://www.ics.forth.gr/proj/at-hci/UI4ALL/index.html.

The visionary goal of *User Interfaces for All* is the realization of the *Universal Design* principle in the field of Human-Computer Interaction. A centrepiece of this endeavour is the development of user interfaces to Information Society Technologies that provide access and quality in use to potentially all users. The targeted user population includes people with different cultural, educational, training and employment backgrounds, novice and experienced computer users, the very young and the elderly, as well as people with different types of disabilities, in various interaction contexts and scenarios of use.

The concept of *User Interfaces for All* (UI4ALL) was originally introduced in the international bibliography in 1995, following the results of several research initiatives in the context of collaborative project work partially funded by the European Commission. Since then, the underlying principles have been taken up in a number of European and international collaborative research activities, which over the years have created a momentum and attracted the interest of the research and academic community, as well as of the industry.

This year's special theme, "Information Society for All" broadens the scope of the workshop to address the link between *User Interfaces for All* and the notion of an *Information Society for all*, the former being considered as a prerequisite for the latter. The experience acquired over the years has provided valuable insight into the technical realization and validity of the notion of *User Interfaces for All*, and at the same time has highlighted the numerous challenges involved in developing truly accessible and high-quality interactive environments. The on-going paradigm shift towards a knowledge-intensive Information Society has brought about radical changes in the way people work and interact with each other and with information. The requirement for universal access stems from the growing impact of the fusion of the emerging technologies, and from the different dimensions of diversity that are intrinsic to the information society. These dimensions become evident when considering the broad range of user characteristics, the changing nature of human activities, the variety of contexts of use, the increasing availability and diversification of information, knowledge sources and services, the proliferation of technological platforms, etc. In this context, universal access refers to the accessibility, usability and, ultimately, acceptability of Information Society Technologies (IST) by anyone, anywhere, anytime. The aim is to enable equitable access and active participation of potentially all citizens in existing and emerging computer-mediated human activities, such as access to on-line information, e-communication, digital libraries, e-business, on-line health services, e-learning, on-line communities, on-line public and administrative services, e-democracy, telework and telepresence, on-line entertainment, etc. While the concept of *User Interfaces for All* caters for the HCI challenges of the emerging Information Society, additional research directions are necessary to address the wide spectrum of concerns pertaining to the *digital content* and *telecommunications infrastructure*.

Efforts towards universal access to Information Society Technologies have met wide appreciation by an increasing proportion of the international research community, leading to various European and international research and policy initiatives, and to the establishment of forums for the diffusion and exchange of ideas and research results. The initiatives contribute to appropriating the benefits of an increasing international momentum and interest on the topics of universal design and universal access. Among them, the ERCIM Working Group "User Interfaces for All" plays a catalytic role in bringing together researchers and teams working in the different ERCIM organisations (but also organisations beyond ERCIM or the European boundaries), and share common interests and aspiration to contribute to the endeavours towards making the emerging Information Society equally accessible, usable, and ultimately acceptable to all.

This year's workshop has attracted very strong interest worldwide, with a total of 60 submissions. Following a stringent peer review process, 12 long papers, 9 short papers, 9 position papers and 13 posters have been accepted for presentation at the Workshop and inclusion in the present Proceedings. Papers cover a wide range of topics including novel design methods, adaptation-based interaction, sociological and policy issues pertaining to universal access to Information Society Technologies, new interactive systems, novel interaction techniques and devices, and new applications and services. Furthermore, in this year's workshop, a paper session and a panel session are devoted to Health Telematics, a critical sector in which universal access is acquiring increasing importance, and in which new initiatives to advance the principles and practice of universal access are starting. Overall, the richness of this year's workshop programme reflects the extension and complexity of this year's special theme, which embodies and extends the *User interfaces for all* research agenda to address new frontiers, by pointing out some of the challenges involved, and how they are being addressed by on-going work. This workshop charters a roadmap from *User Interfaces for all* towards an *Information Society for All*. Such a roadmap is expected, in the years to come, to identify new challenges and to contribute towards the establishment of a critical mass of knowledge, which will raise general awareness about, and create a culture for, universal access in the emerging Information Society.

We would like to thank all contributors and participants who have made this workshop a successful international event. In particular, we wish to thank the Scientific Programme Committee for the dedicated effort to ascertain the scientific quality of the Workshop and the invited speaker Prof. Gavriel Salvendy from the University of Purdue in the USA. We are also thankful to ERCIM for the continuous support of the UI4ALL Working Group and CNR-IROE for hosting this year's workshop.

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