

# Using Argumentation Systems for Supporting Public Participation in the Legislation Process

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In this paper are presented a number of alternatives concerning the approach to be adopted in the LEX-IS project ('Enabling Participation of the Youth in the Public Debate of Legislation' among Parliaments, Citizens and Businesses in the European Union' - 'eParticipation' Preparatory Action of the European Commission) for offering argumentation capabilities that will enhance (= increase and deepen) public participation in the legislation process. Our main focus will be on the legislation proposal formation stage and on the public debate of draft legislation.

The first alternative is to use one of the existing argumentation systems. Our experience from a pilot project we have implemented in this direction (based on HERMES system) is presented ([1], [2]) together with an evaluation from the participants viewpoint based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The advantages and disadvantages of this alternative are analyzed. The second alternative is to use a 'structured consultation' approach ([3], [4]), which enables each participant to enter semantically annotated positions, based on a pre-defined 'Consultation Ontology'. As Consultation Ontology is defined the set of the allowed kinds of positions that the participants can enter, and of the allowed relations among them. Several existing ontologies can be used for that purpose, such as the 'Ontology for G2G Collaboration in Public Policy Making, Implementation and Evaluation' that has been developed by the author ([4]). Some necessary adaptations of this ontology for supporting the above two stages of the legislation process are proposed. Since usually it is not practically possible and productive all the complex issues concerning a new legislation to be dealt with in one structured consultation, it is proposed to organize an 'extended workflow': it consists of a number of structured consultations (each of them can have different participants and focus on a specific subset of the kinds of elements and relations of the ontology). The advantages and disadvantages of this alternative are analyzed.

Finally an approach for evaluating the argumentation system that will be finally developed is proposed. It includes evaluation both from the Parliaments perspective, based on the evaluation framework proposed by the OECD ([5]), and from the participants perspective, based on models and conclusions from the extensive previous research that has been conducted in the area of technology and innovations acceptance, such as the 'Theory of Reasoned Action' (TRA), the 'Technology Acceptance Model' (TAM) and the 'Innovation Diffusion Theory'. The basic user acceptance determinants proposed by the above theories and models will be analyzed into a number of items suitable for describing the special characteristics of e-participation.

## References

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