Meeting on the Management of Statistical Information Systems (MSIS 2012) 
(Washington, May 2012)

Topic (iv): Software sharing and shared maintenance

Report on Activities and Results of the Sharing Advisory Board (SAB) and Proposed Programme of Work

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I. Introduction

1. This report looks back from April 2011 until May 2012 and reports the activities and results of the Sharing Advisory Board. In the Annex our proposed program of work for the coming year is described.

2. This year we have been working hard with the High-Level Group for Strategic Developments in Business Architecture in Statistics1 (HLG-BAS) to do relevant work for them and to contribute to the vision.

3. The MSIS remains an important connection for the Sharing Advisory Board both as a resource for ideas and members, but also as a valuable discussion platform.

4. Membership of the SAB has been stable and devoted; we have a teleconference once a month. We are a global board, with members in very different time zones. Karen Doherty from Canada has retired and at the moment we are reviewing possible candidates to take her place.

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1 http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/hlgbas
II. Program of Work 2011-2012

A. Recurring Tasks

A1. Maintenance of the SAB wiki

There are basically two wiki's, the SAB part of the MSIS wiki and a private wiki that is used by members of the SAB as a work area. The MSIS Wiki has public read access and a user account allowing edit access is available on request for all attendees of the MSIS meeting. Requests for user accounts should be addressed to the UNECE secretariat (support.stat@unece.org). The easiest way to find the MSIS wiki is to search Google for “MSIS wiki”

A2. Production and distribution of the SAB newsletter

The target to produce two newsletters per year has been met. The trend of more articles and contents in the newsletter has continued. Newsletter issue #6 (the current one) is the largest ever. All our newsletters are at: http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/msis/SAB+Newsletter

A3. Software inventory

The software inventory\(^2\) is stable although in the HLG-BAS there has been a decision that for all software in the inventory an indicator should be present to show compliance with the HLG-BAS vision. This indicator will be implemented in the next year. A proposal with criteria for deciding this indicator has been agreed by the HLG-BAS and published on the MSIS Wiki\(^3\). After the necessary changes have been made, maintenance is planned in the form of a mailing to all contact persons to audit their data.

A4. Coordination

This year much effort has been put in coordinating with the HLG-BAS to contribute to realising their vision.

Members of the SAB participated actively in following projects

a. ESSnet CORE

Members of the SAB attended the following meetings were the issue of software sharing was raised:

b. Eurostat IT Directors Group, Luxembourg, October 2011
c. OECD SIS-CC, 12-14 March 2012
d. Various meetings of the HLG-BAS during 2011 and 2012

A3. Reporting

An annual report and programme of work for the next year is prepared for approval by the CES Bureau and the MSIS meeting.

B. SPECIFIC TASKS FOR 2011/12

B1. Develop standards and guidelines

B1(i) Develop and publish guidelines for developing software with multi-lingual support (Must).

\(^2\) http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/msis/Software+Inventory

\(^3\) http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/msis/Shared+Software+-+Criteria+for+Compliance+with+the+HLG-BAS+Vision
Status: The document with principles guidelines has been produced and approved by the HLG-BAS. The guidelines are available in over 50 languages using automated translation (which is quite good actually)4.

B1(ii) Prepare a study on communication methods and tools for effective multi-national collaboration activities (Must)
Status: On-going carried over to next year to C1(ii)

B1(iii) Prepare a study on prerequisites on sharing of software (Must)
Status: This activity is on-going and will be carried over to next year C1(i).

B2. Sharing information

B2(i) Add a wiki page with information on the current state of developments on a Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM) including who is doing what (Must)
Status: It turned out that on the METIS wiki a number of elaborate pages were available so a link to those pages was added to MSIS wiki

B2(ii) Add a facility to share information on requirements, specifications, software evaluations and other documentation (Must)
Status: Not done, will be carried over to next year on another form more suited to the HLG-BAS vision C1(iv)

B2(iii) Create a set of wiki pages to act as a directory with specialists on different subjects in the member organisations (Should).
Status: The pages with the forms have been created, at the MSIS the participants will be asked to fill in their LinkedIn profile and other data. A short item in the SAB newsletter will draw attention to this and encourage experts to get themselves listed on the MSIS wiki.

B3. Communication and outreach

B3(i) Develop a communication strategy to increase awareness of SAB outputs, and make them more accessible (success can be measured by increased hits to the wiki) (Must)
Status: -not done-

B3(ii) Add possibility for case studies to individual software descriptions in the Software Inventory pages
Status: on-going

C. ACTIVITIES CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS WORK PROGRAMMES

C1. Set up administration of the SAB

C1(i) Define a workflow for decision making; how are proposals made by the SAB to be executed. This is closely related to the mandate. (Should)
Status: no longer relevant, proposals made by the SAB are either endorsed by the HLG-BAS group or rejected or given back for amendments.

4 http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/msis/Principles+and+Guidelines+on+Building+Multilingual+Applications+for+Official+Statistics
C.2. Collaboration

C2(i) Work in collaboration with the European Union funded "ESSnet" project on a common reference architecture to produce documentation about prerequisites for sharing of software on a technical level. (Must)
Status: The ESSnet CORE has been completed. It is seen as successful and talks are initiated to arrange for a follow-up, as the goal of the CORA/CORE projects is very much aligned with the goal of a Plug-and-Play architecture mentioned in the Statistical Network and in the GSIM sprint.

C2(ii) Research possible cooperation models for software development, and governance / management models for the outputs from collaborative development projects. Identify those that are successful, and develop guidelines for this type of collaboration. (Must)
Status: Will be carried over to next year as C1(iii)

C2(iii) Keep track of how successful the inventory of existing initiatives and collaborations is and upgrade the guidelines for collaboration models looking at those models that appear to be more successful from the inventory. (Must)
Status: Done, update to be communicated at MSIS 2012 in UNIDO paper

C2(iv) Create a mapping of existing initiatives and existing solutions and concepts onto a single framework (Must)
Status: Done see: http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/msis/Mapping+of+existing+initiatives%2C+solutions+and+concepts

C2(v) Create facilities for users to post information about software tools, including questions, experiences and case studies. Create links to existing shared software user groups, and pages for sharing feedback and problems. (Must)
Status: Done, as part of the work in A3

C3. Provide infrastructure for collaboration projects

C3(i) Consider a default proposal for funding (small) collaboration projects to be agreed on by all statistical organizations taking part in MSIS. (Should)
Status: Not done, underlying problem is more complex that initially perceived.

C3(ii) Enhance the possible forms of collaboration with templates and prefab agreements etc. and have them ratified by the MSIS countries. In this way creating an international collaboration will be easy to give form and easy to be approved in different countries if the "mother form" of the agreement has been approved already (Should)
Status: On-going

III. Program of Work 2011-2012

A. Recurring Tasks

A1. Maintenance of the SAB wiki and website
The SAB wiki (private), and the SAB section of the MSIS wiki (public) are the primary means of communication. It is particularly important to keep the public pages up to date to reflect the activities of the SAB and to give the proper impression that the SAB is an active body. Members of the SAB
should be constantly reviewing these wikis so that they retain their value to the official statistics community.

**A2. Production and distribution of the newsletter**

The SAB produces a twice-yearly newsletter, so there is on-going activity in order to get it published. This includes writing and commissioning short articles or other texts or some research.

**A3. Software inventory**

Although the inventory should be kept up to date by contributing organizations, some periodic maintenance is needed, such as checking for dead links and checking that entries are still being used etc. The SAB also monitors the success of the inventory, and updates the guidelines for collaboration models as necessary, to reflect the activities in the inventory.

**A4. Coordination**

The SAB should be actively represented in initiatives and events of other organizations concerning statistical software sharing, statistical business architectures and other topics related to the work of the SAB, to ensure the coordination of international work in this area. Examples are SISAI, HLG-BAS etc.

**A5. Reporting**

An annual report and programme of work should be prepared for presentation to the MSIS meeting and approval by the HLG-BAS.

**B. Specific Tasks for 2012/13**

*New activities in response to demands from the official statistics community, or activities that were proposed in earlier years but were not carried out.*

**B1. Develop standards and guidelines**

B1 (i) Produce a paper on Software for Data Integration *(Must)*

B1 (ii) Architectural recommendations linked to GSBPM, GSIM and CORE/CORA and encourage parties to do joint development of "plug and play" capabilities *(Must)*

**B2. Sharing information**

B2 (i) Add wiki pages to share information on requirements, specifications, software evaluations and other documentation *(Should)*

B2 (ii) Conduct a survey among UNECE members about concrete plans for new developments to identify collaboration opportunities Top three projects etc. *(Must)*

B2 (iii) Set up an information hub for innovation on statistical standard, outputs or products as indicated in the HLG-BAS strategy, start with inventory of initiatives. Divide in subjects like in the HLG-BAS strategy *(Must)*

B2 (iv) Start a page on the wiki for information on Open Data standards, best practices, licenses and Statistical Organizations' experience *(Must)*
B3. Communication and outreach

B3 (i) Conduct survey or brainstorm at MSIS to identify new needs for SAB (Must)

B3 (ii) Publish data about the usage of the Sharing Advisory Board pages on the MSIS wiki (Must)

B3 (iii) Explore new ways of communication, e.g. WebEx, LinkedIn, use the linking capacities of the web. (Must)

C. Activities Continued from Previous Work Programmes

These are activities have already started, and will require further work in 2012/13.

C1. Collaboration

C1 (i) Complete a study on prerequisites on sharing of software (or pre-requisites for multi-national collaboration) (Must)

C1 (ii) Complete a study on communication methods and tools for effective multi-national collaboration activities (Must)

C1 (iii) Continue to monitor different cooperation models for software development, as well as governance / management models for the outputs from collaborative development projects. Identify those that are successful, and document best practices (Must)

C1 (iv) Create facilities for users to post information about software tools, including questions, experiences and case studies. Create links to existing shared software user groups, and pages for sharing feedback and problems. Part of the input for this task can come from already published material in the newsletter and case studies in the inventory (Must)

C2. Provide infrastructure for collaboration projects

C2 (i) Enhance the possible forms of collaboration with templates and prefab agreements etc. and have them ratified by the MSIS countries. In this way creating an international collaboration will be easy to give form and easy to be approved in different countries if the "mother form" of the agreement has been approved already (Should)