

## Minutes from the 18 th PC-Axis reference group

*Place and time* Vilnius 30 September – 2 October 2009

### *Agenda*

1. Welcome to the participants by Deputy Director General Mr. V Norkus
2. Session 1: Presentations of experiences in the use of PC-AXIS
3. Session 2: Presentation from Statistics Lithuania
4. Session 3: Demonstration of products relevant in the field of dissemination of statistics:
  - PX-WEB 2008 (Louise Björkell)
  - PC-AXIS .Net (Petros Likides)
  - PX-Edit, multilingual version (Veli-Matti Jantunen)
  - FAO ContryStat tools (Yves Jaques)
  - SDMX Eurostat and SDMX ESS-net (Bent Åke Lindblad)
  - Task force for PC-AXIS future (Lars Nordbäck)
  - PX-Map (Marianne Vik Dysterud)
  - Findicators (Harri Lehtinen)
5. Session 4: Group work on wishes for new development
6. Group work presentations
7. Free round table discussions
8. Summary of the meeting

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### Welcome

Mr Norkus, Deputy Director General welcomed the delegates. He was happy that statistics Lithuania as an old and loyal member of the PC-AXIS family could host this years meeting. Exchanging experiences and discussing new developments is considered very useful.

Mr. Lars Nordbäck introduced a list with new members of the PC-AXIS family  
New PC-AXIS members:

Lviv and Ukraine, Angola, Uganda, Kenya, Cameroon. Nigeria, Switzerland.  
There are now 80-90 PX-Web sites, of these 68 in Europe.

Nordbäck reported on the future from 2011. The main message is that PC-AXIS is business as usual. Statistics Sweden has decided not to deliver the pc-axis responsibility to any commercial agent. Statistics Sweden will keep the main responsibility. A task force will meet in November to draft a model for the future organisation of the work. The task force will be established with members from DK, FI, NO, SE and possibilities like Open Source or Open society software will be discussed. The task force will get input from other px-members. Statistics Sweden will

still be the “owner” of PC-AXIS. A model for financing will also be set up. The financing will include support (answering questions etc).

Work on .Net is going on. It is envisaged important that backward compatibility is guaranteed for all present users concerning the PX-file format. Likewise the data model should be untouched. Statistics Sweden has got many resources for the PC-AXIS project. Eight people are now involved in the project, project manager is Peter Holm.

## Session 1 Experience from different institutions

All delegates had prepared written reports concerning their use, experiences and own developments in PC-AXIS. These are available on the website: The reports were distributed in advance so everybody had the opportunity to read the reports before the meeting. All delegates presented themselves and at the same time gave a vote for a country report they would like to have elaborated more:

### *New Zealand :*

New Zealand had been using PX-Web only for one year. The background was to give easy and free access to their time series database. The PX-web database is a substitute for the INFOSHARE database which had become unstable. The web site is populated with PX-files created on the fly (like in Finland). The new website was launched in July 2009 and it includes a Quick Search. NZ is happy to share their developments with others. They have created an embargo process into the system. NZ showed a demo of the PX-WEB. Metadata is linked directly to the table title in the selection mode (last update, select variables). Discontinued series are not shown by default. Personalised options are presented in a separate tab.

### *Switzerland :*

Switzerland is just in a starting phase using PC-AXIS as a substitute for Super-web from Space Time Research. They considered using the Nordic data model. However, to suit into their existing production system they chose to create PX-files directly from the Oracle data warehouse. PX-files are to be created on the fly on the basis of SDMX data. PX-Web is shown as a pop-up created by the CMS. They are not satisfied with that solution and hope for the .Net solution will solve their problem with separating the application from the data and integrating it into the CMS. They are looking into a good way to produce the PX-cubes. Switzerland has to publish in 4 languages which is possible in the new version. The .Net version will also be multilingual.

### *Taiwan (R.O.C.):*

The database contains now 12 topics and more than 300 tables (250 in English). The database is heavily and increasingly used: 230,000 tables were retrieved during the last quarter. They have introduced an advance Release Calendar in connection to the data. Not only the actual figures but also annual change is stored in the table thus making it easier for the user to find the long-term trend of data.

### *Iceland*

Statistics Iceland has been using PX-Web as its main publication tool for six years now. From the beginning, they have chosen to make considerable changes to the application in order to integrate it into the CMS used by the organisation. Tables are mostly produced with PX-MAKE. PC-AXIS sql is used too. They are waiting for the .Net version to make integration to the classification etc better. They have made a script to track number of retrievals of each table. The look and feel of their site is very nice and “clean”.

### *FAO:*

PC-AXIS is implemented in 17 Sub-Saharan African countries. [www.Fao.org/countrystat](http://www.Fao.org/countrystat). The project is supported by Bill and Melinda Gates’ foundation and it is a two year project. A technical group is established and in FAO a team of 15 people work on the development. PX-Edit is used and training material is developed, including SDMX. Partnerships are developed on technology and methodology. The experience from the CountryStat participants (Angola, Cameroon and Ghana expressed their views) is that PC-Axis is easy to use and no technical knowledge is needed by the users. Ethiopia has wished to use the PC-AXIS in combination with there general database system. They will be introduced to the PAX-Admin module in UNECE. In Cameroon the wish to use PC-AXIS has spread to other ministries in country.

There were even more reports that got votes to be presented. However, time did not allow for that. These country reports were from the statistical offices in: Burkino Faso, Basque countries, UNECE, Norway, Macedonia and Ireland.

### Session 2 Presentation from Statistics Lithuania

Lithuania presented the use of PC-AXIS in their office. It started in 2004. The on-line database was public in 2007 and was set up with support from Statistics Denmark as a copy of Statistics Denmark's StatBank.

They have built a database of indicators. Access is free although users can register to obtain a personal profile. Access is obtained via search or browsing the themes. Table presentation can be switched to graphs or maps. The use of the database is increasing and the last quarter ca 1500 retrievals took place.

### Session 3 Demonstration of products

PC-AXIS

There will be no 2009 version of the "old" PX-AXIS, only a .Net version. However, a few wanted changes have been made:

You can make different classes in PX-files based on keyword text. They can be shown in different colours.

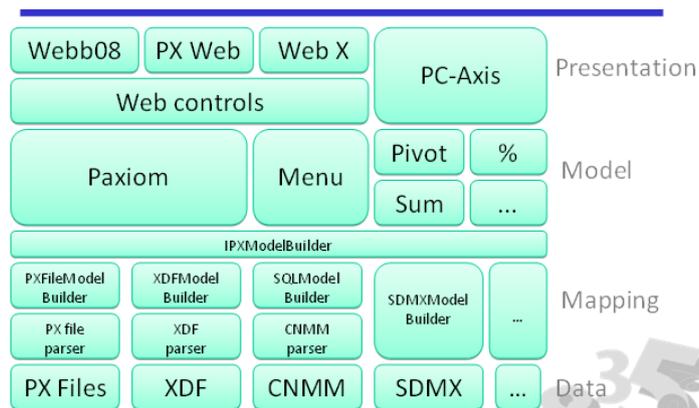
There is now more flexibility in how to change the page where to select variables. (Iceland has made something similar). A lot of parameters have been added in *selectoptions.asp*

Three installation packages to be used in different cases (using vista, xp, ..) have been made. It influences the possibility for the users to be administrators.

Future version of PC-Axis in .Net

A goal was to make PC-Axis more open: divided into  
Data  
Mapping,  
Model,  
Presentation

## PC-Axis .Net



Data (PX, SDMX, XDF, ...) will be transformed through the mapping layer. It reads the different formats and compares them to the *Paxiom*. That is also where all the calculating and pivot etc takes place.

The *web controls* create new px-web .net interface, that is the *Presentation*.

Statistic Sweden works on 2 projects:

- 1) Platform (PCAxis.core and PCAxis.windows (for testing))
- 2) Web controls, ASP.net controls (PCAxis.web.core, pcAxis.web.control, pcaxis.web.client (for testing)).

The standard language is important. They use third party libraries:  
Log4net (logging framework)  
Ude (charset detection)  
Jquery (scripting library)  
SourceGrid (Windows grid control).

All functionality in today's PC-AXIS should be in PCAxis.core

The new PX Web will contain: PCAxis.core, PCAxis.web.core, PCAxis.web.controls, PCAxis.web.admin. The WebControls should be ready by the end of the year 2009.

The work is divided between some offices. Statistics Denmark writes the Menu, Norway the Sql-model and CNMM parser. Finland does the same but for XDF files, and even an export function for XDF files.  
Petros gave a successful demo. It shows *potential* to run on Linux as well.

#### *Task force for PC-AXIS*

A task force for PC-Axis is to be set up with the four Nordic countries. Kick-off for the group will be 16 November 2009. A status report has to be delivered 15 December to the heads of the four offices. From 1 February 2010 there will be suggestion ready to be published to the "family". The group shall come up with a more formal set-up. The group should also write down how the "family" is informed and how to give feed back to the group. Other things on the agenda will be discussions on the Open source possibilities, making a constitution, defining a financing model etc. Nordbäck invited more countries to show interest for contributing to the development – at an optional basis.

License fees should still be paid annually (to cover support, answering e-mails, receiving study visits etc).

#### *PX-Edit multilingual*

Veli-Matti gave a successful and convincing demo of the PX-edit 3.0 and asked us to give feed back on bugs. There are now 470 installations in 60 countries. Feedback should be sent to Statistic Finland's feedback channel [www.stat.fi/comment](http://www.stat.fi/comment)  
ODBC interface for X-Edit is a wish from several countries, so this will be on the wish list for next version.

PX-Edit version 2.4 included work on:

- Excel 2007 support
- CODES may be mandatory
- Bug fixes.

Version 3.0 Release Candidate 1: New things in that version include:

Language menus where appropriate  
Table Join refurbished  
Metada fetching  
Enhanced Default value handling  
+ More enhancements

There is still something missing:

- eXist database connection (this is important to Statistics Finland internal use)
- PX-Tool
- Batch – will be renewed- it does not work in 3.0
- Graphics – almost finished
- Documentation still not existing

Ideas for the future:

- Unicode version
- XML input (CoSSI/XDF, SDMX)
- ODBC
- Batch with script
- Hierarchical key words, GUI honing etc
- Aggregation files creation

FAO has made a lot of help tools to make PX-Web work more smoothly and customized it to fit ContryStat needs.  
20 countries running on one server  
Houses as many sites as desired in one instance of PX-Web  
A flexible RSS feature (whole site or any folder)  
Rich text editing  
Easy use of admin area  
Menu tree a separate process not using PX-web with some new features custom icons in query area  
Support for confidentiality (public, internal, private)  
Support for a validity period

They do not expect the compatibility to new PX-web is a problem.  
A solution could be to investigate an on-the-shelf CMS to house the px-web.  
[www.countrystat.org](http://www.countrystat.org)  
Yves gave a successful demo.

PX-publisher is a new component. It is a web based .px file upload component, a data tree manager. It defines users and their roles. It is multi lingual and defines the minimum of required metadata.

New key words: VALIDFROM, VALIDTO, OWNER  
There will be training for ContryStat users at FAO next week  
They consider if it would be possible to make an intergration with PX-Edit.  
Can be downloaded from: [http:// si-vs506.com:81/svn/countryNet/trunk/uploader](http://si-vs506.com:81/svn/countryNet/trunk/uploader) (login *pc-axis*, password: *reader*). A demo was given.

CountryStat Installer  
It contains edit 2.4, PC-axis 2008, PX-web 2007 with country stat data, PX-map1, FileZilla FT

SDMX has been promoted in order to standardise. The plan June-November 2009 includes:  
Data structure definitions and metadata structure definitions were created  
Metadata registry installed  
Define mapping between px and SDMX  
A prototype developed

Yves brought up ideas for a more formal approach to learn from each other in the community: Process, Tools and Methods.  
Most important to focus on is creating a documentation wiki divided by component and creating a code repository.

#### *Eurostat's work on SDMX-PC- AXIS*

SDMX is used in projects on CensusHUB and the SODI project.  
The idea is mapping the NSI data file with the SDMX registry in Eurostat. This is done in the NSI web service by a Mapping assistant and a Data receiver.  
Two alternative solutions have been proposed. They both have pros and cons. A solution they propose is creating an ODBC driver to read the data from PC-AXIS  
The software can be downloaded from the Eurostat Circa website. Documentation is associated to each module. It is made for .Net and Java developers. It is still a Beta version so "use with care" but by end of October version 1 will be ready. Ver. 2 will be ready by end of November.  
The question was raised that NSI could send PX-files. This was, however, not seen as a possibility from Eurostat's side. Both pull and push solutions can be used in the transmission of data.  
In the beginning the project will use the compact SDMX.

#### *ESS net on SDMX*

ESSnet is a co-operation within NSI' in Europe where some countries are funded and work for a solution on convert between SDMX and PC-AXIS. It handles the PAXIOM version. Within 18 month the project is done. It is not quite clear how the ESS net work is coordinated with other SDMX/PC-Axis work.

<i>Maps</i>	Norway demonstrated the way px-map2 is integrated in their production. PX-Map2 is now also working with PX-WEB. The SVG component is no more supported by Adobe that is why Norway looks into new possibilities like WMS.(web map services. The WMS can be called from another application, for instance an uDIG Application which can be downloaded for free.
<i>Findicators</i>	Finland has made a site with around 100 statistical indicators updated from their px-web databank. It is a cooperation project with the Prime Minister's Office and the objective is to measure progress. This was demonstrated. It consists of a graph, an analysis and a static description. It links to the HTML table and can be downloaded in Excel.
<i>Comments</i>	<p>Angola: It is a good thing to report about bugs, but some time the users have no time to do it. A program should have an automatic bug-report. PX-Edit has a feed-back page</p> <p>NZ: A timeline connected to all the actions that came out of this meeting would be nice to have. A timetable could be in the minutes.</p> <p>FAO: Cooperation model. To make things developed faster, for instance FAO could contribute with resources to the Nordic group's work in order to get results earlier. At least 2 of the FAO countries are prepared to do that.</p> <p>FAO: A mailing list of the different groups so they can inform each other as a group. It could be on the Slovenia forum.</p>

#### **Session 4: Group discussions were setup around four themes:**

1. ContryStat
2. Developers
3. PC-AXIS main module
4. SDMX

##### **1. CountryStat working group**

15 members participated in the group

They focused on 1 moth activities, 12 month, 36 months new projects:

- Integration of read and save into MS Office
- Easy update of variables, values, cell data (can be done in PX-Edit, it should be included in the training program. FAQ should be developed by Finland or the Nordic group.
- PX-MAP1 browse and point to the file would be nice. Colour configuration Also in iGraph they would like to configure the colours.
- Digital Maps manipulation. A smooth flow to update files and maintain the maps
- Enhanced reference handbooks: for programmers, for administrators and for end-users
- Some countries want to contribute
- Preparation of meetings, protocol for Schengen Visa. There are usually difficulties, so a meeting in Africa was suggested. A video based Training Curriculum would help.
- Conduction of the training: Sustainability of critical mass How big groups.
- Improved linkages to back-end. Link px-web with other systems
- Fast internet access in Sub-Saharan Africa expensive and slow: Increase dramatically client side operations by px-developers. CD-ROM for installation.

##### **2. Developers' group (Annex 1)**

Cooperation issues were discussed like a roadmap to let people know what will happen when. Building a WIKI for the developers will be set up by Slovenia. Sweden will look into ways of sharing the source code between them in some kind of repository Better packing of the installation where you easily can select which parts and module to be installed.

The name PC-AXIS is today used for different things. PC-AXIS should cover the overall thing while the new version in .Net could be PX.net, px.edit, px.graph, px.web

Etc.

Layout of the software should be more “professional” same look and feel.

### **3. PC-AXIS main module group (Appendix 3)**

Installing has given problems is not documented. Should go to admin.

Layout should be modernised.

Discussions if PC-AXIS is needed if everything can be made in PX-EDIT or PX-web. However, it is good to be able to send a program along with a file on a CD-rom or memory stick.

Excel version in PC-AXIS is a old one.

PX-Make not updated. Some keywords are missing. A new multilingual version is in test. Denmark will look into it.

Aggregation is very difficult in PC-AXIS. (The aggregation method used in PC-Axis sql is easier to use). Finland will look into the possibility to include it in PX-Edit.

Hierarchical files are also difficult to manage.

We as users should report any bugs to the developers.

PX-MAP2 can be used now, but there were no comment.

Saved queries should be continued somewhere else if PC-AXIS main module is stopped.

### **4. SDMX group (Appendix 2)**

SDMX files are not easily produced from PC-AXIS files because the structure is different. Some information in the SDMX, attribute data, is missing in PX-files.

The group discussed possible changes in PX-files, Norway has made a solution to this by expanding the file structure and adding keywords.

Sql data bases and PAXIOM has to be changed at the same way. This will make it possible to use the mapping assistant from Eurostat and open up for the Census Hub project. Norway will start listing the possibilities this month.

*End of meeting*

Lars Nordbäck concluded that the reports that all countries delivered were very useful for the discussions. They are available before the meeting and everybody can read all reports before the meeting.

He expressed his satisfaction with the way we all work and discuss the future.

He thanked the hosts for the very efficient organisation and hospitality.

On behalf of the “family” Thomas Hoel, Statistics Norway thanked Louise and Lasse for their enthusiastic and remarkable work with developing, supporting and promoting PC-AXIS worldwide. They are both on retirement in 2009, however, one or both might still participate in coming meetings.

*Next meeting 2010*

Next years meeting will take place but the site is not decided.

## Annex 1 Report from The Developers' group

- Create a roadmap of the work going on and set a date when they are supposed to be finished.
- Set up a wiki for developers where we easily can document our different solutions and other information e.g. a list of terminology. Statistics Slovenia promised to try to investigate if they could set up such a wiki at their site within the next month.
- Find a place to host the source code so that the developers from the different countries can get the latest code. Suggestion is to use Subversion and a other possibility would be to use Git. One possible source code host could be google.code. Statistics Sweden promised to find out possible solutions within the next month.
  - It was requested that there also should be like a reference or demo project where new developers could use to further understand the system/API.
  - Other should also get the chance to add their applications to the source code repository.
- The future version of PXWeb should be better packaged where the different components e.g. iGraph and PXMap should be options in the installation process.
- The future version of PXWeb should have a cleaner and consistent layout and look out of the box.
- We should consider a name change from PCAxis.Net since that could be easily be misconceptions between what we are trying to do in the new version and PCAxis main module.
- Maybe there will be a need for the developers to have more meeting then once a year at the reference groups meetings. On possible solution for that could be to use Skype or other similar software.
- A set of test files was requested so that developers could use to reinsure that the code works as expected.

### Actions

- Create and publish as roadmap (owner Statistics Sweden, ready at 1 november)
- Investigate and possibly set up a Wiki (owner Statistics Slovenia, ready beginning of november)
- Investigate how and where to host the source code (owner Statistics Sweden, ready beginning of november)

## **Annex 2 Report from the SDMX group, Thomas Hoel Statistics Norway.**

### Discussion 1

- Several persons have experienced that creating SDMX files from px files is not quite straight forward
- The problems arise because of certain incompatibilities between the two file formats: The SDMX files contain attribute data, which cannot be represented in the current format for px files
- Discussion in the work group: How to make the structure of the px files more compatible with the SDMX file structure

### Discussion 2

- Proposal in advance from Statistics Norway for expanding the px file structure by adding the keywords necessary for including attribute data
- Corresponding changes will have to be made in the SQL database model (CNMM) and in the Paxiom data structure
- Applications like PX-Web, PX-Edit etc will have to "learn" to handle the new data

### Discussion 3

- The changes will make it possible to use the Mapping Assistant created by Eurostat for conversions from px to SDMX
- After some discussion the group agreed upon working along the proposed lines.
- Evaluation and planning will start this year
- Work on the solutions may start in 2010
- Thomas is responsible for starting the evaluation and planning work

### Annex 3: Participants

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