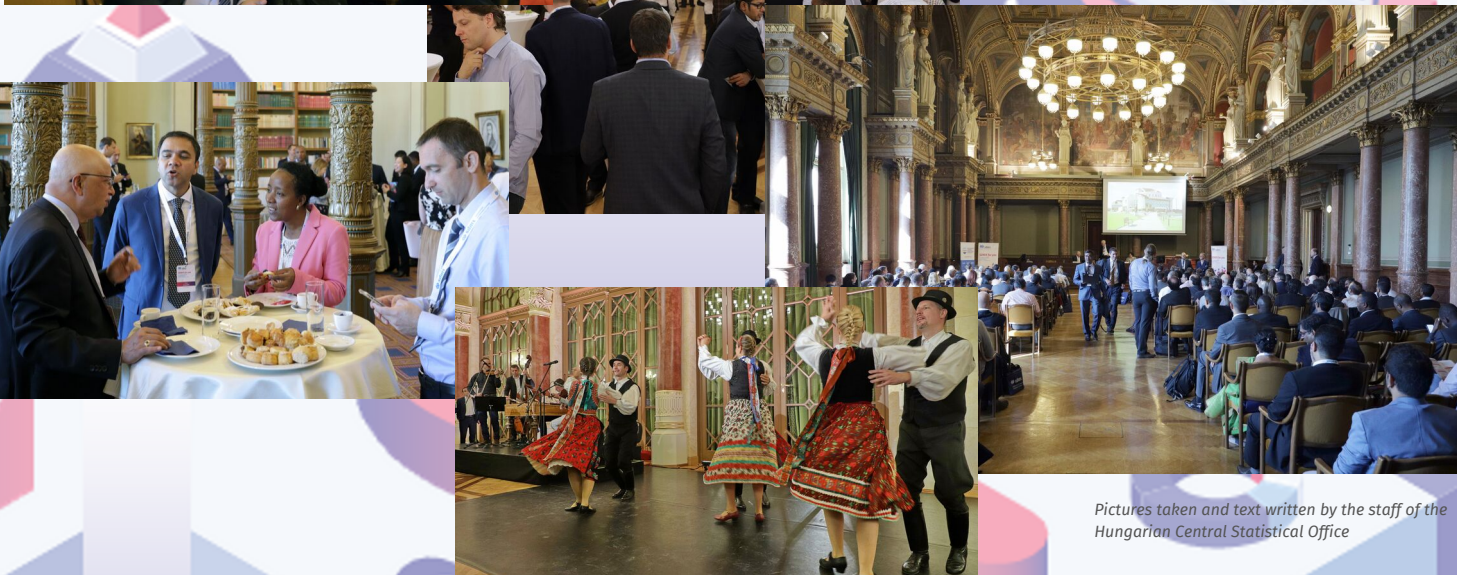# SDMX *for you*

IMPLEMENTING SDMX: EXPERIENCES NATIONAL STATISTICAL ORGANISATIONS

SDMX is a powerful tool to manage national statistical systems. Key success factors for NSOs: soft - especially communication - skills; personal knowledge and competency; stable IT systems and platforms; statisticians and technicians working together in harmony. Apart from building capacity, the use of modern tools for data management and dissemination represent a step forward for NSOs. Upgrading IT infrastructures to better benefit from SDMX projects is also equally important. Apart from the technical aspects, extending SDMX implementation to other statistical domains is also another next step for the NSOs.

FIRST DAY AT A GLANCE

Pictures taken and text written by the staff of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office

WHAT'S NEXT ON THE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME?

17 September: Conference Day 2
- Experiences with SDMX implementation: central banks (continuation) & private sector & international organisations
- Evolution of the SDMX: the way forward

18-19 September: Capacity building days
- Beginners' track
- Experts' track
Please do not forget to bring your laptop (or similar device) to the capacity building sessions!

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HOSTING INSTITUTION: HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE

SDMX *for you*

sdmx — Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange

Newsletter DAY ONE

7TH SDMX GLOBAL CONFERENCE
Budapest, 16-19 September 2019

WELCOME TO THE 7TH SDMX GLOBAL CONFERENCE IN BUDAPEST!

The SDMX Global Conference, organised bi-annually by the SDMX Sponsors, is the key event for the SDMX community to gather information on recent and upcoming SDMX developments and to share experiences with the standard. This year's event is prepared in collaboration with and hosted by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office.

For the two conference days and the two additional days of capacity building, about **300 participants registered** from **97 countries** all around the globe. The first day was focusing on the good progress made, the current challenges and potential way forward for the SDMX, soon to be 20 years old in serving data and metadata exhange. First day sessions were focusing on common goals and challenges, such as:

- Gathering and serving user needs concerning SDMX is always in the focus.
- Standardisation and providing standard solutions is a key priority.
- Many organisations face challenges of integrating information and new technologies.
- Service-orientation and support for implementing such services is of high importance for many organisations around the world.
- SDMX is a powerful tool to support national statistical systems.

Highlights of the first day

01 *Opening and welcome!* Welcome messages from Sponsors and host

02 *Keynote address and interviews* with participants on the importance of SDMX and conference topics

03 *SDMX: latest achivements:* important news on the future of the standard and SDMX 3.0

04 *Experience with SDMX implementation: National Statistical Organisations & First day at a glance: pictures* from Day 1 and the welcome reception

OPENING MESSAGES

"SDMX is used or planned to be used in an increasing number of statistical domains, which is a clear indication of both the stronger implementation of the standard, and its evolving and adaptive nature."

Gabriella Vukovich, the President of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, expressed her appreciation to the SDMX Sponsors for their continuous work in supporting and promoting SDMX and this important event. She specifically thanked that this year's conference is organised in this European region for the very first time.

In her opening message, she stressed that it is extremely important for the National Statistical Organisations to use standards, but also that these standards help them to better integrate with other normatives, and in the meantime, increase quality and save resources.

"SDMX is getting more and more relevant and its usefulness is now much more obvious at national and regional level as well, not only at international level."

On behalf of the SDMX Sponsors, Mr. Paul Schreyer, Deputy Chief Statistician at OECD welcomed the participants. In his welcome message he teased the audience with what is on the horizon for SDMX, such as involvement in geospatial data, microdata; that the standard is more and more about many aspects of the statistical business process, not exhange of information only. All these issues will be addressed during the second day of the conference. Apart from the wider scope for SDMX, Mr. Schreyer also highlighted the importance of user-friendliness of the tools and emphasized the overall relevance and usefulness of SDMX in the community.

SDMX IS A CHAMPION OF DATA STANDARDS, SAYS MR. REINHOLD STAHL IN HIS KEYNOTE SPEECH

Mr. Reinhold Stahl, Director General of Statistics from the Deutsche Bundesbank, addressed the past, the present and the future of SDMX in his keynote speech. SDMX has been a success for many years in his organisation; he shared key success stories and also his views on what challenges are on the horizon for SDMX and how we can make SDMX better fit for the future.

"SDMX is not only a data exchange format, it is much more"

According to the experience of the Deutsche Bundesbank, the SDMX resulted in success stories in developing and producing internationally harmonized statistics; the SDMX is a standard full with a lot of potential to build powerful data warehouses; and it is recognised as an ISO standard which helps a lot in every aspect of using SDMX. This results in data being *"well archived, well documented and above all, standardised".*

In the era of Big Data, it is important for SDMX to be able to store new types of data but more technical skills are also needed now more than ever before. For the future prespective, Mr. Stahl mentioned three areas: better visibility of existing data; better availability of comprehensive and ready-to-use products; and better usability given the new trends in software engineering.

SDMX has the full potential to face these challenges and to become something more in the future. It is important, however, to always keep the focus on the users.

INTERVIEWS

The most important element for me, for this conference is the exchange of experiences. SDMX is an important standard which is now soon 20 years old. The continuous development of the standard requires information, communication and training. The SDMX Global Conference will give us the opportunity to share experiences, to learn from the participants' needs which will help us to define the next version of the standard. After the two conference days we will give beginners and experts targeted training and contributions. This conference is also a great example of a national statistical office collaborating closely with international organizations.

Márta Nagy-Rothengass,
Chair of SDMX Sponsors Secretariat

I always say standards that are like a language so that we can all to talk to each other when we have a standard definition for a concept, such as GDP. Burkina Faso can actually talk to somebody from Myanmar because we are using the same terminology. Developing statistical standards is basically like creating a professional statistical language. It is only meaningful if everybody plays by the same rules. If somebody has figured out a brilliant, clever method to compile something according to an international standard then others can use it. It becomes sort of the basis for exchanging practical experience and building and sharing capacity around the world if we have global standards.

Stefan Schweinfest,
Director of the United Nations Statistics Division

This conference topic (SDMX for you) is very important. We are at a key moment. The work started nearly 20 years ago. After 20 years, we can really see how far we have got, where we are now and what new developments the future has for us. This is why this conference is very important. With many users present, they are going to tell us what is working well, what is working wrong and what are the issues where we should improve. The world is changing and we have to adapt to the new technologies, to the new phenomena, such as Big Data and modernise our dissemination practices accordingly. We all have to change and it is good that we are here for that.

Eduardo Barredo Capelot,
Director of Methodology, Dissemination and Cooperation at Eurostat

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LATEST ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS UPDATE

"SDMX is more than just a data transmission format, it is a way of thinking"

The acceptance and usage of SDMX have been still increasing in the organisations that already implemented (at least partially) the standard. It is also worth to mention that more and more countries – including the developing ones – has started to implement SDMX. This is a part of the conclusions of the latest SDMX global survey undertaken before the conference.

Apart from the SDMX survey, the public consultation of SDMX 3.0 was also available for a longer period before the conference. The SDMX technical and statistical working groups have identified 23 features which are being considered for the next release of SDMX. Both the public consultation and the SDMX questionnaire are important basis for the SDMX Sponsors to gather input and define needs and targets where the SDMX is evolving in the future.

SDMX Sponsors have pointed out that in order to benefit more from SDMX, solutions must be found also for some already known challenges, such as the need for more global Data Structure Definitions (DSDs); the need for more training to have qualified human resources and expertise available; and to collect, store and process Big Data and other types of new data which is recently one of the most crucial points of data management for many organisations. Last but not least there is also a strong need to standardize geospatial data and the corresponding processes.

Since its launch in 2001, the SDMX has become bigger in the sense to have a wider scope, rich content and large variety of supporting IT tools. In order to set targets of where the standard is evolving, the SDMX Roadmap 2020 was created which is now nearing its end.

The panel provided the opportunity for the seven SDMX Sponsors to share their views on SDMX, the road taken and the challenges ahead. The panel identified many challenges and targets for SDMX in the future:

- National Statistical Organisations face similar challenges in the world, especially on data integration issues. SDMX can provide a standard solution there.
- The sponsorship for the SDMX resulted in tools and capacity building opportunities that could not have been addressed by individual organisations alone.
- Many organisations are under the pressure to provide more timely data faster to users.
- SDMX is now the real backbone of data and metadata exchange and management.
- Reach of the SDMX can be further extended globally.
- Need to move further for all kinds of data, including official statistical data, commercial data, geospatial data.
- Keeping in mind of user needs not only in what is needed but how it is needed (especially: user-friendliness of tools) is important.
- Building up further capacities is very important: better usability, better visibility can be achieved.
- Microdata is more and more in the focus.
- Making ready-to-use tools available while utilising technologies is a priority.
- Further efficiency gains can be realised while ensuring better optimisation and further increase in quality.
- Active user engagement is key to ensure the relevance of further development of SDMX.
- Prepare for needs for faster data exchange, involving larger variety of datasets.

Discussion on challenges and future evolution of SDMX will continue in Session 7 on Tuesday.