Publishable Summary

The network for innovation in European public sector information

Summary Report, August 2016

The Share-PSI 2.0 Thematic Network brought together a broad range of stakeholders in the reuse of public sector information to help them to reach consensus on best practice and technical standards, complementing existing and ongoing initiatives in the domain. The network's focus is on implementing the (Revised) PSI Directive and includes government agencies and ministries from a variety of member states as well as standards bodies, academic institutions, commercial companies working in the field, and organisations that effectively interface between government and citizens using open data as the medium. The project organised a series of 5 workshops around Europe during 2014 and 2015. ERCIM/W3C coordinated the work and there is a direct communication and overlap of personnel with its Data on the Web Best Practices Working Group. The W3C Working Group is concerned with technical issues, which was the original scope for Share-PSI but this evolved during the project to focus on policy issues raised during its workshops.

The final result of the project is a set of national, sectoral and community guidelines around the sharing of public sector information that have been created, updated or identified, taking into account the information exchanged at the workshops and the best practice examples arising from those discussions. 40 such guides are known to exist which vary in style, approach and target audience from Pan-European guides to city level, from official publications to community advice. Geographically, they cover the majority of the EU as well as Norway and Serbia. Despite this variation in context, the advice offered is consistent and informed by experience gathered at 5 well attended workshops in different parts of Europe. As well as policy-related matters, the project has supported and benefitted directly from the formal standardisation work at W3C so that a broad and coherent set of Best Practices for sharing Public Sector Information has been identified.

European coverage of localised guides known to be consistent with Share-PSI Best Practices.

In this way, the project promotes interoperability and consistency, and thereby increases confidence amongst potential re-users of public sector information. This applies equally whether the reuse is within the public sector seeking to make efficiency gains, or among the business community seeking to provide new and innovative services.

The Workshops

Secretary of State from the Chancellery of the Romanian Prime Minister, Radu Puchiu, addressing the workshop in Timişoara

The first workshop was held as part of the Samos Summit and took *Uses of open data within government for innovation and efficiency* as its theme. The report summarises the main points made during the workshop and draws a number of conclusions, the first of which is that for any PSI sharing programme to be successful there needs to be a strategy that coordinates the efforts of multiple agencies. As an example of how workshop outputs are captured as best practices, this particular conclusion is codified as the Share-PSI Best Practice Cross Agency Strategy.

The most popular sessions at Samos were not the paper presentations but the bar camp sessions. Held at the end of the two-day event, individuals were able to pitch ideas for discussions among the group. The success and popularity of these sessions lead to the agenda for the second event including two bar camp sessions and only two short plenary presentation sessions, a pattern repeated in all subsequent workshops.

The topic for Lisbon was *Encouraging open data usage by commercial developers*. The report shows that a key theme for the event was the need for engagement with the community of potential re-users. Making a series of spreadsheets available on a portal is not sufficient. A lot of effort is required to understand, clean up and transform data before it is usable in a commercial setting, effort that depends on there being a strong foundation in both legal and organisational commitments.

The Lisbon workshop was the first of its kind in Portugal and attracted many people from across the Portuguese public sector. In Timişoara too, senior officials from the Romanian government participated, as did individuals from the public and private sectors in neighbouring Serbia, Bulgaria and Hungary.

The topic in Timişoara was *Engagement and identifying datasets for publication*. The report emphasises the need to elicit and act upon feedback from the broader community and also provided support for development of two vocabularies in the W3C Data on the Web Best Practices Working Group. These will facilitate the provision of information about the quality and usage of a dataset. Finally, Timişoara was a trigger for the establishment of a new Working Group at W3C, the Permissions and Obligations Expression WG, that will enable publishers to be explicit about the rights that consumers have in accessing and reusing data.

The fourth Share-PSI workshop was collocated with the annual CeDEM conference at the Danube University in Krems. Under the theme *A Self Sustaining Business Model for Open Data*, the workshop included many sessions and presentations by entrepreneurs making use of PSI. As reported, that event was quick to point out that the business perspective of PSI is very different from the public sector's or the open data evangelist's. Business starts with an idea for a service. Data is a necessary resource but so are many other things. Unusually for an event centred on PSI and open data, the point was made repeatedly that having to pay for data is no bad thing. It gives businesses a lever to pull for greater quality and continuation of service, as well as for providers to make the more valuable data available.

The final workshop in the series was hosted by Fraunhofer FOKUS in Berlin with the theme Maximising interoperability — core vocabularies, location-aware data and more. Share-PSI worked with the European Data Portal that had been launched the previous week and the discussion ns were more technical than had been the case in the previous workshops. The focus was on topics such as the important role of the portal beyond simply providing a catalogue of datasets, the importance of persistent, dereferenceable URIs as identifiers for locations, the value of simple tools and, not just the use of common standards, but profiles of standards.

Developing the Best Practices

Each workshop comprised two very full days of discussion and debate among enthusiastic and knowledgeable people. In addition, the project partners met for half a day before and after each event. Identifying a set of best practices from such a rich variety of inputs is challenging. A subset of partners committed time over the summer of 2015 to identifying and collating Best Practices on the project wiki. In each case, a session from a workshop was written up as a story and associated with an element of the PSI Directive. A task force member then reviewed the stories associated with a specific element and created a set of best practices according to an agreed template. Through an online poll, the partners were asked which of the following applied for each Best Practice:

Nancy Routzouni leading the plenary session on the Share-PSI 2.0 Best Practices in Berlin

1. I agree this is a good practice
2. I agree this is good practice and we already offer advice consistent with it.
3. I agree this is good practice and will cite it directly in our guide.
4. I do not think this is good practice but am open to persuasion.
5. I do not think this is a good practice
6. I have some other comment

Using a simple arithmetic model that gave slightly more weight to option 3 than option 2, BPs with 80% or more support were published on the project website while others were classed as 'Candidate Best Practices.' All the Best Practices were presented briefly at the Berlin workshop and further feedback received. In the weeks following Berlin, the template was amended and each BP amended to match. The Candidate Best Practices were revisited during the project's final meeting in Zagreb in March 2016 and, through a consensus, the final set of BPs was agreed. A second round of voting

with the same questions as round 1 led to some content in some Candidate BPs being merged into already published ones and the final texts being drafted.

Each Best Practice includes:

- **Outline** (a short statement of what the best practice is about).
- **Links to the PSI Directive** (which elements of the Directive does the BP relate to).
- **The Challenge and the Solution** (short statements about what issue is addressed)
- **How do I implement this Best Practice?** (Guidance on how to proceed).
- **Where has this Best Practice been implemented?** (Links to examples of the BP in practice)
- **References** (links to relevant workshop sessions, the origin of the BP, further reading etc.)
- **Localised guidance** (links to specific sections of localised guides that include the BP in their advice).
- **A contact point for further information about the BP** (links to the primary author of the BP, including e-mail address).
- A link to an **open issue on GitHub** where the BP can be discussed, lessons learnt can be shared etc.

The W3C Data on the Web Best Practices Working Group has completed its work in drafting technical Best Practices, with its primary document now at an advanced stage in W3C's standardisation process. Those BPs are offered alongside the Share-PSI BPs as a single package so that the project offers a full range of advice for sharing Public Sector Information.

Impact

Croatian Information Commissioner, Anamarija Musa, visiting the joint Share-PSI/W3C Data on the Web Best Practices Working Group meeting in Zagreb, March 2016.

Share-PSI is a network of individuals who all play a role in the sharing of Public Sector Information in their own countries or across borders. It includes civil servants who have written their countries' law to transpose the PSI Directive, academics, technical experts and policy advisers. A typical example is Neven Vrček of the Faculty of Organization and Informatics at the University of Zagreb who worked closely with Croatia's Information Commissioner in developing that country's policy and implementation plan for the PSI Directive, part of which is encapsulated in their localised guide.

As the project reached its final stages, partners were able to use its outputs in a variety of ways depending on their own role and the maturity of PSI sharing in their country. In Malta, Share-PSI provided useful evidence for the need to develop a new national data strategy. In Latvia, IMCS has been able to refer to Share-PSI Best Practices in meetings with specialists from government institutions (e.g. the Register of Enterprises, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development). In Lithuania, UABLD worked with PWC to meet the Society Development Committee under the Ministry of Transport and Communications (IVPK) and introduced the Share PSI 2.0 project. IVPK's representative Kęstutis Andrijauskas agreed to accept UABLD's localised guide.

In countries with a more developed PSI sharing infrastructure, such as Spain, Finland and Flanders, the project forms a useful reference in the ongoing work and, as foreseen at the outset, provides a path to greater interoperability and better use of the Web as a data platform.

A final, lasting impact is that from Norway to Greece, from Portugal to Estonia, a network has been established among colleagues who can and do call on each other for support and advice.