



PC-Axis Reference Group Meeting, Helsinki, Finland
5th – 7th September 2007

Report on the Use of PC-Axis Software in Slovenia

PC-Axis database start page: <http://www.stat.si/pxweb/Dialog/statfile1.asp>

1. Organisational issues

Current SI-STAT team members are:

- Katja Šnuderl, project leader;
- Tatjana Šeremet, definition of input data structure from different programming tools and PX file format adjustments (technical support at new subject areas implementation);
- Sandi Pehlič, PX-Web upgrades and maintenance, technical support and development of PX-Web;
- Igor Štefelin, technical and organisational support at new subject areas implementation and at regular data releases;
- Mirko Klanjšček, works on introducing new data - from organisational and technical point of view (processes);
- Andreja Arnič, new member and still in the learning phase.

Our first priority in 2007 was building a PX-SQL macro database and integrating it with the existing file server following the single-entry point principle for the users. At the same time the process of tabulating data for publication in the database (PX-SQL or PC-Axis file server) was standardized and caused a major step towards the complete coverage of published data in the PC-Axis database – so far still not all off the data, published by Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS), are available in the SI-STAT Database. The current estimated coverage is 70%.

2. Developments in 2007

2.1 New tabulation rules

At SORS we still maintain the variety of sources of data for dissemination. Input tables for the PC-Axis database are created from relational databases, flat files and Excel spreadsheets. Tools for tabulation are versatile as much, from sql queries and views to Cobol, TPL, SAS and Excel tabulations. In 2007 a major step was made when we introduced the new tabulation rules. As earlier we always took what was available and tried to create a comprehensive multidimensional table from existing tabulations, the new rules introduce a pre-defined multidimensional structure, defined by the statistician. Statistician only defines the content of the table. The programming unit then prepares a new tabulation with the available tool (from the view of source or responsible person) by the general rules of tabulation for the pc-axis database. We even prepared a simple converter for txt files from TPL to be converted to the correct CSV structure. The main result of the whole exercise it higher understanding of multidimensional table structure by the statisticians and the programming unit.

2.2 Recalculations of financial data from SIT to EUR

With 1.1.2007 Slovenia has joined the European Monetary Union, adopting Euro as the national currency. In November 2006 most of the financial data (prioritized were prices and salaries) were recalculated for the whole time series. Data were recalculated in two ways – by the fixed exchange rate and by the average exchange rate of the selected time period. As there were not many tables to recalculate, there was no automated procedure introduced. Recalculations were mainly done through PX-Edit. Tables are available at http://www.stat.si/pxweb/Database/EUR_eng/Eur_eng.asp.

2.3 Database development – PX-SQL Macro

Migration of data towards a PC-Axis SQL Macro Base has started within a project in the field of External trade. Two applications were developed in .Net environment: Database manager and web interface. Both applications are in the final testing phase, but two tables had to be published in advance, so some errors might still be present and not all functions are finalized.

Database manager already includes several functions:

- a) Managing the tree of contents (MenuSelection) with options to add any type of links or icons. This options were used also for connecting the two databases (file server and PX-SQL Macro), whereas tables in the file system are presented as links;
- b) Managing metadata for each table in the PX-SQL database and creating new tables;
- c) Managing variables, valuepools, valuesets, levels and footnotes;
- d) Importing metadata and data from PC-Axis files;
- e) Importing data from Oracle or SQL server;
- f) Importing data from CSV files;
- g) Updating existing data tables from XLS files (for corrections);
- h) Importing classifications from files and from our classification server (Klasje);
- i) Managing user groups and permissions on several levels.

Web interface enables the user to browse through the database (tree of contents) and extract the data. When values for variables are selected, a temporary pc-axis file is created. In the "presentation on screen" step this file is presented with PX-Web 2006 component for presenting table on screen. Same functions as in PX-Web 2006 for the user are available in the presentation on screen step.

Additional functions in the selection step are:

- a) Hierarchical presentation of values within a variable, if present;
- b) Option to look for existing combinations of data in the table (removing empty lines in advance);
- c) Mark categories by levels;
- d) Switching between texts and codes;
- e) Advanced selection with a search engine, sorting options (by codes or texts) and filtering by levels.

These functions can be tested on the published external trade table:

http://www.stat.si/sistat/en/MainTable/tbl_2401742

2.4 Integration of PX-Web 2006 and PX-SQL Macro Database

A lot of work was done on mapping keywords from the files to the macro database. In Slovenia we are including many metadata in the PX files and not all of them could be mapped to the macro database (e.g. precision, cellnote/x). On the other hand it was easier to introduce hierarchical variables to the macro database.

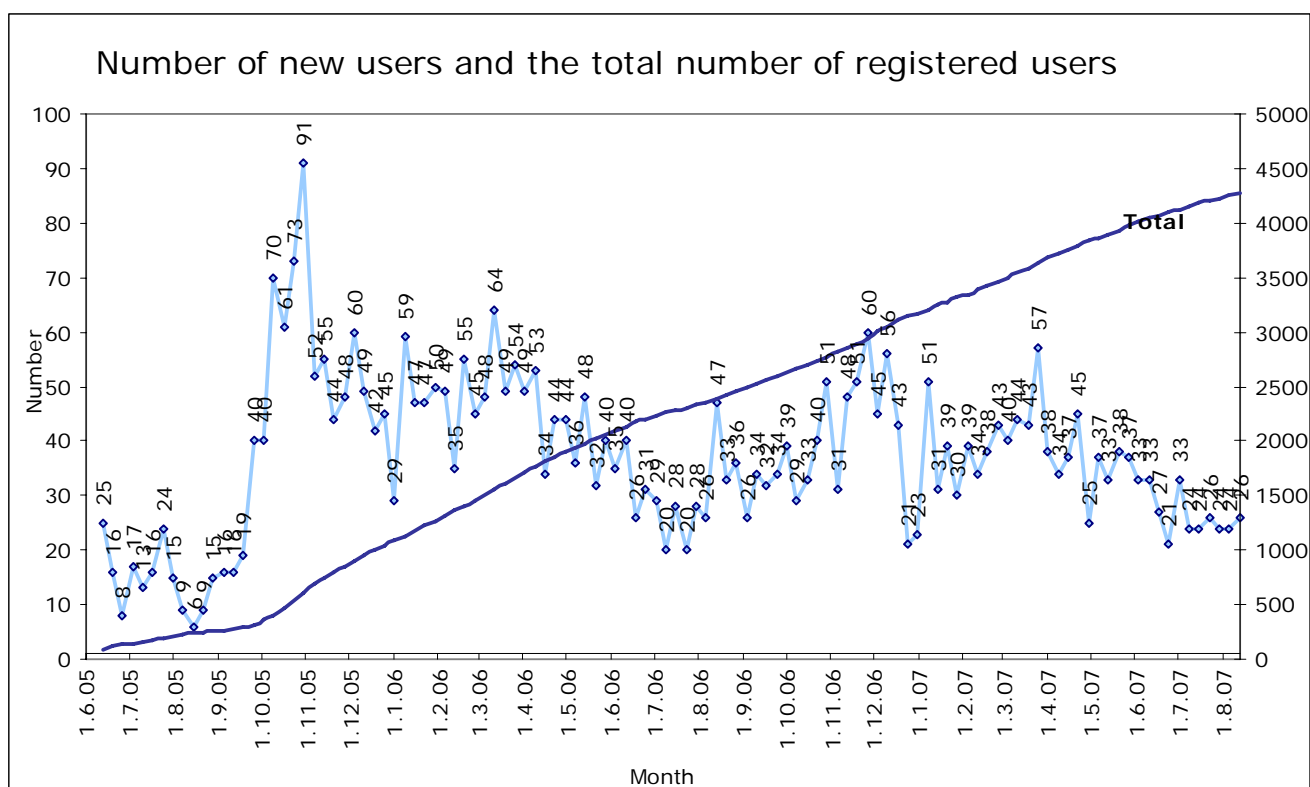
Our main goal was to keep both systems (file server and macro database) without putting burden on the user when searching for data. Basic principles are:

- a) Single entry point
- b) Same "Look and feel"
- c) Same functions + advanced options in the macro database
- d) Same support (header menus)
- e) Single registration for advanced user (option to save queries).

At the moment the databases are not yet integrated as there are only two SQL tables (external trade) published. The final deadline for the new database release is end of October 2007.

3. User response

In May 2005 we've introduced user registration and number of users is still rising and the total number of saved queries is over 1000. We've introduced also a special mailbox for technical problems in May 2006 (surs.si-stat@gov.si), but there are very few requests and most of them ask for data only. Otherwise all data request are directed to the general SORS mailbox, info.stat@gov.si.



4. Use of PC-Axis Family Tools

A short overview of use of the tools:

Product	Use	Comment
PC-Axis 2004	internal	mainly for checking of the prepared PX files, last version not yet ready to be downloadable from our web site
PX-FileBatch	not used	we use internal px-web queries instead
PX-Edit 2.4	internal	main tool for preparing PX files, unifying procedures and standardizing metadata, use of classification files and common PXK files, simplifying processes of data preparation
PX-Tool	internal	used only by the SI-STAT team for the database administration and analysis
PX-Web 2004	internal and external	internal and external web pages, two languages, two internal databases, first for testing and second for checking data before release – at the release date duplicated as external database; some modifications of the createlist.asp, varval.asp; in September we are planning to pass over on PX-Web 2006 with PX-iGraph component

PX-Make	not used	PX-Edit has fully replaced the previous use of PX-Make
PX-Map	not used	replaced with PX-Map2
PX-iMap	internal and external	implemented and working
PX-Map2	internal	We have tested PX-Map 2 on SVG technology and also exported JPG maps to be used with data releases, layering in another graphical program
PX-PUBL	not used	

4. PC-AXIS FORUM

We have prepared also PC-Axis forum. This forum was created to assist the members of the PC-Axis group to discuss new developments of the PC-Axis tools and also to answer questions on how to use some tools or settings - posted by database administrators or by users.

Registered users (members) may write new topics, reply to existing topics, write private messages to other members and receive e-mail notifications on new topic replies or on new private messages.

We also run full forum's administration.

Due to a large number of spam users we've introduced the policy where every new member has to be confirmed by the administrator.

<http://www.pc-axis.info/forum/>