

3rd DATEX II USER FORUM

On the 19th and 20th of May, Prague was the scene for a successful 3rd DATEX II User Forum. With over 75 participants from 20 countries, the User Forum attracted a diverse group of DATEX-friends and DATEX newbie's. It was organised by the Netherlands, Germany and the Czech Republic and chaired by the chair of the DATEX II Strategic Group, Mrs. Marjolein Masclee.

The programme was tailored to this diverse audience with management sessions, exchange of experience through technical presentations, technical sessions on new products and practical hands-on sessions.

Upon arrival participants received some sort of calculator, which was revealed in the opening session to be a voting device. Voting on statements, questions and presentations was common practice throughout the Forum.

Participants were welcomed by professor Svitek, the dean of the Technical University. After him the Czech deputy minister of transport, Karel Dobes and the chair of ITS Nationals – the Network of ITS Associations welcomed the participants.

Mrs. Odile Arbeit de Chalendar from the European Commission expressed their intention to continue financial support for DATEX II in the coming years. They are happy to see that DATEX II supports the legal steps (implementation of the Delegated Act) the EC undertakes and that there is a match between regulation and standardisation.

Chris de Vries, chair of the Dutch Advisory Board for Traffic Information stated that although he is a large-scale consumer of DATEX-II information, he is not really aware of it. And that is OK. It is more or less exactly the purpose of having a standard like DATEX. The standard is used to enable things, to let information run smoothly. It's like the air we breathe in, we need it but we don't need to see, hear or smell it. He argued that DATEX II should be expanded with new information elements like: traffic management plans (in case of calamities, road works and special events), traffic light queues, traffic light green waves, bridge openings, parking information etc.

After the plenary opening session, the programme offered six technical sessions, two management sessions and two hands-on sessions.

Management sessions

The management sessions started with three very interesting presentations, giving an extensive introduction to DATEX II, experiences with the deployment of DATEX II in Romania and the market view by HERE. In the second session, the participants had some very vivid discussions with the experts. They discussed the (im)possibilities of DATEX II and the steps to be taken by each of them.

The award was won by Bard de Vries with his presentation "What can DATEX II do for you?".

National deployments

This session showed that there is broader commitment for a national roll out in more and more countries. The more DATEX II is used, the more experiences we can share on the use of it.

Finland has already taken it up for urban traffic information.

The session also had two presentations about national access points, the Dutch NDW and the German MDM, that could well be compared in this session. They both touched the challenge of collecting data from many sources (e.g. fuel stations, cities) and publishing a harmonized total.

The award-winner of this session was Kjersti Leiren Boag, who showed that the Norwegian experiences with DATEX II are overall positive, as it is perceived as a well thought through information model that enables a more efficient way of providing traffic and travel information.

The national deployments covered challenges on collecting data from different sources (NDW from The Netherlands and MDM from Germany) and the use of DATEX in an urban environment in Finland. Norway and Portugal shared their experiences with the use of DATEX II.

Parking

A special topic at the User Forum was parking. Two sessions were devoted to this subject. Parking for freight can be a nightmare: on a parking place with 26 official spots, 103 trucks were parked. The presentations showed how DATEX II can help to avoid such situations. A new app for trucks with travel time and stocking algorithms is under development, assisting drivers in their search for a parking space in time.

Apart from this, the issue of DATEX II light was discussed. Participants were in favour of elaborating on this idea to see what is possible to make an easier version.

It might be useful to share our way of describing parking related information to find common phrases that are understood by everybody.

The participants agreed that standardisation is an important driving force for the market to use products. This was also mentioned by Tanja Jorzig from HERE in her presentation at the management session.

One DATEX II-awards was won by Jürgen Neugebauer with a very clear presentation on the Bavarian experiences with ITP profile implementation in an ITP pilot project. The other DATEX II-award was won by David Barta, who underlined the need for a standard in his presentation on the development of a Czech standard for smart on-street parking using DATEX II.

TMP's and exchange

The presentations showed how the thinking about exchange evolves: Italy started to show the centre to centre use and asked if centre to roadside would also be possible. Norway confirmed this question with some centre to roadside examples. France showed an example of centre to roadside use for cooperative systems in the Score@F-project.

The award was won by Fabrizio Paoletti, who gave one presentation on operational data exchange and TMP management and a second presentation on an interesting new application: the land slide alert systems.

The future of DATEX II

This session informed us about the process and current status of standardisation of DATEX II.

The DATEX II versioning policy was explained as well as the possible features for DATEX II version 3 (which should be backwards compatible).

The Deployment Guidelines and the relation and usage of DATEX II profiles in the Deployment Guidelines were discussed. There is a need to secure a future maintenance of the work that has been done in the field of the Deployment Guidelines. This also goes for DATEX II.

The award-winner of this session, Bard de Vries, informed us about the road map for maintenance and the road map for support. He also explained the discussion on a possible long term funding under the CEF as well as the preconditions and considerations of the discussions on the future organisation of DATEX II.

Traffic and travel information services

This session showed us that defining standards on interfaces contribute to enhanced usability of the information systems and lower maintenance cost. Especially the re-use of parts of DATEX II that were developed in other countries to solve issues in one's own country.

The presentation of the exchange of traffic information in the triangle Austria, Slovenia and Italy showed that the main challenge is still in finding the common GIS basis for the information exchange. Furthermore, Martin Böhm showed in his DATEX II award winning presentation the operational need for profiling DATEX II to fit the operational requirements for severity in relation to weather situation.

The Swedish informed on the benefits standardising the weather station data that provides the users with information about road and travel conditions influenced by the weather. As this interface is now standardised using DATEX II, the use increased dramatically. This put new requirements on the metadata of the weather camera's. Here the work of the UK was gratefully re-used and enhanced for the Swedish requirements.

The availability of data is a main issue in the Superhub project. Especially in the urban domain the accessibility of the data is difficult, due to several mainly organisational reasons. In Superhub it was recognised that formal standards that are not easily usable are replaced by de facto standards like the GTFS standard. Main challenge is the information for E-mobility in the urban domain. DATEX seems to be a suitable place to facilitate this.

Hands on sessions

The 'real techies' got a tour through the DATEX II data model and were taught by Jörg Freudenstein how to make profiles and extensions.

Closing session

Mrs. Masclee summarised the most remarkable results of the sessions of the forum in the closing session.

The presentations and discussions showed that DATEX II is perceived as a well thought through information model that enables a more efficient way of providing traffic and travel information. DATEX II is therefore used by more and more road operators. Its scope is getting broader, with cooperative systems, parking and urban information.

After every session, participants could vote for the best speaker of that session. The winners received a DATEX II-award at the closing session. The biggest winner was Bard de Vries, chair of the DATEX II Technical Group, with two awards. The other awards were won by Kjersti Leiren Boag, Jürgen Neugebauer, Fabrizio Paoletti, Martin Böhm, David Barta and Jörg Freudenstein.

The previous chair of the DATEX II Strategic Group, Torsten Geissler, could not attend the User Forum, but was surprised by Mrs. Masclee with an award during the Amsterdam group meeting at Schiphol, one week earlier. Josef Kaltwasser, his right hand and one of the original founders of DATEX II also received one.

It was a very successful user forum, where people were able to connect with other experts, learn from each others experiences and expand their network.