PRTR Germany and Open Source Software

Since June 2009 Germany has been providing information on pollutant releases of industrial facilities in a Pollutants Release and Transfer Register for the public. This is also an opportunity for the industry to communicate their efforts and achievements towards a healthier environment. PRTR creates more transparency and improved access to environmental information to support the dialog between public, politicians and the industry.

My statement will focus on two specific aspects of the German PRTR, which in our view could be helpful for other PRTR projects:

– how to implement an effective data-flow from the operators to the register even if the administrative structures are complex

– how the use of **Open Source Software** combined with PRTRs can form a „natural partnership"

Online reporting of environmental data

As you know, Germany is a federal state with shared responsibilities between the Federal Government and the Federal States. The German PRTR is operated by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA). However, the operators send their reports to the competent

authorities of Federal States, which are usually responsible for the enforcement of Environmental Laws. These authorities are responsible for the quality control of the data and forward the data to the Environment Agency.

For ease of reporting, facilities enter their data and report into a central web-portal. The German government and all Federal States have made a joint effort to provide the industry with a web based reporting software operational since spring 2008. In a second step the Federal States authorities use the same web-portal for the quality control of the data.

e-Government 2.0 – improving information while reducing red tape

In 2008 the electronic PRTR became a lighthouse project as part of the E--Government 2.0 initiative in Germany. These projects serve as models for a modern administration. The German e--PRTR project demonstrates how the optimization of process chains can contribute to reducing red tape. In a recent European Commission report on the progress of eGovernment in Europe the German PRTR is acknowledged as a best practice example.

Target-orientated information and fast data flows are very important. This is ensured by the electronic PRTR (e-PRTR), particularly through the data link between facilities and the administration. We provide open XML based interfaces along the entire process chain

from the reporting party all the way to the EU level and into the German PRTR. This means that all data requirements are open and transparent from the very beginning to all facilities and users.

The German web portal includes -- in addition to reporting date for the PRTR – other reporting obligations for industry under EU and national legislation. Furthermore, our open web portal structure allows for integrating additional reporting obligations and can hence reduce the total work load for the administration and the industry, caused by an increasing number of reporting demands. This clearly demonstrates the potential for the reduction of red tape.

Where to find the information

The German PRTR website is at www.prtr.bund.de. You can perform database queries, find evaluations of the data as well as detailed explanations on several issues in a wiki interface. Since April 2010 the data of the reporting year 2008 are available. We will further improve it in a new version in a couple of weeks.

www.prtr.bund.de offers an ultra-fast and reliable map service based on the OpenStreetMap project to help you navigate through the register. The system is compliant with the OPEN GEOSPATIAL CONSORTIUM standards, the European INSPIRE Directive, and serves the PRTR information as a Web Map Service (WMS). This means users can integrate the maps from our PRTR website into their own applications.

Yes we're open

PRTR's ambitions to improve transparency and sustainability are also reflected in the process Germany chose to develop the software: The German electronic PRTR is programmed <u>completely with open source software</u>.

Open Source software actually means, that everybody may use, distribute and enhance the software without license fees. The only requirement is that any subsequent user also makes available their enhancements under the same licence terms. In our view this is an ideal mode to collaborate and cooperate in building tools for public participation. We are ready to share our software.

<u>Thus the complete German e-PRTR software is available for everybody without license fees.</u> You are cordially invited to use or help improve the e-PRTR and share the results - an important step in practical capacity building. The software and interfaces will soon be published on the European interoperability platform www.semic.eu. We invite other countries and users to join the process we started of sharing PRTR software and collaborate in its further development.

Thank you.