**Report of the CESSDA Expert Seminar 2015**

**The Hague, November 30th – December 1st 2015**

**Milestones MS19 “Evaluation of already existing ideas and plans” and MS20 “Proposal on how to set up the Trust Group” CESSDA SaW project.**

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Report of the CESSDA Expert Seminar 2015, held in the offices of DANS in The Hague, November 30th – December 1st 2015.

This report is also the Milestones MS19 “Evaluation of already existing ideas and plans” as well as MS20 “Proposal on how to set up the Trust Group” of task 4.3 of the CESSDA SaW project.

**Introduction**

The central issue of the seminar was trust. The aims of this seminar were:

1. Creating awareness and knowledge of trust issues generally
2. Exchanging and developing ideas on yet unresolved trust issues (non-DSA Annex 2 obligations, CESSDA Trust Working Group)

The intention of this seminar was that the discussions and conclusions should feed into the CESSDA SaW project “Strengthening and widening the European infrastructure for social science data archives”. The trust issue is very much linked to one of the aims of this project: to ensure sustainability of its data for the widened CESSDA network. It aligns in particular with task 4.3 in this project: “Development Support: achieving the Data Seal of Approval”. For that reason this report is both an account of what happened during the expert seminar as well as a draft plan for task 4.3 of the CESSDA SaW project. For the SaW project this report functions as the content of Milestone MS19 “Evaluation of already existing ideas and plans” as well as Milestone MS20 “Proposal on how to set up the Trust Group”.

The seminar brought together fourteen participants, coming from different service providers (SP’s) all over Europe. Both senior and junior staff members were present. This enabled senior, more experienced, staff members to share their insights with junior staff members.

**History of trust within CESSDA**

The trust issue is seen as an important one by the CESSDA community for a number of years already. Early 2013 a first workshop focusing at this issue took place in Bergen. As a result of this meeting an informal working group on trust was constituted in which all then existing SP’s participated. This working group has been active in the course of 2013 by becoming acquainted with the DSA-certification through performing self-assessments and evaluating each other. DSA is the Data Seal of Approval, the basic form of certification for *Trusted Digital Repositories*. These self-assessments were finally evaluated and discussed in October of that year in a second workshop in Cologne. The working group as such has not come together after that. One of the main conclusions of this evaluation was that the SP’s should be able to achieve DSA-certification in a reasonable timeframe: one or two years. DSA seemed to be the best candidate as primary vehicle for certification within CESSDA.

This conclusion eventually led in 2014 to the acknowledgment by the CESSDA General Assembly that all CESSDA SP’s should ensure that they observe the “Annex 2 obligations” effectively. In the CESSDA Work Plan 2014 – 2015, which was approved unanimously by the General Assembly in June 2014, it was indicated as *first priority* that the Trusted Digital Repository status (DSA) for all should be coordinated ensuring the obligations in Annex 2 are in place before the end of 2015. At the moment however it is not clear what the actual timeframe is as this goal has not been reached. It was also decided that achieving DSA-compliance is mandatory. In the Work Plan all the guidelines in the Annex 2 obligations have been elaborated. The main issues were clearly indicated. The intention was to set standard preservation strategies and policy recommendations. Since then these issues have not been taken up in a central way within CESSDA.

The growing awareness by all research funders during the last years of the issues of trust and certification, related to longterm preservation and open access, has increased its importance for CESSDA as well.

**Workshop: general**

During the workshop the issue was looked upon in its entirety, in particular focusing on what still has to be done to improve trust. After an introduction in which the past activities in this field were recapitulated, as indicated in the preceding paragraph, most of the discussions were aimed at the “unresolved trust issues” and the formation of a new trust working group. These discussions are summarised here. Several conclusions were arrived at which will be communicated to CESSDA. The work will be continued in task 4.3 of the SaW project.

**A. Creating awareness and knowledge of trust issues generally**

**Certification within CESSDA: progress**

***Status so far***

At the time of the workshop, December 2015, the status is that some CESSDA SP’s have indeed achieved DSA-certification or are very close to it: 5 out of the 15 CESSDA SP’s.

This result can be described as disappointing. While it is encouraging that five SP’s in CESSDA have reached this status, another ten still have to get there. There are also aspiring members and none of these SP’s to be has achieved DSA-compliancy so far.

There certainly is a challenging task still ahead in this field. Up to now only a minority of the CESSDA SP’s has reached the required certification level. One of the questions is here how far the responsibility of CESSDA should go in encouraging, assisting and/or training SP’s in achieving the DSA-compliancy

***Experiences***

A very useful part of the workshop was that many of the present SP’s shared their experiences in preparing for the DSA-certification. Some had finished that operation by achieving DSA-compliancy, others were still working on that.

Challenging points – positive and negative – which were mentioned:

* Many SP’s in non-English speaking countries would have been helped by a translation of the DSA Guidelines in their own language.
* The terminology used in the DSA Guidelines is not always clear and at times ambiguous.
* It was often necessary to collect and organise sufficient and explicit documentation, as necessary documents were often missing. Considerably more documentation was required than was available in the SP’s concerned. In many cases only implicit routines existed, meaning these were only known in the heads of some experts, in the worst case only in one head.
* It was seen as a positive point that, as a result of DSA certification, everybody at the archive from that moment on was much more aware of preservation tasks and procedures. This knowledge was not only restricted to the archive itself, but could also be spread and shared externally, especially through the website.
* Succession plans or policies (what happens with the SP if the funding is withdrawn?) were often lacking.
* Commitment by the management of the SP is an absolute prerequisite for investments of resources to achieve DSA-compliancy.
* Access to all (internal) documentation, in some cases confidential documents, is a necessary precondition for those preparing the self-assessment.
* Combining efforts to build a repository from scratch and at the same time fulfilling all (technical) DSA-requirements is a challenge.
* DSA is a good incentive to improve procedures and describe responsibilities more adequately.
* Funding, by the SP itself or from another source, of the certification project is important.
* Applying the OAIS to the whole repository is too big a task. More clarity is needed on what the required minimum is (applies in particular to DSA Guideline 13).
* On the point of the mission of the SP: potentially useful for better understanding the relation with the Research Council or any other possible funder.

Central and recurring points in the SP’s presentations were the need for good documentation and the development of explicit procedures. Some participants emphasised that it is regrettable that after 2013 there was no feedback anymore as the trust working group effectively stopped its work (as mentioned earlier).

**B. Exchanging and developing ideas on yet unresolved trust issues**

**(non-DSA Annex 2 obligations, CESSDA Trust Working Group)**

The “yet unresolved trust issues” are a complicating factor. For a number of years it has been observed in CESSDA that the Annex 2 obligations do not fully match the DSA-certification guidelines. DDI-compliance, the “relevant preservation metadata” and the ELSST thesaurus are some examples of the issues not being covered by achieving DSA-certification.

***I Annex 2 obligations:***

All Annex 2 obligations were discussed in some detail. Here follows a summary of the points made.

**1. be fully compliant with the elements of the DDI metadata standard that are required to enable the member/observer to contribute fully to CESSDA activities and which will be identified by CESSDA**

What does “compliant with the elements of the DDI metadata standard” mean in practice? Which parts are mandatory and which parts are recommended? This is interpreted in diverse ways: some SP’s consider all DDI fields as mandatory, some restrict this to a number of core fields. An important point here is how much effort it would cost for a repository if all, or many, of the DDI fields would be made mandatory. An impact analysis should be made. A group of core metadata fields should form the basis of a central catalogue.

A strong relation exists between this issue and the CESSDA metadata working group which will produce a report in April 2017. Mutual contact and consultation is called for.

**2. adopt and apply the CESSDA common single sign-on user authentication system when it exists**

Unclear how far this has progressed, both within CESSDA and within other ERIC’s. Was part of DASISH.

Needs verification: is there a work plan on this? Part of the CESSDA’s Data Access and Dissemination Policy.

**3. enable the harvesting of all their resource discovery metadata and relevant preservation metadata for inclusion in the CESSDA data portal** A clear definition of “relevant preservation metadata” is needed. And why is this mentioned separately and what is meant by it? A better formulation would be “provenance metadata”.

A metadata harvesting tool should be in place April 2017. This has a relation with the technical working group and the metadata group. Common minimal standard of versioning for CESSDA?

**4. make their data holdings downloadable through common data gateways** See point 3 on the metadata harvesting tool. There could be a legal problem when data are downloaded on an international scale. The handling of access requests is a point of attention. Part of CESSDA’s Data Access and Dissemination Policy.

**5. ensure that their local language(s) within the multi-lingual thesaurus are maintained** This is about the ELSST thesaurus. Dutch, for example, is not maintained at the moment. There is a need to define what proportion of ELSST has to be translated, and what exactly are the local languages to be used in the multi-lingual thesaurus. Which costs are involved?

**6. share their data archiving tools (under the IP conditions described in the CESSDA Statutes, Article 11)** Should this sharing be done under Open Source conditions? Are all SP’s up to that? Are fees needed to meet possible costs or will CESSDA fund this? Article 11 is on the legal IP aspects. Could this point be clarified by the CESSDA BoD or GA?

**7. adhere to the principles of the OAIS reference model and any agreed CESSDA requirements for operating trusted repositories**

This is covered by the DSA certification.

**8. contribute to CESSDA’s cross national data harmonisation activities** How far should data harmonisation go?What roles should the CESSDA SP’s have here?

**9. contribute material and/or expertise to the cross-national question bank** Is this an existing CESSDA activity? Is there a working group, or will one created? What roles should the CESSDA SP’s have here?

**10. provide mentor support for CESSDA Observers and their representative Service Providers to achieve full Membership** This is a long standing CESSDA aim and activity. However, the actual CESSDA policy is not clear at the moment, as funding facilities for aspiring SP’s for this expert seminar were withdrawn.

**11. provide member support for countries with immature and fragile national infrastructures to help them build up needed competence later to be able to fulfil tasks as Members**

See the same point mentioned under 10.

**12. facilitate access to national government and research funded relevant data, dependent on national legal systems** The “Data without Boundaries” – project in which CESSDA cooperates is aimed at this. Remote Access facilities are an essential point here. This point should be more stimulated: how far is this within CESSDA and should reminders be sent out to the SP’s on this?

**13. adhere to CESSDA’s Data Access and Dissemination Policy** CESSDA’s Data Access and Dissemination Policy is a project.

**14. adhere to the provisions of the entire Organisation’s policies as required.**

This is a rather obvious obligation that does not need further elaboration. But: are these bring revised?

***II Trust Working Group***

What should its tasks be? It was strongly felt that the Trust Working Group should continue its work: a number of SP’s clearly indicated that feedback and support was missing since 2013.

***Formation of the Trust Working Group***

The participating experts actually envisaged two groups, in line with the earlier names of this group: the trust working group and the trust expert group.

1. **Trust Working Group**

This group should continue to work as it effectively did in 2013 and consist of one participant for each SP basically. A number of SP’s explicitly requested the continuation of the group as they were clearly struggling with the DSA requirements in order to achieve compliancy. Guidance and training are therefore still very much required and appreciated.

1. **Trust Support Group**

This was the expert committee as it functioned in 2013. Its aim is to support and advise members and aspirant members in all trust issues. However, there are more tasks for this group as they should also be active in reviewing the Annex 2 obligations as previously mentioned under I. This should lead to clear indications for all CESSDA SP’s how to handle the so far unresolved issues in this field.

This group should also be in contact with the CESSDA ruling bodies as general advising group on trust matters. Possibly the group could also be in touch with the boards of the various certification standards. This is particularly important given the expected changes in 2016/2017 when the DSA will merge its guidelines with those of the WDS (World Data System) into new “common requirements” for “baseline certification”. These new requirements have not been finalised, but is it expected that these could make the interpretation of some guidelines easier. Conceivably, this could result in clearer explanation of guidelines, closer to the DIN certification in its formulations, which means more precise. Also more evidence may be needed. For more information see: <https://rd-alliance.org/group/rdawds-certification-digital-repositories-ig/wiki/request-comments-dsa%E2%80%93wds-common>

**The tasks of the Trust Support Group:**

**Advisory Body**

To advise the CESSDA Managing Director / Board of Directors concerning the CESSDA Obligations as stipulated in the Annex 2 and, moreover, in all matters regarding certification, in particular with regard to new developments (such as the expected merge of DSA and WDS certification requirements and procedures).

**Review of the CESSDA Obligations compliance**

The group will liaise with other CESSDA working groups: the metadata group (Annex 2 point 1), the metadata harvesting group (Annex 2 points 3 and 4), technical service development (Annex 2 point 3) and the ELSST group (Annex 2 point 5), to solicit information on the details of the various Annex 2 obligations. An important, but still open, question here is who (which body within CESSDA) should review the Annex 2 obligations within CESSDA and ultimately advise the BoD whether a SP has achieved sufficient compliance with these. This can only be decided at a later stage.

**Support and Training**

Active role in assisting all SP’s (including those of aspiring members) in acquiring or prolonging the DSA certification and complying with the Annex 2 obligations. This will be done in contact with the Trust Working Group as described under IIA. Additional to the workshops a mentor system will be developed, in particular for newcomers SP’s. The training activities will also be aligned with other training initiatives within CESSDA, in particular with Task 4.1 on Training.

**Certification watch**

The group will liaise with the boards of the certification initiatives (DSA, WDS, DIN/NESTOR, and ISO) to suggest amendments or respond to possible adaptations of these certification systems.

The work of this Support Group is identical to the activities in the CESSDA SaW project task 4.3. The main points of that task are “clarification of the relation between the DSA Guidelines and the CESSDA Annex 2 Obligations” and “the formation of a certification work group (“Trust Group”)”. A point of priority is the “translation of the CESSDA Annex 2 Obligations into the DSA guidelines (establishing the relationship between these two entities)” as this should be done in the first year of the project. Meetings of the Trust Working Group could take place as CESSDA SaW project workshops, in coordination with task 2.3. However, additional funding will be needed to organise the meetings of both trust groups.

Members of this group are: Hervé l’Hours UKDA, Mari Kleemola FSD, Natascha Schumann GESIS, Janez Štebe ADP and Heiko Tjalsma DANS.

**Summary**

1. DSA certification is seen both by existing and aspiring SP’s as a subject requiring guidance and coaching or training by CESSDA.
2. The issue of the non-DSA Annex 2 Obligations has not been resolved. This issue needs urgent attention, especially the elements of cooperation and possible collaboration with other working groups within CESSDA.
3. On some points of the non-DSA Annex 2 obligations clarification from the CESSDA boards is needed.
4. Both a Trust Working Group and the Trust Support Group have to be installed.
5. Work for the Trust Support Group can be executed within the task 4.3 of CESSDA SaW project.
6. Communication with the CESDDA Managing Director and / or Board of Directors will be initiated and organised.
7. Additional funding is needed to organise the meetings of both trust groups.

**Annex 1**

**Participants Expert Seminar 2015**

1. Hervé l’Hours UKDA
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